

CAPITOL STUDIES

MARCH 5, 2025 • WEEK 8



LUKE FOR LEGISLATORS

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Theme Verse

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man has come to **seek** and to **save** that which was **lost**.



Worthy or Great Faith?



PROFESSIONAL MOUNTAIN CLIMBER Royal Robbins, writing for *Sports Illustrated*, described the one great essential of the sport. It is not physical strength or having the safest and best equipment, or even proper training, but the ability to see things as they really are. Robbins writes: “If we are keenly alert and aware of the rock and what we are doing on it, if we are honest with ourselves and our capabilities and weaknesses, if we avoid committing ourselves beyond what we know is safe, then we will climb safely. For climbing is an exercise in reality. He who sees it clearly is on safe ground, regardless of his experience or skill. But he who sees reality as he would like it to be, may have his illusions rudely stripped from his eyes when the ground comes up fast.” Actually, mountain climber Robbins has given masterful expression to a crucial life principle. Wise people resist seeing life as they would like to see it. They are honest with themselves regarding their capabilities and weaknesses. This universal principle applies to every area of life. But nowhere is it more essential than in matters of faith, because *real faith is an exercise in reality*. – R. Kent Hughes¹

Pastor Arin Hess
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INTRODUCTION

A centurion commanded about 100 men. “In ancient Rome, a *century* was approximately equal to a company in the U.S. army, and a centurion was roughly equivalent to a captain.... [C]enturions were chosen for their size and strength, their abilities at swordplay and at throwing missiles, and the quality of their discipline, which was partly shown by how well their soldiers kept their own armor polished.”² In Luke 7, we read of a centurion whose faith was greater than any Jesus had ever seen.

I. THE CENTURION’S FAITH

A. A Man Who Loved

Luke 7:1-5

When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. ²And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.”³

Though a Roman, the Jews thought very highly of this centurion. His love for the Jewish people was evident, and he had used his wealth to build them a place of worship. He also cared deeply about his slave (indentured servant) who was dying. Luke says this servant “was *εὔτιμος* to his master, a word that here means ‘honoured, respected’ (Luke 14:8; Phil. 2:29)... and indicates why the centurion was so concerned over him.”⁴ Being conscious of the intricacies in Jew/Gentile relationships, and so as not to be offensive, the centurion asked his Jewish elder friends to petition Jesus to please heal his servant.

B. A Man Who Believed

Luke 7:6-10

Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” ⁹Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.” ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jesus left with the Jewish elders heading to the centurion’s home, but he was stopped by friends of the centurion. This was another evidence of the centurion’s knowledge of Jewish culture. A Jew entering a Gentile home had to spend time in ‘purification’ before entering back into the



normal routines of life. The centurion likely wanted to keep this from happening to Jesus. He sent the message, “I am not worthy for You to come in my home, and I am also not worthy to come to You. But I know Your word has power and authority, just like mine with my soldiers. You only need to speak the word, and I know my servant will be healed.”

C. The Centurion’s Opinion of Himself

“The centurion used two Greek words to contradict the opinion of his Jewish friends in verses 4-5. The first term rendered ‘worthy’ (*v. 6*) is *hikanos*, an adjective expressing the idea of sufficiency. ‘I am not sufficient, adequate, or important enough for this honor’.... The second term rendered ‘worthy’ in verse 7 is *axios*, the identical word translated ‘worthy’ in verse 5. In addition to feeling unworthy socially, he did not consider himself ‘good’ on the moral balance scale.”⁵

D. Jesus’ Opinion of the Centurion’s Faith

Jesus marveled at this man’s faith. The Greek word here for ‘marveled’ is *thaumazo*, meaning ‘amazed.’ This word is only used of Jesus in reference to the centurion (Luke 7:9, Matt. 8:10) and then again when He began His public ministry in His hometown of Nazareth and His fellow Jews rejected Him. The first was in amazement at the centurion’s “great faith,” and the second when He was “amazed at their lack of faith” (Mark 6:6 NIV).

E. Why Was Jesus So Amazed?

The centurion was a Gentile who had not been raised with knowledge of the Scriptures as the Jews were. He was a part of the oppressive Roman army, an officer with great power—not someone you would think of humbly submitting to another. He was wealthy. Jesus later said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” (Luke 18:24). Riches often bind us to an earthly mentality. Yet this man had faith, a simple unwavering faith that whatever Jesus commanded *would* happen!

By contrast, Jesus’ hometown friends had been brought up on the Scriptures. If the Scriptures had truly governed their lives, they should have realized that Jesus had to be the Messiah. Instead, their thoughts were not on the Scriptures but on the circumstances. Despite Jesus’ miracles, they could not get beyond their own doubts and questions and were instead “offended” at Him.

Is Jesus amazed because of your great faith or your lack of faith? This story illustrates two essential parts of the Christian faith—knowing who Christ is and knowing who we are.

Who are we? We are unworthy of God’s love. We are unworthy of heaven. “All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isaiah 6:4). Paul tells us, “There is none who does good, there is not even one” (Romans 3:12b). Unless we know who Christ is, we are “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God” (Eph. 2:12).





“Just as through one man sin entered the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Who is Christ? He is the worthy “Lamb that was slain” (Revelation 5:12). “He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.... He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.... [I]t was the Father’s good pleasure... through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:13-20). “He [God] made Him [Jesus] to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him” (John 3:16-17). “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.... ‘Whoever will call on the name of the Lord [Jesus] will be saved’” (Romans 10:9-10, 13).

II. THE LORD’S LIFE-GIVING HOPE

A. Sin Brings Death and Despair

Luke 7:11-12

Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd. ¹²Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

Nain was a small, insignificant town about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum and just five miles from Nazareth. Why Jesus was going through Nain we do not know. Perhaps He was on His way to somewhere else; perhaps He chose to go to Nain because He knew the need. Whatever the reason, a large crowd of people chose to follow Him and His disciples as they journeyed from Capernaum. Arriving at the entrance to the city on God’s perfect timetable, they were met with a funeral procession.

“The burial custom of the Jews called for the family to wrap the body of the loved one from head to toe in strips of linen soaked in as much as 75 pounds of aromatic spices and resin to counteract the smell of decomposition. On the day of burial, friends of the deceased placed the wrapped body on a ‘bier,’ a lattice frame supported by horizontal poles, which they carried to the family’s burial cave, hewn from a limestone hill. After placing the body on a shelf, carved into the limestone wall, the family sealed the entrance of the cave with a large stone. Sometime later, perhaps upon the death of another family member, the family would gather the deceased person’s bones and place them in the family ossuary, or ‘bone box,’ along with those of his ancestors.”⁶



Luke lets us know that the dead man was the only son of a “widow.” This made the situation more desperate. Sin brought death, sorrow, and hopelessness. Widows who did not have a “man” in the home to provide and protect did not fare well in those days. “Jewish culture led the rest of the ancient world in caring for the helpless, such as orphans, widows, and the disabled. But while Jews didn’t shun or abandon the destitute, they offered just enough help to keep them from utter privation.”⁷

B. Jesus Brings Hope and Life

Luke 7:13-17

When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.”¹⁴ And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!”¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.¹⁶ Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!”¹⁷ This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

This time no one asked for Jesus’ help. Jesus simply recognized the need and responded with compassion. He couldn’t *not* respond. He stopped the procession, touched the bier, and then spoke. Like with the healing of the centurion’s servant, Jesus’ word was sufficient. That word that had been used so often in healing now resounded in resurrection power. The dead man came back to life! Can you feel Jesus’ love for this grieving mother as, with tender assurance, He tells her, “Don’t weep,” and then lovingly gives her son back to her? This is the first time Luke calls Jesus “Lord,” meaning “the Master.” How fitting as Jesus clearly proved Himself to be Lord over death itself!

Imagine being in the crowd that day as the dead man sat up and spoke. Did the linen cloths just pop off or did Jesus maybe take them off as He touched him? Hearing this man speak had to have electrified the crowd because, as we know, dead men don’t speak! Fear and then praise moved through the crowd as they realized only “God” could have done this. Everywhere they went, they told others what Jesus had done. Are we quick to share what Jesus has done in our lives?

CONCLUSION

“Hope remains when we accept as truth that even though we cannot see God or hear Him or touch Him, He is hard at work on our behalf. This is perhaps the hardest part of faith. Not seeing, not hearing, not having any tangible evidence of God’s concern for our problems leaves too much room for the imagination. Unfortunately, we don’t tend to fill the information void with good thoughts or encouraging anticipation. Satan would have us believe our Creator has abandoned His creation leaving us to suffer evil alone and forgotten. When we fall into the natural pattern of doubt—‘God doesn’t love me; God doesn’t care’—the circumstances of life will substantiate our worst fears. Consequently, choosing to accept the truth of God’s genuine care and active



involvement becomes a discipline. When we choose to trust in His love, we will see it abound.”⁸

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5, KJV).

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (Philippians 4:8).



Chaplain Arin Hess

FOOTNOTES

1. R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Crossway Books, 1998, pg. 253.
2. “Centurion,” *Merriam-Webster*, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/centurion.
3. All Scripture quotations, unless noted, are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, 1995 Update.
4. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, Eerdmans, 1978, pg. 279.
- 5, 6, 7, 8. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke*, Zondervan, 2012), pg. 170-174.



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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

Meeting during the
109th Legislature’s
First Session

SENATORS

6:45 – 7:45 A.M.
Wednesdays
Capitol Office #1004

STAFF

12:00 – 1:00 P.M.
Wednesdays
NE State Office Building
Morrill Room