



JESUS HEALS A CENTURION'S SERVANT

Part 26 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 7:1-10 | May 02, 2010

Luke 7:1–10

¹ After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ² Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. ³ When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." ⁶ And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. ⁷ Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰ And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

INTRODUCTION

Well, howdy, Mars Hill. We love to go through books of the Bible. If you're new, it is something that we enjoy, and we find ourselves in the book of the Bible called Luke. We're in chapter 7:1–10. Feel free to go there in your Bible, or on your iPhone, or whatever the case might be. If you don't have a Bible, you're certainly welcome to pick one up for free on your way out. And where we find ourselves in the story is that Jesus has been preaching, and teaching, and healing, performing miracles, dealing with troubled people, casting out demons, and he has been essentially kicked out of his hometown of Nazareth. They have sadly rejected him, and so he set up a base of operations in a town called Capernaum, small town, maybe fifty or a hundred people. Small homes, 400, 500, 600 square feet, fishing down the hillside toward the Sea of Galilee, farming up over the fertile plains. A lot of people who are not well educated, they're not financially prosperous. These are simple, hard-working, regular, poor people from that day and era. And what we're going to see today is that as Jesus is on a bit of a preaching and teaching tour, he's on his way back toward Capernaum, and he is approached with a situation of a man who was sick, and suffering, and near death, and that is the clinical diagnosis of Luke, who is a medical doctor, and the author of this book of the Bible bearing his name. And so we're going to get to know this man who is suffering, and how Jesus ministers to him.

By way of preface, let me say, though, that sin, and sickness, and suffering, ultimately culminating in death, are not part of God's original plan. When God finished his work of creating the heavens, and the earth, and man and woman, in Genesis 1:31 it says that, "God saw everything that he had made and he said that it was," what? "Very good," very good. Everything was great. We didn't need locks on our homes. We didn't need air bags in our cars. We didn't need 911, hospitals, ambulances, police, or soldiers. There was no sickness, sin, suffering, or death. Everything God made was very good.

We sin and the result is all that is very bad. And what we find today is a man who is suffering. He is in a world of imperfection and sin, and as a result there is suffering. And the Bible says that he is near death. That means he does not go to Jesus because he is bedridden. This is a man who is in his final moments. Some of you have been there at the bedside of someone who is suffering and dying, and you've seen them in their last moments. That's where he is.

Some of you are approaching that day. There's a man at Mars Hill that I see every week, and he is on borrowed time. I've met with him. He does know Jesus, but his heart is blocked, there's nothing more they can do, and every week that he sees me, he says, "I'm still here, if I'm not here next week, you know that I've gone to see Jesus." Some of you are well aware that your time could be very, very short. Some of you know and love people whose time is very short. Some of you have been with those in their last moments of suffering as they approach death.

And this man is at that place. The doctors have done everything they can. The family and friends have done everything they can. There's nothing left that can be done and apart from a miracle of God's grace, he is going to die shortly. And he's a servant. He is a man who is essentially a slave. In that social order, he's at the bottom of priority. If he had a bad master, he would be treated as property, or an animal, yet, we're going to find that Jesus has great love and compassion for this man.

Emotionally, I need you to go to that place where you put in his place, someone that you know and love. God has helped me today. One of the great struggles of being a pastor is being aware of so much suffering in so many people's lives, and then emotionally just trying to endure that. I woke up this morning—to give you an example—and a friend of mine e-mailed. He was a guy I went to high school with. We played baseball together, lettered four

years together in baseball. Played summer league together. We were friends, got along fine. Neither of us were Christians. We both graduated as non-Christians, and then we both became Christians. And he married a gal who graduated with my wife, grew up with my wife, went to church with my wife, was friends with my wife. And so of course, we've kept in touch over the years. He's a godly man. He's studied theology. He's a great Bible teacher. He loves Jesus, loves his wife, loves his kids. They're out of state and she was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of cancer. She's been through some surgeries, her health has taken a serious turn for the worse. She's really struggling just to live. And he e-mailed saying that he was hoping to get back to the Northwest because apart from a miracle, his wife is going to die, and she wants to spend her last days near her parents. And she also wants her parents to help out with her children as she's really struggling.

Came into church today to find out that my sister suffered a miscarriage. So, I've gotta go see her. She lives locally and goes to Mars Hill. And I've seen her become a Christian, and get married, and seen her miscarry before and have a child. And death has come to my family today.

Some of you are there. You're suffering as the servant is. Some of you are in the place of the centurion, his boss. There's someone that you love and care about and they're suffering, and so your heart is burdened for them. That's where I'm at today. And this man, the servant, the slave is at the place that apart from a miracle, he's simply going to die. He doesn't even go to Jesus to ask for a miracle, because he can't get out of bed and make it there.

So there is the servant, and then there is the centurion, who is his boss. And the centurion is one who loves the servant very much. Centurion means the commander of a hundred, so he is a military leader, a man's man, a guy's guy, a dude's dude. Too often times in Christianity, Jesus is portrayed as the perfect fit for women and children, yet, men are not interested because men are interested in battle, be that actual battle as soldiers and warriors, or sports, which is a modified form of battle, or business, which is a financial form of battle. Men like conflict, combat, and conquering, and Jesus in Christianity is not often portrayed in such a way that is pleasing to real men.

Here we get a picture of a real man, a man's man. He's a Roman soldier, a warrior. This is a man who goes into battle and leads other men. He would have been affluent, prominent. He was well known. He was successful. He works for the Roman government, and they were essentially overseeing—some would say, “oppressing”—the Jewish people, different races, different religions, different belief systems. And the Roman Empire was ruling over the Jewish people, so he could have been very cruel to those who were among God's people. But he, by all accounts, was not. He was not.

And he loves this friend of his. Do you have a friend that you love who's suffering and dying? If so, you can perhaps identify with the centurion. The first person that comes to mind for me is a friend of mine named Matt Chandler. He's a dear friend of mine. I cannot overstate how much I love, and respect, and appreciate this man. He's part of our Acts 29 Church Planting Network. He's in Dallas, Texas. He took a small, struggling church, it has exploded into one of the largest and fastest-growing churches in America. He's in his thirties. He loves his wife. He loves his kids. He loves his Bible. He loves his Jesus. He loves his church. He's a world-class Bible teacher. God is using him to disciple the nations. He and I are close. I have dear affection for this man. I love seeing God's grace in his life. I enjoy his friendship. He's been a blessing to me personally.

I'll never forget the day, it was Thanksgiving weekend, and I was home enjoying some time with my family. And I can't remember if it was an e-mail or a text, but I got word that he was home with his family, enjoying the holiday weekend, and he set his little daughter aside, and then blacked out, fell over. He's quite tall. Slammed his head on the mantle above the fireplace, cutting it open. Ladies, imagine yourself there. It's the holiday weekend. There's your healthy, young husband. You hear something, you go in the other room, and he's lying on the ground unconscious, bleeding. You have no idea what happened. She calls 911. The medics come, they rush him to the hospital. He wakes up not knowing where he is or what has happened. And they tell him, “You have a large aggressive tumor on your brain that is impinging on your brain, and it caused you to black out. And we can cut a certain amount.” And they have, and he's got a big scar on his head, and they've shaved his head, and he's undergone surgery. “But we can't cut more.” So they're taking him through aggressive treatment, and it's right in that region that is connected to speech and memory. And every time he undergoes certain treatment, he can and will lose IQ points.

So for a Bible preacher, this is all very scary. It's even more scary to be a husband and a father, and thinking of not walking your daughter down the aisle for her wedding. I mean, that was the first thing that came to mind when I heard that. I thought, “Not Matt.” I remember just sitting in the chair in my living room, and I put my face in my hands, and I just started crying like, “Not Matt. His kids need him. His wife needs him. God, you're using him to preach the Gospel to the nations.” That was one of the first thoughts that came to mind is, “Who's gonna walk his little girl down the aisle?” That's our job as a dad. That's our great honor. We need to see our kids through to maturity. And he has publicly said that apart from a miracle, he'll be dead in a few years, and I'll be at my dear friend's funeral. Devastating.

And the centurion has this affection for this servant. This is not just a guy who works for him or with him. This is a friend and a brother. This is someone he deeply cares about. And so he sends word to Jesus. “I need you to heal my servant.” And he does so respectfully, because he's a Roman, Jesus is a Jew. Because he's a political leader, and Jesus is a homeless man, because he is not a worshiper of the God of the Bible, and Jesus is the God of the Bible. He knows that it, perhaps, would be inappropriate and disrespectful for him to approach Jesus and make a request. So he goes to the Jewish elders, spiritual leaders that are friends of his, and he asks them, “Could you do me a favor and go ask Jesus, one of your teachers. I've heard he can heal. I really love my friend. I need him to come and heal my friend.”

WE GET GRACE

And the religious people blow it. All through Luke's Gospel, religious people blow it. Over and over and over they blow it. This is why we don't like religion, and we want to always repent of our own proclivities toward religion. Religious people in the Gospel of Luke are no friends of Jesus. Sinners and lost people, they're friends of Jesus. The religious people decide, “Yes, we will go to Jesus on your behalf, and we will inquire if he would come and heal your servant.” And here is exactly what they tragically say to Jesus: “He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he

is the one who built our synagogue.” They go to Jesus and say, “You owe this guy. “He’s worthy because he was really nice to us, and he built our church.” And see, religious people tend to work this way. They feel like if they sin, they owe God, so they have to pay him back through their good works, through going to purgatory, karma, reincarnation, suffering. But if they do good, they feel like God owes them. They’re always keeping score. And so they would say, “Well, we looked at this guy’s life, and he’s not even a Christian, and he paid for our church building,” the synagogue, the old covenant equivalent of the church. “And he’s really nice to us. He’s a Roman, but he’s nice to us, even though we’re not Romans. And because he’s nice to us and generous to us, we feel like you owe him, because he’s a really moral, good guy.”

Religious people tend to think this, and even if you don’t think this, you know you’re a bit religious when you’re suffering or life is damaging, or hurtful, or harmful, or painful, or strife-filled, and you become disappointed with, and embittered against God. “God, you owed me, and you did not deliver.” You may not say that, but any sort of bitterness or disappointment with God is a declaration toward God that you did good, and he owed you, and he didn’t come through, because you assume that God owes you. God owes no one nothing. God gave us life and breath on the earth, and we sinned against God, we rebelled against God, and God is obligated to no one.

And what the religious people don’t get in that day, and what the religious people don’t get in this day, is that we don’t pay God back, Jesus does. And God doesn’t owe us anything, but he gives us grace. And grace by definition is to those who are ill-deserving, not just undeserving, but ill-deserving. We don’t deserve anything but hell. Everything else we get is grace. And so they come to Jesus not asking him humbly, “Jesus, could you be gracious to this man?” They instead come to Jesus religiously and say, “You owe this man.”

JESUS LOVES WHOLE PEOPLE

Nonetheless, Jesus is so kind, and generous, and gracious, and merciful, and wonderful that he actually heals the man, because Jesus cares, not just about our spiritual well-being, he also cares about our physical well-being. God loves you, and he loves all of you. He loves whole people. He does want our inward soul to have faith in him and love for him. He also wants our outward body to enjoy wellness. That’s why we want to be good stewards of the body that God has entrusted to our care, and part of our ministry is to care for those who are physically suffering, and hurting, and in need. That’s why for those of you who are doctors, and those of you who are in medical professions, Luke, the author of this book of the Bible, would resonate with you and say, “It’s good. Minister to the whole person. Give them the love of Jesus in word and deed.” And so Jesus ministers to this suffering servant by healing him, because God cares for the whole person. That’s one of the reasons that Christians are to be about acts of mercy, and kindness, and charity.

And I’ll give you a point of encouragement, how God still likes to do this, and how generous and gracious he is. It’s a bit tangential, but I hope it’s encouraging and illustrative. Earlier this year when the earthquake hit Haiti, and some of you know I got to go there and made some footage, and we got to tell people, and we launched an organization called Churches Helping Churches to get money and relief and supplies and support to Christians whose churches fell down, and lives were devastated in Haiti. And so you, as a church, were very generous. Our general giving has been really down this year, but for that cause, many of you were large-hearted, and we gave about two-thirds of a million dollars, which was very generous. And so we have been giving some of that to pastors and clinics and those in need. We’ve got a conference coming up, more of a retreat actually, where a few of our pastors from Mars Hill, as well as others, are gonna go down, and we’re gonna invest in hundreds of Haitian pastors, train them in biblical counseling, get them resources, see exactly what we need, build those ongoing partnerships to support these churches that still have a lot of hard work to do.

And one of the things that happened in Haiti was when the earthquake came, the major hospital in Port-au-Prince was destroyed, so now a lot of the care for the physical body is happening in smaller makeshift clinics, but they’re having a hard time getting medical supplies. And so last week, we finished a negotiation with an organization called International Aid, and we partner with them. They’re great people, and they said, “We can help secure medical supplies that could be distributed to these Christian clinics so that people could minister in word and deed to Christians and non-Christians.” Everybody’s welcome to come to these clinics. We want to pray for them and talk to them about the love of Jesus. We also want to serve them, and help them to enjoy physical healing, ‘cause Jesus does both, and he cares about both. So they said, “We can secure and procure for you \$1.7 million of medical supplies, and the arrangement that has been made is Churches Helping Churches needs to pay for the transport.” Well, it all worked out in God’s grace that we were able to ship all of that last week for \$17,000. \$1.7 million of medical aid for \$17,000. We praise God for that.

And my point is simply this: God still cares about the whole person, and when we care about the whole person, God tends to pour out exceeding generosity and grace, to even take what we would give, and to multiply it like fishes and loaves to care for many. And that’s what Jesus does, he cares for this whole person. He heals him physically. So there are three types of people here. There are those who are suffering. Some of you are here today, and you’re there. Say, “You know what? I need God’s help. Apart from God’s help, my suffering will continue, and my life, perhaps, would even end.” You do need Jesus. Some of you would come here like the religious people and say, “I feel like God owes me, or I feel like I’ve been a good person.” And you need to meet Jesus. You know nothing of Jesus, you only know of religion. You don’t know grace. The last thing you want to do is stand before God and say, “Give me what I deserve.” You want to stand before God and say, “Give me the grace that comes through Jesus.” And some of you would be like this centurion, this friend who asked the elders on behalf of his suffering servant and friend to inquire of Jesus’ willingness to heal him.

THE CENTURION IS A “GOOD MAN”

And let me say this, this centurion is an amazing man. He is, by all accounts at the beginning of the story, not a believer in Jesus, but by the end, he comes to faith in Jesus. Somewhere in this process, I believe, and most commentators agree, he experiences what we would call conversion. He goes from unbelief to belief in Jesus. But this man, even as a non-Christian, demonstrates amazing character. Let us go so far as to say that he is a moral man. He does not live to the glory of God. He is not filled with the Holy Spirit. He is not, apart from faith in Jesus, going to experience eternal life, but he’s a

“good man.” And some of you need to know that the way Christians tend to portray ourselves religiously, holier than thou, better than everyone else, doesn’t work because what happens is Christians have this proclivity to say, “Well, the non-Christians are the bad guys, and us Christians are the good guys.” And immediately one of the non-Christians says, “I know a bunch of Christians that are far worse than a bunch of non-Christians,” and we have to tap out because that’s true. I know some really nasty Christians. And I know some really nice non-Christians. Like if you let me pick, I don’t know, let’s say I was gonna do a car trip across the country, right, I would not necessarily pick, depending upon who the options were, all Christians. There are certain Christians I would not want in the car, maybe in the trunk, not in the car. Not in the car. Maybe on the roof rack, not in the car. There are certain non-Christians that I wouldn’t mind hanging out with, ‘cause they’re actually pretty nice, pretty gracious, pretty generous, pretty easy going. It’s not that Christians are good people, and non-Christians are bad people. It’s that everyone’s a sinner, and some people live out of the conscience that God has given them, and others fight the conscience that God has given them.

And so for the non-Christian, this moral centurion, he’s living out of the conscience that God has given him as an image bearer, to live a certain kind of life that is not an act of worship, but it does make him a decent neighbor and a good citizen. Some of you would relate to him. You would say, “I don’t feel like my life is in ruin and I’m suffering, and I don’t feel like I am exceedingly religious. I just feel like I’m a pretty decent moral person. Yeah, I believe in God. Why do I need to give my life to Jesus? Because every time I hear about someone becoming a Christian, it’s ‘cause a boulder fell on their life, and they’re trapped under it. You know, addiction, death, suffering, poverty, and then they cry out to Jesus in their moment of need. But I don’t consider myself to be in that painful place and position of need. Life’s going pretty good. There’s no crisis.”

That was this man. Look at his character. He’s loving. That’s what the religious leaders say, “He loves us and our nation.” Do you know how loving that is? No one loves religious people. This guy actually loves religious people. That’s very loving. And he also loves his servant. Servants didn’t have legal rights. They couldn’t sue. They couldn’t take you to court. They couldn’t testify in court. They were treated like animals and property, and he really loves his servant. And he’s going above and beyond the call of duty, trying to get Jesus to come and save the life of his servant. That’s a very loving man.

He’s also very generous. The Bible says here that he funded the synagogue, the old covenant equivalent of the church. Now imagine, Mars Hill, if we were going to start a campus, and I stood up and I said, “Okay, we’re starting a campus. We need you guys all to give generously,” and you didn’t. This is Mars Hill. And then what happened was a non-Christian came forward and said, “Well, how much does it cost to start a Mars Hill campus?” We told them and they wrote a check and said, “I’ll pay for it.” “What? You’re not a Christian.” “Yeah, but I love you guys, so I’m here to help.” Mind bending. That was this man, very generous. And some of you would ask, “Is this all true? Is this real? Is there a town called Capernaum? Was there a place called a synagogue that he actually built? Was a guy really healed in that town?” It’s all true ‘cause the Bible’s not just philosophical, it’s historical. So let me show this to you. We were in Israel this last summer and took this photo. This is an architectural rendering of the synagogue in Capernaum that this man paid for. That’s where Jesus preached as well, previously in Luke 4, in the building that this guy built. Isn’t that crazy? The non-Christian builds the building that Jesus comes and preaches in. Some of you say, “Well, how do we know it’s true?” The next slide says, “The late fourth century A.D., the white synagogue built upon the remains of the ‘synagogue of Jesus.’” Now here is what it is showing us. The white stones on the top, those are from the fourth century. They’re built on the foundation of the dark stones beneath it. Those dark stones beneath were paid for by the centurion. Those are his stones. That’s the foundation that he paid to have laid. Isn’t that amazing? You can go there to this day, two thousand years later, and see the foundation of the synagogue that was funded by the non-Christian centurion. Not only did he build it, he built it well. This is a very generous man.

Additionally, we see that he is very considerate. He sends the elders to meet with Jesus, not to disrespect him. Additionally, he’s a very humble man. As Jesus is approaching his home, he sends out additional servants and he says, “I am unworthy to have you, Lord Jesus, into my home.” How many of you, if Jesus said, “I’m coming to your house,” immediately your thought would be, “Yes. This is gonna be great. I’m gonna get a photo with him, put him on Facebook. I’m gonna have tons of friends. This is gonna be great.” And this man is so humble, even as Jesus is coming to his house, he says, “You know what? I don’t need to waste Jesus’ time. Jesus is very important. He’s got a lot of things to do, lot of people to see. Yeah, I’m an affluent man. I’m a generous man. I’m a powerful man. I’m a strong man, but I’m not worthy to enjoy friendship with that man, Jesus.” Very humble.

He’s also very effective. I love the fact that he gets stuff done. “My servant is ill. I gotta find a way to get to Jesus.” He’s also very honorable. He says, “Jesus, I understand this, you need to be in authority and under authority.” Most men don’t get that. Most men want to be in authority, and they chafe and bristle under authority. But he understands chain of command. He’s very honorable. What he says is, “I’m a military leader. When I tell my guys to do something, they do it. You are in a completely different rank, and all you need to do is just give a command that there would be healing, and healing will occur.”

STILL, THE CENTURION NEEDS JESUS

Despite all of his morality and his good citizenry, this man still needs to be converted. He needs to place his faith in Jesus. And some of you would come here today, and you would say, “That feels like me.” I would, to some degree, relate to you. I did not become a Christian till I was nineteen. Some of you know my story. Before that I would have considered myself a “good, moral guy.” My whole ethic was believe in God, be a good person, do nice things for people. And I tried to live out of that general ethic. Was not a Christian, was not filled with the Holy Spirit, did not love Jesus, was not reading my Bible, was not in church, was not connected to God or his people, but was moral. Never drank, never smoked, never did drugs. Most likely to succeed, student body president, four-year letterman, man of the year. A “good, moral guy.” Worked hard, got a scholarship to college, was the first person in my family to go to college. I’m in college, and I didn’t have a crisis. I wasn’t drinking, smoking, doing drugs. Wasn’t flunking out. Wasn’t getting bad grades. Actually life was good. All things considered for that life stage and age, it was good.

So why did I come to Jesus? ‘Cause I was reading the Bible, and I came to find that he’s God. Not because I had a crisis, but because it’s true. And at

the time I would have told you, “Well, I’m not perfect, but I don’t think I’m a big, nasty sinner.” Having relooked at the evidence, after knowing Jesus for awhile, I’ve come to a different conclusion, that I’m far more sinful than I thought that I was, and I was filled with pride and self-righteousness in my own smug religion. But nonetheless at the time, had you compared me to other people, especially in my dorm, or the frat that I got kicked out of, which was like prison rules all the time, I was a fairly moral person. But then you compare me to Jesus, and you see all the sin in my life.

Some of you would come here today, and you would compare yourself to others, and you would say, “I feel like this guy, I’m generous, and successful, and I love people who work for me. And I’m a good leader, and things are not going bad, and I got my life under control.” And I would say, “Well, compare yourself to Jesus, not other people, you will see your sin.” But the truth is some people come to Jesus because they have a crisis in their life, and they feel this urgent need for a savior. That’s great. Others don’t have that crisis moment. They just come to know that Jesus is, indeed, God, and they place their faith in him.

AMAZING FAITH

And that is the turning point in the centurion’s life where Jesus looks at him, and we are told that Jesus said that he was amazed at this man’s faith, amazed. There’s only two times in the Bible that we’re told that Jesus is amazed. In Mark 6, as Jesus was rejected in his hometown of Nazareth, it says that Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. He was shocked, stunned. Here he looks at this man’s faith, and he’s amazed. Because this man understands Jesus is God, that’s the chain of command, you need to trust him, and he does. And he does.

So for those of you who are moral today, come to Jesus. It’s not that we want you to be immoral. We want you to live a new life out of your connection to the living God. Not just a good life but a new life, an eternal life. For those of you who are like the religious people, and filled with your own sense of worthiness because of things you’ve done or not done, come to Jesus. For those of you who are suffering and hurting like this servant, come to Jesus. Place faith in him as the centurion did.

MILITARY MINISTRY AT MARS HILL

And as a side note, I would tell you that part of our heart at Mars Hill is for soldiers, warriors, centurions. It just is. One of the emphases of Mars Hill that God has given us is a focus, certainly a love for all people, but a focus on young men. The least likely person to go to church in America, young man in his twenties who is single. That tends to be the majority of attendees at Mars Hill. In so far as I’m aware, by a slight majority, our biggest demographic are single guys in their twenties, least likely people to go to church. Those tend to be the same guys who go into the military. Those tend to be the same guys who want to be, in one way or another, some kind of warrior for some cause. And so what we have seen is God be very generous and gracious to us to bring a lot of military personnel, men and women, but a lot of men, to Mars Hill, a lot of soldiers, a lot of warriors. This centurion is the equivalent of a captain in the military, in our present day vernacular.

In addition, we give away lots of things online because our God is generous, and he is a giver of grace, so we give as a demonstration of generosity and grace. And what we’ve started seeing is lots of soldiers all around the world taking the videos of the sermons and meeting in tents in Baghdad, Iraq, and elsewhere, in addition, places like Afghanistan, and having Mars Hill. So we’re getting feedback from Mars Hill Afghanistan, and Mars Hill Baghdad in tents. We’ll give ya one photo. There are many, many, many we could show, but how cool is it that guys all over the world are getting together and going through the Bible, and watching sermons, and enjoying Mars Hill? So we started getting e-mails and letters from these soldiers saying, “We need Bibles. We need books. We need resources.” So we started shipping them. We have something called a Military Ministry. You can read about it more at theresurgence.com. And thus far we’ve given away 22,000 books to military personnel stationed overseas, 22,000 Bibles and books. Okay, as people are generous, we’re gonna give away more. Why? Because we want centurions to meet Jesus. We want soldiers and warriors to know Christ, have faith in him.

We also give a lot of things away online. One of them is a resource called, *Porn-Again Christian*. It’s a little e-book. We did a whole section in the back on sexual slavery and sex trafficking, which is what prostitution is. It’s modern-day slavery. It’s amazing that many soldiers who would be trying to liberate a people, while employing prostitutes, are enslaving others in a literal slave trade. So we had that all included in that little book and put it up. It’s been downloaded, or at least visited 330,000 times. We don’t know how many times it’s been forwarded. We know that a large portion of that audience of hundreds of thousands is military personnel, guys who are really continually tempted by pornography, and prostitution, and all kinds of sexual sin.

So be praying for those who are in the military. We want the centurions to come, and to know, and to love, and to serve Jesus. I have seen recently in our own church, military personnel meet Jesus. I have seen soldiers—I’ve personally laid hands and prayed over many that are being deployed and coming back, praying for their well-being and safety, and some of them, their wives and children, if they’re married. There’s a lot of military personnel in our church, particularly down at the Olympia Campus. We also have a number at the Ballard Campus and elsewhere. We’ve seen the West Seattle Campus bring in chaplains from the military under Pastor James Noriega to train them. Now we’ve got a lot of chaplains asking for our help. Awesome, wonderful, thank you, praise God because we want centurions to meet Jesus, and have faith in him. That’s what we want. That’s what we want.

Even today, it was amazing, there was a soldier back from deployment, really struggling, saw buddies killed, has turned to drugs for comfort, knew nothing of Jesus or Mars Hill, driving by. Saw the sign, service, looked at his watch. Said, “Well, it’s starting. I wonder what’s going on in there.” Walked in. In God’s providence, it was the sermon about the centurion. He realized his need for Jesus, and he got saved today. That’s what God does. *[congregation applauding]*

That’s what our God does. And so we want to get the word out that our Christ is a warrior as well, that he comes to battle Satan, sin, and death. And

the Bible says when he comes again, he'll be riding as a warrior on a white horse, that a sword will come out of his mouth, with which to slay the nations, that he will ultimately set all the captives free, and his men will be riding with him. That ours is a faith that is not a faith of violence, ours is a faith of forgiveness. But when Jesus comes, he puts down all the bullies, and he puts down all the dictators and tyrants, and he sets all the captives free, and he wipes tears from eyes. So every soldier who goes into battle because they're an image bearer of God, has some echo of the Gospel in their soul. "I am going to possibly lay down my life, so that others might live." That's our Jesus, and they need to know him. And so we want to help.

In closing, we have seen how the suffering gets healing from Jesus, how the religious still don't understand it's about grace, not works and merit. It's about what God does, not what we do. And additionally, we have seen that even if you are a moral, decent, good, upstanding, generous, loving citizen, that will not earn you status of forgiveness and salvation with God. You still need to place faith in Jesus, and all of this culminates in our understanding from this text of who Jesus is because ultimately, the whole Bible's about Jesus, Amen? It's all about Jesus.

TEN THINGS WE LEARN ABOUT JESUS

So I'll share with you ten things we learn about Jesus from this text.

1. HE IS A SOVEREIGN RULER.

Number one: he is a sovereign ruler. I love the fact that the centurion gets this. He says, "I understand chain of command. I rule over a hundred warriors, and you, you're in a completely different rank." God becomes a man. He has complete authority. He is sovereign ruler. The Bible says he is king of kings, lord of lords. For some of you, your Jesus is way too small. He's just a helper, a counselor, a comforter, a friend. He's not Christ. He's not ruler, Lord, savior, God, king, and judge. This man, the centurion, the soldier, he understands who Jesus is. "Oh, I understand chain of command. "You're at the top. Creator, that's who you are." That's who Jesus is.

2. HE IS A HUMBLE INITIATOR.

Number two: he is humble initiator. This sovereign king comes into human history as the man Jesus Christ. He goes on a tour to preach in towns. He goes to people. When requested to go to the home of the centurion, he is on his way. He's a humble initiator. He is going out to serve. He is going out to help. He is going out to preach, and teach, and demon cast, and heal. And unlike religion, where we go looking for God, Christianity's about God looking for us because we're lost, he's not. See, some of you are here today and you don't know it. Jesus is looking for you. That's why you're here. Because he is seeking you. He knows you. He loves you. He died for you. He's pursuing you. He's a humble initiator. He doesn't owe us anything, but he pursues us in love.

3. HE IS A GLOBAL SAVIOR.

Number three: he's a global savior. We see him in this story serving Jew and Gentile, rich and poor. We see him serving slave and free. We see him serving Roman and Jewish. We see that Jesus loves all people. Unlike some religions that tell you that their God loves their nation, their people, their tribe, their tongue, their heritage, their tradition, Jesus loves all people. Jesus is for all nations, young, old, black, white, rich, poor, single, married. Jesus is for all. It's wonderful. One God, one savior, one answer, Jesus. It just is horrifying that some quasi religions, cults like Scientology would even teach you if you want to move up in an organization, you have to pay more money at each level. Jesus heals for free. Jesus teaches for free. Jesus serves for free. To be sure, people will give generously, but it's not to get him to do things. It's because they're grateful for what he's already done through grace. So if you're here, come for free, seats are free, Bibles are free. Prayer is free. Community groups are free. Help is free. Premarital counseling is free. Downloads are free. Salvation is free. Our God is a giver, not a taker, and we love the fact that he is, he is a global savior. He gives to everybody. And for those who really do know him and love him, we want to be generous as he's been generous, not, not to earn favor with him, but to demonstrate the favor that he's already given us. You need to know that the hope of the world is Jesus. The hope of all nations is Jesus. The hope of all people is Jesus, and we see him minister to these various groups in the story.

4. HE IS A FAITH SEER.

He's also a faith seer. See, what religion does, religion looks at the outward. Did you do this? Did you not do that? Did you give? Did you tithe? Did you pray? Did you read? Did you serve? Did you cry? Did you go? And Jesus looks at the heart, "Do you love me?" Yeah, morality is great. I would rather live next to someone who was moral than immoral. But in so far as eternal life is concerned, you're not going to be judged just by the externals, but Jesus is gonna look all the way down to the seat, sum, center, total essence of who you are, look at the heart, and ask this question, "Do you trust me? Do you have faith in me? Do you love me? Do you belong to me?" It really comes down to you and Jesus. And religious people might pat you on the back, and say you're a good person, you do nice things. You give a lot. You serve a lot. You're like the centurion, and these are all wonderful characteristics of a decent neighbor, but these are not the marks of a Christian. The mark of a Christian is faith in Jesus, out of which, yes, new life flows, character flows, change flows. Some of you would judge Christians and say, "I don't like where they're at." You may look where they've come from and realize that God is working on them, and they have made some progress, but they've still got a long way to go. And Jesus looks at the faith. And so some of you are here today, and you would be, perhaps, in the same position that I was some years ago. They say, "I believe in God, and I think I'm a moral person. And I try to help people, and do nice things, and be a good citizen." You know whether or not you really have faith in Jesus as God, and God knows whether or not you really have faith in Jesus as God. He sees faith. He's looking for faith. He's amazed, we're told in Scripture, by faith, and lack of faith.

5. HE IS A GRACE GIVER.

Number five: he's a grace giver. Does he give grace to the servant who is suffering? Yes, he heals him. That's a great gift. Does he give grace to the religious people? Yes, he puts up with them. They're gonna keep showing up in the book, and they're pretty much annoying every time. That's how

religious people are. And he is gracious to them. He keeps teaching them, rebuking them, putting up with them. Is he gracious to the centurion? Yes, yes. The centurion actually gets saved and becomes a Christian. He receives saving grace. What about the crowd that hears this story as Jesus uses this man's faith as an example? Yeah, he gives grace of teaching to them as well. Our God is a grace giver. He loves to give. He's a giver.

6. HE IS A PRAYER HEARER.

Number six: Jesus is a prayer hearer. I want you to see that the request from the centurion through the elders to Jesus is a form of prayer. Anytime we have a request, and we bring it to Jesus, that's a form of prayer. Jesus hears prayer in that day as he does in our day, and he always answers prayer, sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes later, but he always does answer prayer. That's why we can't manipulate him through prayer. We can't make him give us an answer that we want. Again, back to the centurion's comment, "You are at the head of the chain of command. You're the commander in chief. I can give you a request, but I cannot give you an order. And when you give a decree, I receive it because of the chain of command. You're a good ruler. You're a loving God. I'll give you my request, you give me your answer, I'll obey your orders." But he does hear prayer. That's why we pray.

7. HE IS A TRANSCENDENT DOER.

Number seven: he's a transcendent doer. Jesus is told, rightly, by the centurion's servants, he has a bit of a change of mind. He's requested that Jesus come to his house, and then he thinks about it. "Jesus is busy, got a lot going on. He doesn't need to come to my house. All he needs to do is just give an order." See, when you're in authority, that's how it works. What he's saying is, "Jesus, you don't need to be at my house." And how generous is he? Where's the servant? At his house. This man's taking care of his friend. This is kind of like hospice care, those people who love and serve so well. Those people are amazing. He's like that. "Jesus, you can heal from a distance." This is good news for us 'cause Jesus goes to the cross, dies for our sins, rises for our salvation, ascends back into heaven. He's seated on a throne today, ruling and reigning over all nations, kingdoms, peoples, times, places. And it seems like Jesus is far away, and you know what? He can heal from his throne. He can answer prayer from his throne. He can save and bless from his throne. He doesn't need to come to your house, he can through the presence of the Holy Spirit, but Jesus, from a distance, can still hear, and answer prayer, and do good works, and he does. Just like he didn't have to go to the bedside of the sick man, he doesn't need to go anywhere. He can answer prayer from his throne.

8. HE IS THE ULTIMATE HEALER.

He's the ultimate healer, number eight. He heals the servant physically. He heals the centurion spiritually. Jesus heals mind and body. Jesus heals the whole person and in this life, we will die, but because of Jesus' resurrection, if our faith is in him, we too shall rise and enjoy perfect, eternal healing. He's the ultimate healer.

9. HE IS A GREATER CENTURION.

The last two, he's a greater centurion. See, the centurion's job was to go into battle and, as necessary, lay down his life so that others could be blessed, that he would die that they might live, that he would go as a substitute to die in their place to secure their freedom. And Jesus is a greater centurion. He is God come into human history. He is God at war against Satan, sin, death. He is God who comes, not just leading a hundred, but now leading billions of his servants. And as the centurion is worried about his one servant, so Jesus is worried about us all. He's a greater centurion. I want you men to see this man, the centurion, probably with scars on his face and on his hand. He's battle tested, general, captain. He's strong, man's man, tough guy. He gives orders, and young men are willing to die. And he looks at Jesus and says, "You're the boss. You're in charge. You're a greater warrior than I." That's our Jesus, Mars Hill. That's the Jesus we call men to. That's the real Jesus.

10. HE IS THE BETTER SERVANT.

Number ten: he's the better servant. The centurion loved the servant because this was a humble, faithful, dependable servant. Jesus, we are told in the Bible, is the suffering servant. Jesus serves better than any servant. Jesus suffers, and he doesn't, he doesn't leave his duties. He goes all the way to the cross, and he suffers in service to us. And so what happens is, friends, when we suffer, we can go to the Jesus who has suffered, and he serves us as we're suffering, because we have a God who has suffered. And even if and when we die, Jesus still serves us because he's been through death, and he meets us on the other side, and he wipes every tear from our eye, and he gives us a resurrection kingdom where death and sin are no more because of his victory. It's all about Jesus.

JESUS CAN AND DOES ANSWER PRAYER

So here's what we're going to do. We're going to pray. We're going to take a bit of time and pray for one another. Some of you are here today, and you're in the position of the servant. You're hurting, suffering, it's a very difficult time for you. You came in lonely. You need to be prayed for. Some of you need to pray, you're so self-consumed with your own issues that you maybe have overlooked the needs of others, and like the centurion, you need to see those who are suffering, need to pray for them. Some of you are like the centurion and your life isn't horrible, but there's someone you really love, and they're in a difficult place, and you need to intercede and pray for them. And just as he went and got the elders, you need to get the people of God to pray.

So in a moment, I'm gonna have you raise your hand if you want to be prayed for. Don't leave, don't freak out. Don't stress out. "Oh no, now we're gonna do church, I just came for the band." All right, stick around. And some of you would say, "But I'm not a Christian, what am I doing in a prayer meeting?" Well, the centurion started as a non-Christian, and he ended up a Christian. Stick around, stick around. Let us pray for ya, let us pray for ya. We believe that God can and does answer prayer. We believe that God can and does heal. One of the ways that the Gospel got started in my family is God answered the prayer for my mom's healing in a charismatic prayer meeting. My mom was healed, which began my family's legacy with Jesus. We

know that Jesus can and does heal. We know that he can and does answer prayer.

Father God, as we go into a time of prayer, I pray against the enemy, his servants, their works and effects. I pray against our anxieties and fears. I pray that, God, we would not just be an event but a church, that we wouldn't be a people who simply consume, but are participants in your grace as we enjoy extending love and affection to others on your behalf. As we pray, Lord God, I pray for those who are suffering, that they would raise their hand to be prayed for. I pray for those who, like the centurion, love someone who is suffering, that they would raise their hand and ask for prayer for them. And I pray for the Christians that we would not be religious, and by your grace, humbly do a better job than the people in this story, that we would not come demanding or expecting, that we would come humbly requesting that, Lord Jesus, you would answer our prayers. In your good name, and for your good glory, Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.