

+ Luke 7:1-10 + Can I Trust Jesus? + 2nd Sunday after Pentecost + 7 June 2015 +

Trust doesn't come easily, does it? Call me cynical, but people today are much quicker to doubt or distrust or be skeptical than to trust another person. For most people, it usually takes a great deal of time and effort by the other person to win that trust.

So it shouldn't surprise us when we are skeptical—when I withhold my trust from someone, when you doubt the trustworthiness of an organization. After all, we live in a skeptical age. We live in a world where organizations and companies, leaders and individuals seem like they are constantly trying to take advantage of us or have tried to do so.

Scamming is one of the most common crimes. Identity theft is a lucrative “business.” If that doesn't rob you of your willingness to trust, then scandals and corruption in government or churches or companies certainly do. You see it in advertising as businesses promise the best products, but fail to tell you how bad their customer service is or how poor their materials are. You can't help, but be skeptical when another car dealer blares on your TV screen or a lawyer promises to win you settlement money.

Yet this lack of trust strikes even closer to home. Have you ever been burned by someone you trusted—a relative, a friend, a classmate, a co-worker, even a fellow Christian? It's no wonder that trust is so rare among us, even among Christians. What's even sadder is that because we've all grown so skeptical, so cynical we even have a hard time trusting Jesus. Oh, I believe in him as my Savior, but will he come through on his promises? Will he really answer my prayers? Does he really have the power and authority to back up what he has said? **CAN I REALLY TRUST JESUS?**

In Luke 7, we hear about someone whom you'd expect to be more skeptical than most. He definitely wasn't the type of person who typically came to Jesus for help, but yet he trusted Jesus to do just that.

Jesus had made his way back to the city of Capernaum on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. When he arrived, a group of Jewish elders rushed up to him and began begging for help. Someone was dying! Who was it? Was it one of them? One of their children? Who? None of the above. Instead they had been sent by a local Roman centurion to ask Jesus to heal a servant whom he **“valued highly.”** That servant **“was sick and about to die.”**

This centurion at some point had been in command of a 100 soldiers, but he was more than a commanding officer. Not unlike a modern Navy SEAL, a centurion was among the best Roman soldiers in skill, in leadership, in courage, and in devotion to Caesar and the Roman Empire. He stood out in his culture, admired by neighbors and feared by enemies.

Unlike so many other centurions who lost their lives on the battlefield, this one seems to have served long enough to put down permanent roots in Galilee. In fact, this centurion had even come to love the local Jewish people there as his own. He cared for them as he had cared for his soldiers. He cared for his servant who was sick and dying. He had such care for the people that the Jewish leaders told Jesus, **“This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”** Centurions weren't known for their compassion and kindness, especially towards a people like the Jews who often rebelled against Rome.

You'd expect this man to be a hardened warrior, cynical and skeptical, trusting no one and depending only on himself, but when he heard about Jesus, he sent the elders to Jesus for help. The centurion was risking a lot by doing that. How would other Roman soldiers interpret his appeal? How would other Jews, who knew not of his kindness, interpret his actions? ...But none of that mattered, because he trusted Jesus.

So **“Jesus went with them.”** He would provide the healing that the centurion's servant needed, but not far from the house **“the centurion sent friends to say to [Jesus]” ‘Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes.’ I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”**

Jesus was so amazed that he told the crowd, **“I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.”** What was the big deal? There was much more to the humble trust of this centurion than a hope that Jesus could maybe, perhaps, possibly heal his servant. He recognized that as a sinful human being, he wasn't even worthy to stand in the presence of Jesus, but by faith, the centurion knew that Jesus only had to speak the

word. As a centurion, he demanded and received instant and unquestioned obedience. If he gave a command, it was done yesterday. His own obedience to his superiors and to his emperor was just as immediate and unquestioned.

Amazingly, he was anxious to apply that same unquestioning confidence to the spoken word of Jesus. He completely trusted that the sickness would obey Jesus' very command. He was fully persuaded that Jesus had the power to do what he had promised, and the Spirit through the power of God's Word had made him bold to come to Jesus for healing and for life. Just think about that! A hardened, cynical, skeptical, self-sufficient Roman centurion trusted that Jesus could do what he had promised! That wasn't something the centurion generated in his heart, but trust that flowed from faith that the Holy Spirit had planted in his heart through the Word of God.

It's no wonder Jesus **"was amazed at him."** This is the first recorded Gentile or non-Jew to respond in faith to the ministry of Jesus. Of course, Jesus in his mercy then fulfilled his promise. **"The men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well."**

The centurion knew he could trust Jesus with his servant's life, but can you trust him with your life and everything going on in your life and everyone in your life? You and I live in a cynical, skeptical world. Being slow to trust and quick to doubt comes naturally to you and me and everyone else around us. We pride ourselves on being self-sufficient, not needing to depend on anyone and often demanding that people earn our trust the hard way.

Sadly the same can be said about our approach to Jesus and his Word. Yes, it's easy to trust in Jesus on Sunday morning when you're sitting in church, but where does that trust go when you get that phone call about a loved one who was in a car accident on Monday night or that call into the boss' office on Tuesday afternoon or when you have that doctor's visit on Wednesday morning or your friends let you down on Friday night? It's easy for us as Christians to detach ourselves from Christ and his promises during the week and forget how vital and relevant and necessary he and his promises are for us every single day. We believe in Jesus, yet we fail to trust him.

So how can you trust Jesus? How can you be like that Roman centurion and trust Jesus to fulfill his promises? Well, consider the Savior's track record when fulfilling his promises. The centurion had **"heard of Jesus"** from the local Jewish people, hearing about some of the things this Jesus had done—healing the sick, teaching with authority, casting out demons. He knew that Jesus was more than just another Jewish prophet.

When you look at Jesus and his track record, what do you learn? This Jesus never broke a promise, never failed to come through, never hesitated to do what God had commanded to be done. When the right time in history came, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. All those promises of the Old Testament that described the Messiah who would come to save his people from their sin—Jesus fulfilled every single one of them. From the place of his birth in Bethlehem to the nature of his death on a cross to a tomb left empty with death defeated, Jesus did it all.

Not only did he have the power to do all that he had promised, but he actually did it. That certainly impacts your life and mine. What about your sins of doubt and skepticism? Christ's very real death on the cross paid the price for those sins, and his very real empty tomb guaranteed your forgiveness.

Is life in this skeptical world robbing you of any reason to trust? Jesus comes through for you with peace and joy and hope that the world cannot give. He never tries to take advantage of you. He never turns his back on you. He never lets you down. He never fails to be there when you need him. He even gives you the assurance in blood and a vacant tomb that someday you'll be in heaven with him where you'll have no more need to be skeptical.

So can I trust Jesus? Can you trust him? Yes!! Like the Roman centurion, by faith we trust Jesus to do what he has promised—to bless us, to be with us, to save us. Like that centurion, by faith we entrust our lives—every aspect of them—into the almighty and merciful hands of our loving Savior-God. When it comes to Jesus and his Word, you have absolutely no reason to be skeptical or cynical. Jesus always comes through. May this Jesus, then, grant you a bold and unquestioning trust that confidently and completely trusts in him alone! Amen.