

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, May 29 – June 4 (C) – Luke 7:1-10

Stories of Discipleship: *A Leader's Story*

Focus Question: *How have we witnessed faith in unexpected people?*

word of life

“Jesus said, ‘I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.’” Luke 7:9 (NRSV)

Read Luke 7:1-10

The theme of inclusion runs through the stories in Luke's Gospel. Time and again, Luke tells stories of unexpected people expressing profound faith. The gospel writer of Luke lifts up a poor young girl (Mary) to be the mother of the promised Messiah (Luke 1:26-38). A despised Samaritan is seen as the one who shows mercy in the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Outsiders – and those least expected to be faithful – are seen as people of deep faith.

1. *What other examples of the faith of the least and the outsider can you recall from Scripture?*
2. *Who would be the marginalized, the outsider, or the least in our society?*

Today's reading is another example of the unexpected serving as a model of faithfulness. The centurion was a man of great authority. The imperial Roman army was organized in units of 100 men. Each unit was led by a centurion (note the root of the word also found in “century” or “100 cents”) who was skilled in military experience and civilian control. The centurion in today's reading was a man of means. He had slaves; and he was accustomed to giving orders and commands. He was confident that he could speak an order and it would be followed and carried out. “I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and the slave does it.” (Luke 7:8 NRSV)

The centurion had also garnered the respect of the Jewish people in his jurisdiction through his benevolence; even though he was an outsider, his gifts built the synagogue in Capernaum. (Luke 7:5) He was obviously held in high esteem by the people (“he loves our people” – vs 5), and they were willing to go to Jesus with the centurion's request for the healing of his slave.

3. *What are some examples today of a person with authority?*
4. *What is the source of their authority?*

This man of authority – this outsider representing the oppressive army of occupation – asked Jesus for the healing of a lowly servant. In his request, he expressed profound humility and respect for another's faith tradition – it would have been considered unclean for a Jew to enter a Gentile's house – and he expressed an even more profound faith: “I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.” (Luke 7:6-7 NRSV)

5. *Share some examples of a “humble leader.”*
6. *Are you more or less likely to follow one who is humble? Why or why not?*

The centurion – a man of authority, a foreigner – humbly trusted in the power of Jesus to bring healing. His humble, amazing faith bore witness to the assurance he had in the power of God's Word to give hope and healing.

7. *Reflect upon a time when you were amazed by another person's faith, especially from someone you least expected.*

word among us

The inner city congregation was located just a few blocks from a half-way house for indigent people being released from the state psychiatric hospital. One of the residents of the house – Rosie – was not a member of the church but was a frequent worshipper on Sundays.

You could always count on Rosie to be there; and you could also count on some other things about Rosie. You could count on Rosie to be 15-20 minutes late; you could count on her to sit in the front pew, noisily making her way up the aisle as she came in; and you could count on Rosie bringing a friend, because her church was important to her, and she wanted to share it with others.

You could also count on Rosie to always pray aloud for an extended period of time during the prayers of the church. Her prayers were meandering streams of consciousness as she prayed for her friends, for her church, for the neighborhood pets, and for those who were ill. Some saw Rosie as an embarrassment and a distraction.

One Sunday, the death of a beloved member of the congregation was announced. People were shocked at the news. Soft weeping could be heard in the sanctuary. And Rosie knew what she had to do. She got up during the service and walked over to the woman crying, put her arms around her, and loudly prayed, “Lord, give us peace, because I know you can do it.” And then she sat and wept with the grieving woman.

1. *What surprises you about Rosie’s response?*
2. *What does it feel like to have someone sit with us in our pain and pray with us?*

The power of Rosie’s story – the power of the story of the centurion – is not only depth of their faith but also the fact that they were **not** of the faith. They were outsiders, strangers (and perhaps even deemed a bit “strange” by some). Yet they trusted in what God could do in Jesus completely. “Only say the word, and my servant will be healed,” the centurion confidently said. “Give us peace, because I know you can do it,” Rosie boldly and confidently prayed.

3. *When have you been surprised at the faith from an unexpected person?*
4. *What do you want God to give you?*

It is a faith found in unlikely, unexpected people. It is a faith that challenges us to see beyond the expected and the usual and to witness how God is working and active in those who are different from us – the outsider, the outcast, one from a different culture, a different lifestyle, a different race, one with a child-like faith, one who is disruptive yet who brings a new insight and a new dimension of faith and trust.

We are called to trust what we know God can do, even through the most unlikely and unexpected children of God.

5. *What do you want to remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

Open our eyes, Lord, to see you in the unexpected and the unlikely. Grant us bold faith to trust in what you can do through Christ our Lord. Amen

Dig Deeper

I Kings 8:41-43

last word

Be open to God working
in unexpected ways this week.



Daily Discipleship

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