



St John Lutheran Church

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LK. 7 1-10

God's Word, God's Life

"Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word and my servant will be healed."

King Solomon built the first Jerusalem Old Testament temple. **Then and now it** was considered the wonder of the ancient world. **The thing that** characterized Solomon's reign was the vastness of his building program.

After all the years of war and bloodshed under his father David...**Solomon reigned** as prince of peace and builder of God's Kingdom... **a beacon** to draw and gather all men to God.

Listen to Solomon's missionary intent in his prayer at the dedication of the temple: **"Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not one of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake ...when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in Heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all the peoples of the earth may know...that this temple which I have built is called by Your name."**

Dear Baptized, the Centurion of this morning's Gospel is the **"foreigner"** of King Solomon's prayer. **Jesus had just** delivered His Sermon on the Plain... **concluding with** a parable about two house builders (6: 46ff.). **One built on** earth without a foundation... **easily swept** away in rising flood waters. **The other builder** (Solomon-like) dug deep into the earth and built his house on a foundation of bed rock... **not to** be shaken by the world's shifting tides. **Following His sermon** Jesus entered Capernaum where He was greeted by a delegation of town elders who made petition on behalf of a Roman Centurion that Jesus might heal this man's dying slave.

And in this Gospel account... **two houses** are referenced... **the synagogue**, gifted to the Jewish people of Capernaum by the Centurion... **and the** other is the Centurion's own residence. **These two structures** picture the Old and the New Testament church... **and of** the Old giving way to the New... **the One firmly established** on Christ... **her Rock** and Foundation.

The chief reason that the elders commended the Centurion to Jesus is his having built their synagogue. **Town synagogues developed** as a sort of extension of the Temple in Jerusalem. **The Temple was** the place for the sacrificial offerings prescribed in the Law. **But it was** in the local synagogue where the people of God would meet regularly, every Sabbath, to hear the Word of God: **the Law... the Writings... and the Prophets**. **Jesus says of** Scripture, **"they...testify of Me"** (Jn. 5: 39) so that when the Word of God is **not grounded** in Christ and Him crucified and risen for the salvation of the world... **Scripture then** becomes a closed and dark book.

This Centurion was a man who had heard the Word of God and now by the work of the Holy Spirit...**he believed** in the coming of Jesus as authoritative Son of God with {Power to save from death and the pandemonium of sin. **The faith of** this Centurion was so remarkable that the Church has since adapted his

confession of faith as a prefatory response in some of the Communion Liturgy, **"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed."**

In the New Testament Church... God has taken up residence with the Divine faith of this Centurion... as Jesus promised, Jn. 14: 23, "If anyone loves Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him."

This world we live in... is a world of pain and chaos because of sin. Television news brings us the various seasonal tragedies. We think of those caught in flash floods as people scramble for any high ground... a tree or a roof top. Sometimes the person is rescued and sometimes the tree or the house collapses. We saw example after example of this when Katrina ripped through our southern states. This is the life of periodic pandemonium experienced by those outside the Lord's Church. Those that do not have Christ as their Rock and anchor.

Make no mistake...we Christians are not immune to the pain and effects of sin ...so we suffer in this world along with the rest of the world. The difference is that we know we are never alone. We know that this world is NOT our true home. By a Divine faith in Christ...given to us by God Himself and sustained in us by God Himself...we know and trust that we are but pilgrims here as we wait for our Lord's return. That Great Day when our Lord Himself will take us into that place He know prepares for each of us His Church.

The authoritative and Powerful Word of God calls into being as Christ's Church. The Church exists at our Lord's Command and Will...just as we do. And from the structure of the Church... the Gospel in the Blood of Christ cleanses us from sin and death... so that we are new creations in Christ. God in Christ comes to us and anchors our faith in Him who is the Church's Rock of Ages and God from eternity unto eternity.

As we abide in God's House... no flood or tide will ever sweep us away into pandemonium...that chaos and destruction created by... and for Satan and his house of fear and pain . Here, in this place... we literally dwell in Christ's Ark of Salvation...represented for us by this beautiful building. That is why this building was built representing an upside down ship. This is why you sit in the "nave"... from the Latin navis or navy. This beautiful building and it's architecture represents what we now have as Christ's Church. This building could someday be destroyed by weather or some other calamity...but that destruction would not effect one little bit... the Truth of knowing that as our Lord's Church... as His Bride and dearest possession...we are safe eternally from the floods and chaos that rages without, in the world. He holds us safe in His Almighty hands, no matter the chaos and pain we experience in this wretched world.

By faith in God's Word...faith worked by God Himself... we not only dwell in the safety of His abiding presence... but our own homes... our souls, are cleansed and ordered...sanctified...that is made holy in His eyes. We recall that Jesus had just delivered His beatitudes to a gathering of His disciples. Perhaps the Centurion had been attendance. Jesus said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Understand... A Roman centurion was like an army captain commanding a hundred men within a legion of six thousand. His pay was better than the ordinary soldier but he was by no means wealthy. This Centurion had heard God's Word and by God's Power he responded in faith by building a synagogue for its proclamation. The Centurion prized God above wealth... being content to be numbered as one of Jesus' blessed poor.

"Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled" (v. 21a). Our Centurion is the model of every penitent Christian. You who are called by the Word of God to repentance and confession of sins... and so do you not hungrily seek God's Absolution of your sins in Christ's Word and meal? And by your confession do you not admit the same unworthiness acknowledged by the Centurion? Still by Grace Jesus bids us to be like the Centurion... to possess by His Command a petitioning faith for the forgiveness of our sins... faith that gives us our release from sin and the death it threatens.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" The Centurion who recognized the Power and Authority of God in Jesus... **and so** loved God's Word and asks nothing solely for Himself. **Instead, he seeks** Jesus' healing for his beloved slave. **His concern is** for the well-being of his household, those under his care.

"Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake" Certainly this Centurion was scorned from every side. **His fellow Roman** officers, would have mocked his charity toward the Jews... **even as** Jesus' had come to His own and was rejected. **But more telling** of the Centurion's outcast status is his request that Jesus not even enter under his roof. **For Jesus to** enter a gentile's home was a violation of the Jewish purity laws. **This gentile soldier** was sensitive to Jesus' situation and showed his love and confidence in Jesus... **begging Him** only, **"say the Word."**

Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me and hears My sayings and does them" ...this is one who builds on a foundation of deep rock. **From the example of** the Centurion... **what does** it mean for us to **"hear and do"** Jesus' sayings? **Does it mean** that we must keep the Law in order to be saved or treat Jesus' beatitudes as additional commandments from God? **Not at all!**

Merely to ground our relation with God in obedience to the law is to build on the earth without a foundation. **And to pervert** God's blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation arising out of our baptismal life in Christ is blasphemy toward His death and resurrection for us. **Our house and** safety is built on **Thee One and only Foundation of Christ** and His work for us. **"To hear and to do"** God's Word means nothing else than receiving in all welcoming humility our Lord Jesus as He comes to us for healing by Word and Sacrament.

In today's Gospel account of Jesus coming to the Roman Centurion... **God reveals His** answer to Solomon's prayer at the Temple dedication, **"hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all the peoples of the earth may know...that this Temple which I have built is called by Your name."**

At the beginning of His Ministry Jesus stood in the Old Testament Temple referring to God's New Testament Temple... **His own Body**, Jn 3: 19, **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."** **By Satan's desire... the Temple** of Jesus' Body was destroyed on the cross... **but by** the Will of God ...**this same** Flesh and Blood sits on the throne of Heaven, and given in His Church for the Life of the world.

Therefore as Jesus comes to us...**in His Word...in His Holy Sacraments ... we** pray with the Centurion, **"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the Word and I shall be healed."** **And so we are.** In the Name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit...Amen.

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