

### How to Amaze Jesus!

*When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them.*

*He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "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."*

*When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.*

I use to play a lot of softball in my day, and I was pretty good at it. I could tell you of my sliding catches, opposite field doubles and stolen bases. You might be impressed. But then you tune in the Minnesota Twins and watch them play, suddenly my exploits on the softball diamond don't seem all that impressive at all. Who am I compared to a professional baseball player?

How hard do you think it is to impress or amaze Jesus? Christian Yelich of the Milwaukee Brewers has 29 home runs, more than any other player so far. Impressive. But how many home runs do you think Jesus can hit? McDonalds is huge with 36,000 restaurants in 119 countries. It is estimated that they make 75 hamburgers every second. Amazing. How much food can Jesus make? How can anyone impress Jesus who can walk on water, still storms, raise the dead and make the lame walk?

Someone has. He was a Roman officer and we are told that Jesus **"was amazed at him."** It is possible to amaze Jesus. And you can, too. How? Jesus wasn't amazed at the Roman centurion. He was amazed he at his great faith. Today we see what kind of faith amazes Jesus. First, a great faith is a humble faith.

#### *I. A humble faith.*

*When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." So Jesus went with them.*

We seem to have a disagreement here. When these Jewish elders came to Jesus, they tried to convince him that this centurion deserved to have Jesus come and heal his servant. They didn't appeal to Jesus' mercy or compassion. They instead pointed him to all this centurion has done. Unlike other Romans, he wasn't a Jew hater. He not only respected their religion, he listened and became a convert. Out of his own pocket he paid to have a new synagogue built. **"This man DESERVES to have you do this,"** was their argument, implying that if Jesus didn't drop everything and come and heal his servant at once, then Jesus would be a cold, unloving, unfair person.

But the centurion disagreed with these elders. **"He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "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.""** The elders thought he deserved Jesus' attention, but the centurion did not agree with them. The elders were proud of this man, but he wasn't proud of himself; he was humble instead. The fact that he was so concerned about his servant shows humility. Servants were a dime a dozen, treated more like property than human. This centurion considered a mere servant more important than himself. He was so humble he sent the elders to plead with Jesus instead of going himself. How could a sinner like himself stand in the presence of God? This centurion was an important man. He was the commander of the garrison in Capernaum. He was use to people bowing before him and obeying his every command. But before Jesus he was nothing. He didn't deserve Jesus' attention or mercy. He didn't even deserve to be in Jesus' presence. And he panicked when he heard Jesus was close to his house. He sent friends to Jesus to beg him to come no further. **"I do not deserve to have you come under my roof,"** he said. The elders thought he deserved good things from Jesus. He thought otherwise.

How humble is your faith? Well, do you go to God in prayer, not just at dinnertime, but many times during the day? Or are you too proud or self sufficient that you don't go to God for help? How humble are you? If you are unhappy with how God answers your prayers or with the way he is taking care of you, you are not humble because you feel you deserve more and better from God. Should the Lord feel a certain obligation to help us because we go to church and others don't, or that you give offerings and others don't?

As it reads in Psalm 51, **"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."** Faith that is great is a faith that is humble. We know we deserve nothing from God. That alone is a fact and should humble us. But notice something here. Our humility let's God's grace and love shine all the more. God tells us to come to him, not because we deserve it, but because we don't deserve anything but need him. Jesus became a man to die on a cross for our sins not because he saw something worthy in us, but because we are totally lost without his sacrifice. Just think of what that means in your life. Our prayers don't depend on how much we give or how many times we come to church, but they depend solely on God's grace and love. We come to Communion not because we are worthy or better than others, but because we are totally unworthy because of our sins and need to be assured they are forgiven in the body and blood of Christ.

That is humility. That is one thing that makes faith great. The other thing is to have faith, that is, to trust Jesus.

## *II. A great faith trusts Jesus.*

***“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.”***

Here we have the great irony of faith. Faith is humble and knows it doesn't deserve anything from God. But faith still goes to God. Humility says, “no.” But faith says, “yes.” That is because faith trusts God and his Word.

This centurion had great faith. He did not deserve to have Jesus come to his house, but this did not prevent him from asking Jesus for help. He trusted Jesus as God. He trusted Jesus would answer his prayer one way or another. He trusted Jesus could do whatever he wanted. He also trusted in Jesus' word. All he asked of Jesus was to say the word, and his servant would be healed. He didn't need seem some sort of waving of the hands or magic dust or special pill. He did not limit Jesus power as though he can only help if he was within ten feet of his servant. He trusted Jesus as true God.

The centurion understood authority. As he explained, as the garrison commander, all he had to do was issue an order. If he tells someone to come, he will come. If he told someone to do this, it will be done. If he had that kind of power over humans, what kind of power does Jesus have? As true God he has God's power, and the centurion trusted that power. All Jesus had to do was speak. ***“But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”*** Doctors need years upon years of study and steady nerves and expensive instruments and million dollar machines, and even with all of this, there is no guarantee that they can heal you. But look at the authority of Jesus. All he had to do was say the word and the sickness or disease afflicting this servant must obey and leave the servant.

Great faith trusts God's Word. And we have every reason to trust his Word. In Genesis when God said let there be light, what happened? Light happened. When Jesus told a dead Lazarus to come out of the grave, he did, not because he was in a coma; he was dead. He came out because Jesus said so. Think of how much a blessing it is to have such faith. When God's Word tells you that your sins are totally forgiven because the blood of Christ washes you clean, you can be sure you are forgiven. If God says nothing will separate you from his love, nothing will. If God says he works everything out for your good, he will even if we don't see the good this side of heaven.

Faith means to trust someone, to say, “I believe you. This is true no matter how crazy it sounds.” And we can have faith in Jesus because he is God, a God who loves us so much he literally died and went to hell so we don't have to. Faith trusts God's motives and reasons even if we open up our eyes to a prayer and the trouble is still there.

Only two times in the Bible are we told that Jesus was amazed. One is in our text for today and how he was amazed at the faith of this centurion. The other time occurred earlier when Jesus went back to his hometown. ***“He was amazed at their lack of faith,”*** it says in Mark 6. The fact that they refused to believe him was amazing. They were God's chosen nation. It was to them he gave his Bible. They were church-ed from the cradle on. They had so many advantages over people like the non-Jews, gentiles like this Roman centurion. Jesus was amazed they didn't believe him.

I guess every man and woman and child will amaze Jesus. It is amazing that so many will reject Jesus even though he died for them and gives them heaven as a gift. But it is amazing that we do believe because it means admitting we are utterly helpless and need him. So in which way would you like to amaze Jesus?