

Title: THE MAN WE NEVER SEE, LUKE 7:1 – 10
(Chatham, NJ; 05/29/16, AM) [Pc – Narrative Analysis]

Theme: The centurion who displayed great faith provides us with a model of faith and humility.

Purpose: To analyze why Jesus found his faith so marvelous.

Introduction:

1. This person could be called “the first centurion.”
2. This episode raises the image of those Gentiles encountered by Elijah and Elisha who helped foreigners with faith.
3. We also could think of him as “the invisible man” since we never encounter him directly.
4. Though he is the central character, he never appears “on stage” or “in the narrative.”
5. We hear of him and from him, but he is always in the background.
6. There are, however, some ways that we “see” him.

I. We “See” Him through the Community

A. The elders of his town, 3

1. Jesus is back in Capernaum where are recorded more of Jesus’ miracles than any other single place in the New Testament
2. He sends a message to Jesus through them, 3
3. They speak of his good reputation in the community, 4-5
4. What kind of man does this?
5. What does your community think about you?

B. His friends intercede for him next

1. Matthew doesn’t mention them, but Luke notes that he still doesn’t come to Jesus in person
2. Perhaps he is sensitive to the Jewish tradition about Gentiles
3. That his friends are willing to speak on his behalf says even more about his communal standing
4. Who are our friends in the community?

II. We “See” His Character

A. Traits based on his behavior

1. Generous – built our synagogue
2. He loves “our nation”, 5
3. Compassionate – he cares for his servant “who was highly valued”
4. I get the impression this was more than valued for his economic value: if he had money he could always buy another slave
5. Humility – he considered himself unworthy of having Jesus come to him

B. The mind of a soldier

1. He understood authority and trusts that Jesus had enough to command anything to happen
2. We don’t know where his confidence in Jesus came from
3. He must have heard the reports about him and found no reason not to doubt them
4. Soldiers also understand conflict: judging from these other things, we can see that he was not just some blood-thirsty, violent beast
5. He was a soldier with a heart: most of them are

III. We “See” Jesus Reaction to Him

- A. Jesus “marveled” at him, 9
 - 1. One commentary suggested: he “admired” him
 - 2. Perhaps there is also an element of surprise
 - 3. Why shouldn’t Jesus expect this kind of faith among his own people?
 - 4. Jesus comments that his faith outshined anything he had seen
 - 5. Matthew 8:11-12 inserts a comment that Luke places in 13:28-30 (read)

- B. Jesus challenges the crowd
 - 1. He speaks to the crowd: “I haven’t found such faith among you”
 - 2. This is the point of this story
 - 3. The healing is almost beside the point
 - 4. We gain insight into the nature of faith
 - 5. We also see a forerunner of the mission to the Gentiles
 - 6. Perhaps Jesus is preparing them to see that the Gentiles are worth saving
 - 7. The second centurion (Acts 10) will open the door for the many other Gentiles who will believe

Conclusion:

- 1. We are challenged to see this man’s faith.
- 2. Is our faith like his?
- 3. We are challenged by his connections to his community.
- 4. Would your community stand up for you like it did for him?
- 5. Will Jesus admire your faith?
- 6. Are you humble enough to even ask these questions about yourself?
- 7. Be a centurion in humility, compassion, and faith!