



## Luke: Chapter 7

### Kingdom People: Gentiles and Sinners

Following the Sermon on the Plains, Luke emphasizes the quality of faith that is demanded of a disciple. The surprise comes in this chapter when one sees whose faith shines.

Though the leaders of Israel do not gladly seek Jesus, the Gentiles and sinners do. They will become a vital part of God’s Kingdom people.

This section of the gospel highlights Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles, the poor, women, sinners and disciples of John the Baptist. The Kingdom of God belongs to them! Their response is summarized in the proclamation: “A *great prophet has been raised in our midst and God has visited his people.*” (Lk 7:16).

#### **THE CENTURION AND HIS SERVANT: (Lk 7: 1-10)**

**7:1** After Jesus <sup>1</sup> had finished teaching all this to the people, <sup>2</sup> he entered Capernaum. **7:2** A centurion <sup>4</sup> there <sup>5</sup> had a slave <sup>6</sup> who was highly regarded, <sup>7</sup> but who was sick and at the point of death. **7:3** When the centurion <sup>8</sup> heard <sup>9</sup> about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders <sup>10</sup> to him, asking him to come <sup>11</sup> and heal his slave. **7:4** When <sup>12</sup> they came <sup>13</sup> to Jesus, they urged <sup>14</sup> him earnestly, <sup>15</sup> “He is worthy <sup>16</sup> to have you do this for him, **7:5** because he loves our nation, <sup>17</sup> and even <sup>18</sup> built our synagogue.” <sup>19</sup> **7:6** So <sup>20</sup> Jesus went with them. When <sup>21</sup> he was not far from the house, the centurion <sup>22</sup> sent friends to say to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, <sup>23</sup> for I am not worthy <sup>24</sup> to have you come under my roof. **7:7** That is why <sup>25</sup> I did not presume <sup>26</sup> to come to you. Instead, say the word, and my servant must be healed. <sup>27</sup> **7:8** For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me. <sup>28</sup> I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes, <sup>29</sup> and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” <sup>30</sup> **7:9** When Jesus heard this, he was amazed <sup>31</sup> at him. He turned and said to the crowd that followed him, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith!” <sup>32</sup> **7:10** So <sup>33</sup> when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave <sup>34</sup> well.

Begin each reflection day in prayer: (Suggested prayer)

*Loving God, you sent us your only Son, Jesus  
He came to fulfill your promises and start a New Kingdom for us.  
Send us the Holy Spirit to embrace Jesus and Your Kingdom.  
Teach us the values of the Kingdom. Amen.*

#### **DAY 1:** (Read Luke 7: 1-10)) **The Centurion.**

Take a moment. Read the passage of the day. Breathe deeply.

Scripture records only two occasions in which Jesus was “amazed” (Mk 6:6 & Lk 7:9).

**1. What was it about the Centurion that so amazed Jesus?**

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The Centurion was a gentile and pagan.

**2. What does his interaction with Jesus say about him? What does it say about Jesus?**

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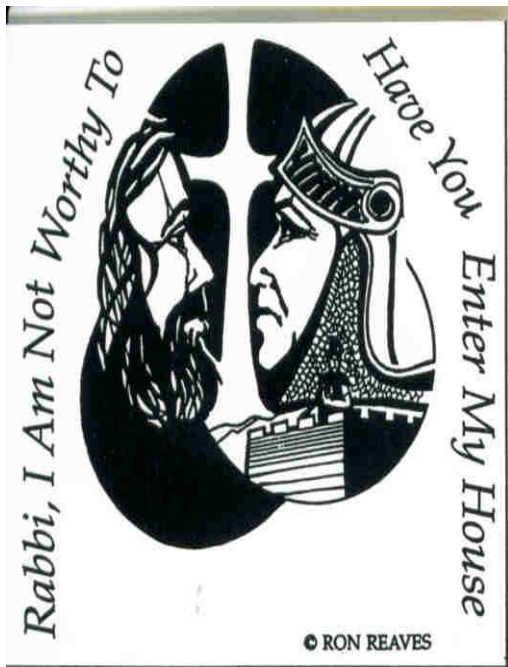
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3. What does the interaction say about the Kingdom of God?

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The Centurion is a shining light of faith and acceptance of Jesus. He does not fit the accepted mold of a true believer. He was a Gentile and Roman officer that commanded 100 soldiers. His duty was to patrol and ensure peace in the conquered territory of Herod the Tetrarch. Yet what a believer! Jesus never saw the Centurion nor touched his dying servant. However, the Centurion's faith in the power of Jesus' word brought about the cure.

**Centurion's Request:** *"A Centurion had a servant he held in high regard, who was sick to the point of death. When he heard about Jesus he sent some Jewish leaders to him, asking him to come and save the life of his servant." (Lk 7: 2-3). "When Jesus was only a short distance from the house, the Centurion sent friends to tell him. 'Sir, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you enter my house, just give the word and my servant will be cured. (Lk 7: 7-8).*

The Centurion had great integrity. He esteemed his servant, the Jewish people and most of all, Jesus. The main reason that he would not come personally to ask Jesus was because he understood the Jewish teaching about Gentiles. Jews would be considered unclean if they touched a Gentile or even entered his house. The Centurion also understood the power of a spoken command. He commanded many men. Response to his word could mean the difference of life and death in the field of battle.

**Jesus' Response:** *"Jesus showed amazement on hearing this, and turned to the crowd which was following him to say, 'I tell you. I have never found so much faith among the Israelites.'" (Lk 7: 9).*

**The Main Points of this episode:**

- The word of Jesus is power.
- One does not need to be in Jesus' physical presence to be moved or impacted.
- Faith in Jesus' word is salvation.
- Obedience to Jesus' word is a joy and a command to every follower.
- The Kingdom of God is an invitation to all peoples and cultures.
- The story of a Centurion will surface again in the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10. *(Cornelius, the Centurion will be the first Gentile admitted into the Church)*

**THE WIDOW AND HER SON: Lk 7: 11-17.**

**7:11** Soon <sup>35</sup> afterward <sup>36</sup> Jesus <sup>37</sup> went to a town <sup>38</sup> called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him.

**7:12** As he approached the town gate, a man <sup>39</sup> who had died was being carried out, <sup>40</sup> the only son of his mother (who <sup>41</sup> was a widow <sup>42</sup>), and a large crowd from the town <sup>43</sup> was with her. **7:13** When <sup>44</sup> the Lord saw her, he had compassion <sup>45</sup> for her and said to her, "Do not weep." <sup>46</sup>

**7:14** Then <sup>47</sup> he came up <sup>48</sup> and touched <sup>49</sup> the bier, <sup>50</sup> and those who carried it stood still. He <sup>51</sup> said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" **7:15** So <sup>52</sup> the dead man <sup>53</sup> sat up and began to speak, and Jesus <sup>54</sup> gave him back <sup>55</sup> to his mother. **7:16** Fear <sup>56</sup> seized them all, and they began to glorify <sup>57</sup> God, saying, "A great prophet <sup>58</sup> has appeared <sup>59</sup> among us!" and "God has come to help <sup>60</sup> his people!" **7:17** This <sup>61</sup> report <sup>62</sup> about Jesus <sup>63</sup> circulated <sup>64</sup> throughout <sup>65</sup> Judea and all the surrounding country



**DAY 2:** (Read Lk 7:11-17) The Widow and her son.

*Imagine yourself in the funeral procession in this passage.*

1. Where are you in the scene? What are you doing? What do you feel for the mother?

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Jesus' good news is for the poor. What are ways that the widow was poor?

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This episode demonstrates the full extent of Jesus' authority. His word is stronger than death. Jesus reveals this power in an encounter of great compassion. He engages a mother who loses her only son. To add to her pain, the loss of her son means a life of destitution. She is from Naim. Like the Centurion, she is a Gentile. This does not hinder Jesus in the least. The Kingdom of God belongs to such as her.

Jesus confronted sickness with the Centurion's servant. His word heals. Now he confronts death with power and authority. Death is the ultimate expression of Satan's hold over man. Jesus deliberately touches the funeral litter. He shows that he was not afraid to touch death nor did he fear being contaminated or unclean by death nor does he fear Satan's hold. This is one of the clearest signs that the Kingdom of God has arrived.

This passage recalls the raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath by the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament (1 Kgs 17: 8-12). It prefigures Jesus' own death. Mary will become the sorrowing widow. Yet sorrow will be turned to great joy by his resurrection from the dead.

**WIDOW :** *In the ancient world, there was little pity for widows. The Mosaic Code had to provide for their defense by a special rule: 'you shall not wrong any widow or orphan.' (Exodus 22:21). A woman without any man to protect her or provide for her was the most helpless. Salaried work for women was very rare. A widow represents one of the poorest and most vulnerable of people.*

**SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD: Lk 7: 18-28.**



Jesus was not the type of Messiah that many were looking for. Many wanted a fiery, vengeful leader. The encounter with John the Baptist's disciples, clarifies who Jesus is and what kind of Messiah he is. He initiates the Kingdom of God proclaimed by the prophets, especially Isaiah. Jesus is the Messiah who brings good news to the poor.

**The disciples' question:** *"Are you 'He who is to come' or do we look for someone else?"*

**Some of the Prophet Isaiah's prophecies:**

*"Here is your God. He comes with vindication; He comes to save you.  
Then you will see the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared:  
Then will the lame leap like a stag, then the tongue of the dumb will sing. (Is 35: 4-6)  
Your dead shall live, their corpses shall rise; awake and sing, you who lie in dust. (Is 26: 19).  
He has sent me to bring good news to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted. (Is 61: 1)*

**Jesus' reply:** *"Go and report to John what you have seen and heard. The blind recover their sight, cripples walk, the deaf hear, dead men are raised to life, and the poor have the good news preached to them. Blest is that man who finds no stumbling block in me."* (Lk 7: 22-23).

Jesus' answer recalls his mission statement at the beginning of his ministry. (see Lk 4:16-21). Specifically, it describes the prophecy of Isaiah which proclaims the signs of God's Kingdom and the presence of the Messiah. The actions of Jesus are more than healing and miracles. They are clear indicators that the Kingdom of God has begun. Jesus fulfills the promises of Isaiah and the prophets.

Jesus is clearly the Messiah and he affirms it with the testimony of his works. He also acknowledges the greatness of John the Baptist who led so many to conversion. However, he proclaims the greatness for those who follow him, *"Yet the least born into the Kingdom of God is greater than he (John the Baptist). Lk 7: 28.* What dignity there is in following Jesus and belonging to the Kingdom! They are considered even greater than the prophet, John.

**THE SINFUL WOMAN AND THE PHARISEE: Lk 7: 36-50.**

**Sinful Woman** (Lk 7:37) Considered a prostitute. She could have easily entered the Pharisee's house since dinners were not private. However, she would not have been welcomed. She would have been an embarrassment.

**At his feet** (Lk 7:38) People did not sit at the table to dine. They reclined on low couches, leaning on the left arm with the head toward the table and the body stretched away from it. The sandals were removed before reclining. The woman was not a welcome guest who reclined at the table. She was at Jesus' feet. Likewise, the host would normally anoint the head of a guest when he entered the house. A servant would wash the dirt from the guest's feet. The lowest servant had the job of washing the feet. The feet were considered the least important part of the body.

**Hair** (Lk 7:38) Considered the most glorious part of the body. A woman almost never unbound her hair in public.



*She washed my feet  
with her tears*

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Jesus, himself, makes very clear the importance of the woman's actions of washing his feet with her tears then anointing them with oil.

His parable of the two debtors makes the point crystal clear. He has come to forgive those who would welcome him. The foundation of such forgiveness is faith in him.

Jesus eats with tax collectors and sinners. Likewise he dines with Pharisees. He makes no distinction. The episode compares the relationship of the self-righteous and the sinner. Simon is self-righteous with God. He keeps a respectful and cool distance from Jesus. They share the same table but there is no warmth of friendship nor true respect. He is aloof from Jesus. How different he is from the woman whom he disdains. The woman responds to Jesus with all her heart. She pours out her tears, her emotions, her love, her need for forgiveness. Before God, Simon and the woman were both in the same situation. They needed forgiveness. They needed salvation.

**Jesus' response** (Lk 7:47-50) *"I tell you that is why her many sins are forgiven- because of her great love. He then said to her, 'your sins are forgiven... Your faith has been your salvation. Now go in peace.'"*

The repentant woman demonstrates the quality of faith required to enter the Kingdom of God. She has a living faith enflamed by love. She receives the fullness of God's blessing.

**Fr. Judge “The impact of faith on Jesus”**



*“When our Lord wished to say something to show that he was joyful, it was an expression like this: “ Oh woman, great is thy faith! Let it be done to thee as thou wilt.” (Mt. 15:28)*

*And: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee, but my Father in heaven. “(Mt. 16:17.) You could give Jesus the same joy. There is no faith in Heaven. It is all over. This is the time for faith. In heaven we know – everything is seen, demonstrated. This is our opportunity. This is the time for proving the spirits. This is the time to win that grace and that merit of pleasing our Lord, of being men and women of faith. To have faith! Oh, what is more wonderful! To scatter it, to teach it, to bring other to it, and to save children for the faith. This is the work you can do. In the*

*providence of every day life, you can do it.”*

**Fr. Judge Conference to Missionary Cenacle Apostolate April 13 1932**