

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Enabling all to meet Jesus when we pray for all

8 September '24

Luke 7:1-10 & Psalm 27

SECTION	DESCRIPTION
Holiday Club:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Holiday Club this year, we looked at Jesus's life and ministry... • As I prepare for sessions with children, I often have profound revelations when reflecting on complex Theological concepts that I must explain to them in a way they can relate to and understand. • The one that hit home this time, was the Faith of the Roman Centurion.
The Centurion:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Roman centurion was of crucial importance in the Roman military, commanding respect and authority. • Centurions were the backbone of the Roman legions, serving as mid-level officers responsible for leading a <i>centuria</i> that comprised approximately 80 to 100 soldiers. • They maintained discipline, trained soldiers, and led them on and off the battlefield. • The position of a centurion brought prestige and responsibility, often requiring years of service to attain. • Now this man had the favour of the Jewish leaders and by all accounts was a good man. (built the synagogue and treated them well) • So, what is it about his faith that surprises Jesus?
The Faith:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humility characterises this encounter. • The centurion seeks healing for his suffering servant. • However, he understood his Gentile house would have been considered unclean to a traditional Jew, especially a holy man, and a Jew wouldn't have been willing to defile himself to enter his home. • Jesus normally challenged these Jewish traditions, but this man would not have known that. • The centurion attempted to honour Jesus. • SO rather than asking Jesus to come to his house, he expresses profound faith in Jesus' ability to heal from a distance. • He likens Jesus' spiritual authority to his own military command, where orders are obeyed without question. • The centurion believes Jesus can command healing in the same way he commands his soldiers. • Jesus was amazed and said: "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." • Jesus knew without faith, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and God saves by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). • The early church endured great persecution for their unwillingness to bow to "Caesar." • The Romans of Jesus' day didn't appreciate anyone expressing a power greater than that of the emperor, who was treated as a type of divine figure.

<p>What do we see?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, the centurion acted like Jesus was the transcendent authority over everything, including sickness and disease. • Also, his compassion for a servant (one he could have easily replaced) further revealed his faith and character. <p>Firstly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The centurion shows us how God responds to acts and prayers of faith. • True faith does not require physical evidence but relies on God’s word and promises. • We can do the same through the Spirit and the Word and see God move in amazing ways. <p>Secondly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We serve a Christ with authority over all aspects of life. • His authority holds power over all circumstances, and trusting his command brings miraculous changes. • This teaches us to intercede and pray for God’s will in every situation. <p>Thirdly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The centurion’s care for his servant shows the value of compassion and intercession. • Despite being a man of power, he deeply cares for his servant and seeks help on his behalf. • As disciples of Jesus, we should care for others and intercede for them.
<p>Why is this kind of faith rare?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many things in Christianity cannot be understood until you have travelled a certain distance along your journey with God. • These things are purely practical though they do not seem to be. • When the most important things in our lives happen, we often do not know at that moment, what is happening. • For me it is the first decision I make in the morning... • To trust in myself or to place all my trust in God. • It might seem like a silly simple choice, but in that moment something profoundly significant is happening. • In a certain sense our entire life as Christians consists of accepting this remarkable offer – To surrender all to Jesus and to trust him. • Choosing to come before God in prayer first thing acknowledges that we honour him as our Lord and King and through that true spiritual growth is possible. • During prayer God brings forth change within us. • What matters is the nature of the change itself, not how we feel while it is happening. • It is in this trust that we find true peace.
<p>This is where Ps 27 comes in:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We live in a world of technology. • Every now and then when you open your computer there is an ad for a new antivirus or some such thing. • These defence mechanisms are true fortifications that protect our Digital World against imperceptible threats.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These invisible Guardians operate constantly filtering risks and keeping our most precious information safe. • In a way Psalm 27 works in the same way. • It gives us a spiritual barrier a Divine protection that surpasses any Security System created by man. • This is a highly sophisticated and impenetrable defence system for your life. • A system that adapts to each new threat. • It never fails and is sustained by an inexhaustible source of energy.
<p>Let's take a closer look:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It all comes down to one thing... FAITH! <p>Verse 1: The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not just a nice poem David wrote but a bold affirmation of unshakable confident FAITH in God. • Our God who is with us in our darkest moments and fills us with his strength. • With such a powerful Defender fear loses its grip on our hearts and anxiety disappears in the face of this certain FAITH. • This confident FAITH does not come from our own abilities or strength but from a deep understanding of who God is and what he promises to be for us. • So, what is He promising?
<p>Verse 1:</p>	<p>The Lord is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life — of whom shall I be afraid?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These words paint a vivid picture of God as our Supreme protector and guide. • He is our light Illuminating the path ahead and dispelling the Darkness of confusion and doubt. • He is our Salvation rescuing us from danger and securing our Eternal future. • He is the strength of Our Lives empowering us to face any challenge. • With such a God by our side fear becomes irrational... • BUT this kind of unshakable faith does not come easy...
<p>Verse 4:</p>	<p>One thing I ask from the Lord, - this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord - all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord - and to seek him in his temple.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is clear that David has made God his main focus and his heart's deepest desire. • He does not ask for wealth, power or material security... • He desires God's presence and wisdom. • So, true unshakable faith is built on an intimate relationship with God where what matters most is not what he can do for us but who he is to us. • This does not mean that challenges disappear but that we begin to face them differently. • True confident FAITH is not just a matter of accepting something in a moment of clarity but of continuing to maintain that trust even when our emotions try to pull us away.

	<p>Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety is replaced by prayer and worry gives way to gratitude • This is the practical application of the trust we see in Psalm 27 • A faith that acknowledges the reality of challenges but chooses to focus on the greater reality of God's presence and power. • It begins with the simple decision to take the focus off our problems and place it on Jehovah Jira our provider... • To shift the perspective from fear to the Father... • To make God's presence our highest priority... • As we do this we find a growing confidence within us not based on our own strength but on The God Who holds Us in HIS HANDS!
<p>Verse 5:</p>	<p>For in the day of trouble - he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent - and set me high upon a rock.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So God is not just with us through difficult times, but actively intervenes and brings us into His presence. • He offers us a sanctuary from the storms of life • This is not a distant and impersonal Refuge but an intimate hiding place by His side. • He also puts us in a high place upon a rock... • This symbolizes security, stability and a new perspective on our problems. • From this elevated viewpoint we can see our challenges differently gaining God's perspective on our situation. • So, how do we get to this position?
<p>Verse 8:</p>	<p>My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" - Your face, Lord, I will seek.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is not about sitting around waiting for God to rescue us but an active pursuit of his presence!
<p>Verse 13:</p>	<p>I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a profound affirmation of hope and expectation even in the darkest moments the psalmist clings to the belief that God's goodness will be manifested not just in the distant future but here and now. • So, how do we cultivate this kind of resilient hope in our lives? • It is about choosing to trust in God's timing and methods even when we cannot see how he is working. • We need to train the habit of FAITH so that we can grow in spiritual maturity.
<p>Zephaniah 3:17:</p>	<p>The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is the reality of God's refuge... • not just His protection but a deep and personal love. • In his presence we find not only safety but also joy, peace and the assurance that we are deeply loved and valued.

- When we are truly in tune with God we stop worrying about our actions as a means of Salvation and begin to **act** according to what God is already doing in us.

Acts 17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being

Philippians 1:6 I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ

- This is why we can choose to confidently trust our God with everything.
- Just like the Centurion who knew Jesus was resulting in unshakable, confident, and steadfast FAITH, we need to habitually draw near to him so he can draw closer to us! (James 4:8)
- That action is profoundly powerful.

Persistent Prayer:

- Persistent prayer goes beyond simply repeating requests.
- It is about **aligning our hearts with God's will** and **deepening our relationship** with him.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Prayer:

You, Lord, are my light and my salvation—
 whom shall I fear?
 You are the stronghold of my life—
 of whom shall I be afraid?
 When the wicked advance against me
 to devour me,
 it is my enemies and my foes
 who will stumble and fall.
 Though an army besiege me,
 my heart will not fear;
 though war breaks out around me,
 even then, I will be confident.
 One thing I ask from You, Lord,
 this only do I seek:
 that I may dwell in the House of the Lord
 all the days of my life,
 to gaze on Your magnificent beauty;
 to seek You in Your Temple.
 For in the day of trouble
 You keep me safe in Your dwelling;
 You hide me in the shelter of Your sacred tent
 and set me high upon a rock.
 My head will soon be exalted
 above the enemies who surround me;

at Your sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to You, my Lord.
Hear my voice when I call out to You, Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.
My heart says of You, 'Seek His face!'
And Your face, Lord, I will seek.
Do not hide it from me,
do not turn Your servant away in anger;
You have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
God my Savior.
Though my father and mother may forsake me,
You, Lord, receive me.
Teach me Your way;
lead me on the straight path.
Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses will rise up against me,
spouting malicious accusations.
I remain confident of this:
I will see the goodness of my Lord
in the land of the living.
I will wait for You, Lord, always;
I will be strong and take heart
and I will wait for my Lord.
Amen.

Epilogue:

- As you pray Psalm 27, praise God for His faithfulness to you;
- for leading you down the narrow path.
- There will come a day when we will be blessed in the fullness of His fellowship.
- But even on the journey there, He promises that we will lack nothing.
- All we need to do is trust Him.