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Faith, Compassion, and Doubts in the Kingdom of God – *Luke 7:1-35*

Introduction – In the gospel of John we are told that Jesus “*came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.*” This is what Luke has been revealing as well. Jesus is the Great Prophet who taught with authority (6:20-49), and works wonders by the power of His word as well. But the way in which Jesus displays this authority caused some to doubt. We can just as easily fall into our own doubts as well.

Faith in the Kingdom of God (vv1-10) – The faith of this centurion stands in stark contrast to the Jewish leaders in the previous chapters, and Christ will point this out (vv9). The centurion sends the elders of the synagogue which he helped to build but he himself does not come because he deems himself unworthy (v6). He had great authority over these people, but he “*loved the nation*” of Israel. He knew that Jesus was also a Benevolent Dictator. He has no concern over whether Jesus *can* heal his sick servant; he only requests that Jesus *would* do so. Jesus marvels, that is, He holds in great esteem the faith of this man as greater than all He has seen in Israel.

Compassion in the Kingdom of God (vv11-17) – Although Jesus loves to see the signs of faith as in the centurion, He is not bound by it. In this story, He acts out of sheer compassion, doing something nobody imagined He could. Touching the open coffin should have made Jesus unclean (Num 19:11) but in this New Covenant, Jesus touches and makes clean. In fact, Jesus touches and brings to life. Having compassion on the mother, He spoke words of comfort to her, spoke words of authority to the corpse, and “*presented him to his mother*” (1 Kings 17:23).

Shadows Come to Light – Who is this great Prophet risen up among them (v16)? Luke is showing us that He is like Elijah and Elisha (Jesus had referred to them in 4:24-27). Like Elisha, Jesus helps a Gentile soldier. Like Elijah, Jesus raises a widow’s son from the dead. The people exclaim that “*God has visited His people*” (v16). The word “*visit*” here means more than a “*stopover.*” God has come to take care of His people. He has come to bring about an exodus as He did through Moses (Acts 7:23).

Doubts in the Kingdom of God (vv18-23) – John wonders, and even seems to doubt, as to whether he understood correctly who Jesus was. And John had good reason. He had preached that the coming judge would sift Israel and cut down the corrupt trees, and yet Herod has imprisoned John, the Pharisees are still in control, and Jesus is only ministering in Capernaum, Nain, and other outskirts. Jesus answers John’s question while in the midst of performing many miracles (v21) by citing a series of passages from Isaiah describing the character of the kingdom of God and the day of salvation (Is 29:17-22, 35:5, 61:1). This Coming Judge first comes in humility to serve (Mark 10:45). This is the stumbling block to fiery-yet-faithful Jews who are looking for the kingdom to come now in all its splendor. Jesus arrives displaying God’s longsuffering, patience, and mercy toward hardened people.

No Doubts Over John (vv 24-35) – Jesus turns to those who may have heard these doubts of John and casts aside any doubts concerning John. He is the one God had promised would come; the forerunner. At the same time, Jesus makes clear that there is a great chasm between John and Jesus (v28). He then condemns the ‘funk’ that the Pharisees and religious-lawyers find themselves in – no prophet can do anything right in their mind. But that is because of the state of their unbelieving and rebellious mind and not because of the words or actions of the prophets.

Our Doubts; Christ’s Compassion – Who can you relate to more this morning; the centurion in his faith, the widow in her reception of the Lord’s miraculous compassion, or John in his doubts? If John could struggle with doubts, how much more may we expect to find ourselves struggling at times in our prisons of trials and tribulations? How come God hasn’t come to judge the wicked and make my life perfect? Why do I still struggle with wicked sinners; and why do I still struggle with my own wicked sin?

“But wisdom is justified by all her children” – Some teach that Jesus and Paul were mistaken. There was no real kingdom of God coming in their generation. Rather, they taught ideals, the ideal of the kingdom must be brought forth by

human merit and schemes. Others teach that Jesus' offer of a kingdom was rejected by the Jews and so the kingdom of God in essence left with Jesus and will not be revealed until His Second Coming – this church age is simply a parenthetical time, a time of waiting.

But there is another way of looking at this. All around you are signs of Christ's compassion, longsuffering, mercy and holiness. The leaven of the kingdom of God is spreading. Jesus told us that we were to disciple the nations and that it would come through many trials. Jesus' followers will always be criticized – some for being too strict; some for being too lenient – some for being too intellectual; some for being too earthy. But what did the centurion see – a Prophet who's Word had authority over all creation and who's heart was full of mercy to extend to any unworthy man (Lam 3:31-33).

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