

**Luke 7:1-10**  
**Pentecost 2C**

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My Faith Looks Up to Thee!

- I. From my humble position.
- II. To Your Powerful Word

<sup>3</sup> *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. Galatians 1:3-5*

My Faith looks up to Thee. We just sang it. Did you mean it? I think all of us would say, “Absolutely, yes” – right? We meant it. I think just about every person in the world would say so, right? At least every person who calls themselves a child of God, really, any god, even if they’ve made up their own god. They would say their faith looks up to it. But here’s the shocker. They’re lying. All too often, you’re lying when you say that, too. I know that sounds a little harsh – but let me explain. To do that, let me read our Gospel Lesson about one of only two people in Scripture that Jesus says have “great faith.” Our Gospel Lesson is from Luke, chapter 7. It is printed for you in the bulletin. Please rise in respect for the words and works of the One to whom our faith looks. Listen for how necessary it is that “**My Faith Looks up to Thee.**”

**Luke 7:1-10** When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup> There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. <sup>3</sup> The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup> When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> 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." <sup>10</sup> Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

This is the Gospel of our Lord. You may be seated. OK, so I’ve got some “splaining” to do, right? I said that all too often we aren’t being truthful when we say “My faith looks up to thee.” I say that because our text brings out a sin committed by the “church people” here that is only too natural for us. It seems right to our human minds and hearts, but really, it shows that sometimes, our faith doesn’t look up, but in. You see, the Jewish leaders were sent to go get Jesus and ask him for help. But did you notice how they did that?

The centurion had heard of Jesus. He knew that Jesus was the only one who could help. He knew he needed that help. And so the “religious people” go to present the request. Did you catch what they said? “**This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup> because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.**”

“God, you should really help because he’s been really good.” Doesn’t sound so bad, does it? But what are they really saying? Their words are betraying the way they understand religion, the way they understand relationship with God. He “DESERVES”, they said. That’s what religion had become to them. Do enough, and God will reward you.

This week, I had a conversation with a lady on one of my visits who told me I wasn’t obedient enough to God, which is why I claimed there were things about God that my mind wasn’t capable of understanding. She said if I was obedient enough and wanted to fully understand the Trinity, then I would. If I opened my heart enough, he would reveal to me all the different ranks of angels and all the reasons why he does some of the things he does, that I would know everything. In fact, she gave the example that she wanted her fingernails to grow a certain way, so she fasted and prayed, and sure enough, they bent over just like she wanted because she was able to please God with her obedience.

This might be an extreme example, but, do you ever get caught up in that? Let me rephrase that by switching the first two words – you do get caught up in that. Maybe you don’t say it out loud, but if you have sin living in you – and Scripture says you do – there are days when sin tries to convince you to think God should reward you for being so good or on the flip side, that God should not and could not love you for being so bad. There are times when we confuse the gifts God is giving us with payment for our faithful repetition of some act. We look to me instead of to Thee. Sometimes it is subtle.

I had another conversation this week with a gentleman who told me he wanted to do a certain thing because he “felt” that God wanted him to do that – even though I told him God was very clear in his Word that he did not want that specific thing. But this man was sure God was leading him. He trusted his gut more than God’s Word. He made a good-sounding argument, because our hearts all have that same selfish pride even when it comes to religion. So really, too often, our faith is looking in to me instead of up to Thee. That won’t end up well, because “me” fails.

So take a lesson from this Centurion. He corrects those religious leaders. “No, I don’t *deserve* anything.” He sends other messengers to catch Jesus before he gets any farther. Look at the message: **“Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. <sup>7</sup> That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.”** He knew that looking to me results in failure and shame and guilt and desperation. Only in Thee – only in Jesus is there worth... value... importance.

This man knew Jesus had overcome his sinful, humble position, just like he has ours. Look at what the centurion says next: **“Say the word, and my servant will be healed.”** Like we talked about in the children’s sermon – words can be pretty powerful things. Twelve years ago tomorrow, Janette and I said some simple words, “I do,” but those words changed our lives...for the better, right? Last Sunday, our confirmands said some powerful words when asked if they wanted to die rather than let this faith slip: “I do, and I ask God to help me,” they said. Those are powerful words, but even they are nothing compared with THE WORD, the WORD from God’s own lips. You see, our words, our promises can fail. God’s cannot – because He is God. That’s why **My Faith Looks up to thee ... To Your powerful Word.**

The centurion knew that it was not about some fancy ritual or show that Jesus would put on – “just say the Word Jesus.” Think about the power of that Word. In Genesis, we hear that Word say, “Let there be...” and our universe came to be. The Psalmist writes: **“By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.”** Then, in Eden, God gave his Word to send One to defeat Satan, to crush Satan’s head, to win our victory. The

Word of God through Elijah shut the heavens and brought drought; through Moses it split the sea and brought water from the rock. Through Joshua, the Word gave victory over huge enemies, through Ezekiel it made those dry bones live, and through his priests at the temple it brought forgiveness and new life.

And then, then, the Gospel of John tells us: **the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** Jesus came, as the ultimate communication from God. His Word never failed, but defeated every temptation in the desert of this life, brought health to the leper and sight to the blind, hope to the helpless and life to the dead. And then with that single Word as his blood poured into the puddle at the foot of the cross where our sins used to be, he declared it all “Finished.” One word, and God had kept His Word – perfectly, and put into his word for all time - power. And now our faith has something to look up to.

**My faith looks up to thee**, so we come here, to hear that Word. **My Faith Looks up to Thee**, so we come here to be reminded of that Word that made the water of our Baptism powerful. It gave us faith, forgiveness, salvation – not because we believed, not because we did the right things, but because God does what he says.

**My faith looks up to thee**, believing that the Word really does make the bread and wine body and blood, life-giving food connecting us to the sacrifice Jesus made, keeping His Word. Praise God that I don't have to trust my weak, failing self – but let us all say with the hymn-writer: **My Faith Looks Up to Thee.**

In Christ,  
Amen.