**Capernaum Part 2**

**Text: Text: Matthew 11:23-24**

Last week we left off on the shores of Galilee in a small, really insignificant village called Capernaum. We said that in its hay day there were probably about 1,500 people that could call Capernaum home.

We also said that Peter, Andrew, James and John were from this town as was Matthew the tax collector and that all of these men were personally called by Jesus into the Gospel ministry.

We also remember that Jesus made His headquarters in tiny Capernaum after being rejected in the town He grew up in, Nazareth.

We talked about the sin of Capernaum… What was it? That’s right… their indifference to Christ. Jesus, the Lord of Lords was in their town and they didn’t seem to care one way or another. Sad really.

Do you remember our text verse? Matthew 11:23… look there with me…

Jesus said… “…*for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.  Matthew 11:23*

Last week we discussed one of those “mighty works” of Jesus… The work Jesus did on a leper who was cast out of society with no hope of ever returning. This leper must have heard about the wonderful things Jesus was doing in the region. If you think about what is written in the gospels about the mighty works of Christ you’ll come to realize that Jesus just about wiped out disease in all of Palestine.

The abundance of miracles that Jesus did must have been great because His popularity even reached the leper community. Remember lepers were outcasts… they didn’t always get the community news… not right away anyways.

So this leper is miraculously healed by the word and touch of Christ. The people of Capernaum should have turned to Him and repented in sackcloth and ashes. Obviously they didn’t, and that is part of the reason Jesus made the statement that He did in Matthew 11:23.

We said last week that we were going to study the 3 miracles that Jesus did in Matthew 8 in rapid succession. Let’s now move on the second of these…

**THE ROMAN CENTURION**

The next miracle that the people of Capernaum should have recognized was the miracle Jesus did for the servant of a Roman centurion.

Let’s look at the passage before we go on.

*“And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,**And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.**And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.**The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.**For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.**When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.    
But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.”***Matthew 8:5-13 ( KJV )**

**Description of a Centurion by Vegetius “4th century Roman Military Author”**

A Roman Centurion was a commander of 80 to 100 men. Centurions had to be literate, have connections (letters of recommendation), be at least 30 years of age, and had already served a few years in the military.

The centurion in the infantry is chosen for his size, strength and dexterity in throwing his missile weapons and for his skill in the use of his sword and shield; in short for his expertness in all the exercises. He is to be vigilant, temperate, active and readier to execute the orders he receives than to talk; Strict in exercising and keeping up proper discipline among his soldiers, in obliging them to appear clean and well-dressed and to have their arms constantly rubbed and bright. ([Vegetius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetius). [De Re Militari](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Re_Militari),[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centurion#cite_note-6) “4th century Roman Military Author” ) “Wikipedia”

So this man, this Centurion would have been pretty self sufficient.

* He had strength,
* he was good with a sword and shield
* and he was probably built well because of the strict exercises he had to do to stay fit enough to lead other men and gain their respect.

***Jews respected him***

It is obvious to me that this Centurion had to gain the respect of his men in order to lead them.

* These of course would have been Roman men… Not Jewish men.
* The Jews hated, with a passion, I might add, the Romans occupying their nation.
* Romans and Jews did not get along.

Now, what’s odd about this story is that this Roman… this Roman citizen… this Roman Centurion is LOVED by the Jews of Capernaum.

The narrative in Matthew doesn’t tell us that but Luke does…

Look with me to Luke 7:1-3…

**Luke 7:1-3 (KJV)**   
**1. Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum.    
2. and a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.    
3. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.**

Did you notice verse 3?

* The Roman Centurion didn’t go to Jesus himself…
* He sent the “elders of the Jews” and it says that they “beseeched” Jesus to help this man.
* Beseech means to earnestly contend for… to plead for…
* Why would the Jewish elders… who hated the Roman occupation of the nation, turn around and help a Roman Commander?

Look at verse 4…

**Luke 7:4-5 ( KJV )**   
**4. And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this:    
5. For he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue.**

The IVP Background commentary says this about the situation…

“Non-Jews who feared God and donated substantial sums to the Jewish community were well respected. Centurions’ salaries were much higher than those of their troops, but for this centurion to have built the local [\*synagogue](qv://steplinkto0%200000005980) represented a great financial sacrifice…” ***IVP Background Commentary***

This man must have been highly respected for the Jewish community to back him up so.

* It is reasonable to speculate that the whole community, which was probably less than 1,500 persons, would have seen the sacrifices that this man made for them and their synagogue.
* So when he had a need,
* they would gladly want to pay back the favor, and go and speak on his behalf.

***The Centurions Need***

So, what was his need? Why did he need Jesus?

* What was so urgent that he get a message and a request to the Lord?
* Let’s continue the story in the book of Luke…

Look at verse 3 again…

**Luke 7:3 ( KJV )**   
**And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.**

His request had nothing to do with himself… It was not a selfish request…

* It was a selfless request…
* This gives us an idea of why the Jews loved him so.
* This was a selfless man…
* This was a man who thought of others before he thought of himself.

So here we have a servant, who was paralyzed and in agony…

In “Word Pictures of the New Testament” which is a Greek resource for preachers and teachers, it says this… ***“The boy (pais), slave (doulos,***[***Luke 7:2***](qv://steplinkto4%2042%207:2)***), was bedridden…”*** In other words this wasn’t an adult slave this was probably the son of a slave that this Roman Centurion dearly loved.

* and this Centurion cared enough to not just leave this boy outside…
* or in the slave quarters…
* not even in a guest house…
* but he brings him into his own house and treats him like he’s part of the family.
* You ask, “How do you know he brought him into his home?”
* I know because the Bible says so…

Look at verse 6…

**Luke 7:6 ( KJV )**   
**Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof:**

The servant must have been “under his roof” because that’s where Jesus was headed.

The centurion didn’t want Jesus to come “under his roof” or “inside of his house” because he felt unworthy.

* This centurion was a “good man” as men count goodness.
* He was considerate to even a slave…

The story continues as the centurion relates his own authority over his company of soldiers to Jesus’ authority over disease.

* He basically tells Jesus… “All you have to do is speak the word and my servant will be healed.” (*Potter Paraphrase)* ( V. 7)

***Jesus was amazed***

The Bible says that Jesus marveled or was amazed…

Look at verse 9…

**Luke 7:9 ( KJV )**   
**When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.**

As a military man he had learned how to receive orders and to execute them and that's why he expected obedience to his commands, He recognized Jesus as Master over disease with power to require obedience.

He knew that the disease had no choice but to obey!!!

Jesus was speaking in Capernaum where great and miraculous things were taking place…

* And here this gentile had so great a faith…
* It really is amazing to see this gentile centurion with such great faith.
* You say WHY?
* As a gentile he was not brought up to know our loving God.
* He would have grown up to know his own gods…
* such as Saturn – god of agriculture,
* Pluto – god of the underworld,
* Mars – Roman god of war,
* and a plethora of many others that he may even have worshipped as a child.
* So for him to come to faith in Jesus … AMAZING!!!!

He was obviously being drawn to Christ by God Himself.

Listen to John 6:44 and 65…

**John 6:44 ( KJV )**   
**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**

Also…

**John 6:65 ( KJV )**   
**And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.**

***Pray for the Lord to draw people***

There are people in the world today who will say… If you are born a Muslim you will remain a Muslim till the day you die… or a Hindu etc, etc…

* I beg to differ…
* You see if the Holy Spirit of God draws a man or a woman they can come to Jesus, much like this Centurion.
* The Lesson?
* Don’t give up praying for the person you’re trying to lead to Christ…
* Ask the Holy Spirit to draw them to Christ… to convict them of their sin.

Here was Jesus… God in the form of a man…

* And He was attempting to draw the city of Capernaum to Himself…
* yet they would not.
* A gentile did and he was rewarded look at the 10th verse…

**Luke 7:10 ( KJV )**   
**And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.**

Jesus said… “…*for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.  Matthew 11:23*

In essence Jesus said… “If this miracle of the Roman Centurions servant would have happened in Sodom they would have repented and the city would still be there today. WOW!!!

***Peter’s Mother-in-Law***

I heard a Mother-in-Law joke some years ago that I’d like to share with you this morning.

There was once a man who wanted to visit the holy land with his wife but he couldn’t because his wife would not leave her mother alone in the U.S. for the duration of the trip. So he saves his money and after a number of years is able to finally buy 3 tickets to the Holy Land. There is one ticket for himself, one for his wife, and one for his mother-in-law. The day finally arrives for them to go and they are excited. They arrive in Tel-Aviv and are met by their tour guide and they are off touring the land. A few days into the tour the man’s mother-in-law gets deathly ill and dies… He goes to his tour guide and explains that he needs a mortician to prepare the body for a flight back to the USA. The tour guide says you know it is a lot cheaper if you just bury her hear in Israel. The man thought for a second and said, “No, I’d better play it safe and bury her in the U.S. because I’ve heard too much about people coming back from the dead here.

No, I love my Mother-in-Law… MOST OF THE TIME!!! (Ha, Ha…) And I know you do too…

Let’s look at our text…

**Matthew 8:14-17 ( KJV )**   
**14. And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever.****15. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.****16. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick:****17. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.**

**This first miracle** involved a man who had been alienated from the Jews because of a feared disease.

**The second miracle** involved a man who was a Gentile… both of these miracles dealt with people who were normally shunned by Jews… BUT NOT BY JESUS!!!

**In this third miracle** the compassion of Christ contacted a third group of people viewed as “second-class citizens”—women.

***A great fever***

Simon Peter’s mother-in-law was *lying in bed with a fever.*

The Life Application Commentary tells us that… “A malaria-type fever was common to this region because of marshes near the mouth of the Jordan River. We don’t know for sure what this fever signified, but the Greek word for “fever” in the noun form is also the word for “fire”; thus, she was burning with a severe fever. Luke (the doctor) wrote in his Gospel that she ***“was taken with a great fever”*** ([Luke 4:38](qv://steplinkto4%2042%204:38%203) KJV).”

***My Bout with Typhus Fever***

If you’ve ever had a severe fever you know it can really drag you down.

* A few years ago I contracted Typhus Fever.
* You want to talk about being sick, I was.
* A high fever that just wouldn’t break for (I believe it was) 12 or 13 days…

I hate to have to go to the doctor, but when the fever wouldn’t go away after 4 or 5 days I knew something was amiss.

* The doctor gave me some sort of shot with antibiotics and warned me that this fever would persist.
* Even after 12 or 13 days of having it I felt weak.
* It would not have been easy for me to do household chores or serve anyone sandwiches or drinks.

But in the case of Peter’s mother-in-law… she did serve those in the household…

* This to me shows how complete her cure was and it also shows me how grateful she was for what Jesus had done.
* We should do the same…
* Jesus has healed us from the greatest disease known to man… SIN.
* I want to serve Him because I’m grateful for His love toward me.

In the succession of the 3 healings we have been discussing we’ve had **a Leper healed**, **A Roman Centurions servant** healed of the palsy, and **Peter’s mother-in-law healed of a fever**…

Jesus said… “…*for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.  Matthew 11:23*

It’s amazing to think that even the healing of something as small as a fever could have been used to win a city as wicked a Sodom. Incredible.

Let’s Pray…

**\*\*\* Prayer and Invitation**