

Luke 7:1-10

Impressions are Important. In human relationships we are told that a **first** impression can be one of the most **lasting** impressions we form. But, what **is** an **impression**? Webster's New World Dictionary describes an impression as a **mark** or **imprint** - an **effect** produced on the mind or senses - a notion, feeling, or recollection. There are lots of things which **impress** us - things which make an **impression**, or leave their **mark** on us, aren't there? In the Bible we are given instances of **many** impressions which were made on people. For example, the spies whom the Israelites sent to check out the Land of Canaan were **impressed** with the prosperity and abundance of the **land**, as well as with the size and strength of its **people**. Much earlier in their history, **Lot**, Abraham's nephew, had been **impressed** with the land in and around Sodom and Gomorrah - so much so, that he chose to **settle** there. Unfortunately, the **people** of the area were extremely **wicked**, and they **also** left their **impression** on Lot and his family - an impression which would prove to be the **undoing** of them all.

But what about **you**? What impresses **you**? What leaves its **mark** on you - great **honor**, great **loyalty**, great **wisdom** - great **beauty**, great **strength**, great **wealth**? Are you more impressed with nuclear **weapons**, a "fire and brimstone" **sermon**, a beautiful **oil painting**, a weedless **garden**, or **Bill Gates**? Maybe you're a **sports** fan, and you are impressed by professional **athletes**, or by the multi-million dollar **salaries** which they receive, or by the multi-million dollar **facilities** in which they **play**.

Impressions are Important, but we must always remember that **some** impressions are **more** important than **others**. Our text today provides us with **three** impressions of one man - a **centurion**. One impression came from his **friends**, another came from the centurion **himself**, and the third came from the Lord **Jesus**. Let's take a closer look at the **first** impression. "*The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to Him, asking Him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with Him, 'This man deserves to have You do this, because he loves our nation, and has built our synagogue.'*" Those words sound pretty **impressive**! The centurion was a **humanitarian**, and he **showed** it in a couple of ways. As the captain over 100 men, he had a considerable amount of **authority** and **responsibility**. He also appears to have accumulated a considerable amount of **wealth**. But this centurion didn't allow his position, or his power, or his wealth to go to his **head**. He didn't use these things to selfishly **lord it over** others, and to gain **further** personal

advantage over them. Instead, he wisely used his authority for the **benefit** of **others** - including not only his own **servant**, but also all the **Jews** in Capernaum. Ordinarily, Roman centurions were not high on the “friend list” of a typical Jewish citizen. But **this** one was truly **different**. He had shown an **interest** - in **them**, and in their **God** - so **much** so, in fact, that he had used his own resources to build a **synagogue** for them. The people were **grateful**, and they were also duly **impressed**.

Now in our **text**, an opportunity had arisen which would allow them to express their **gratitude**, by serving as liaisons to Jesus on behalf of this centurion. It would be **easy**. After all, the centurion wasn't **asking** for much - just a simple **healing** - and it wasn't even for **himself** or a member of his **family**, it was for a **servant**. Surely they wouldn't hesitate to put in a good word for him with the great **Healer**. From their perspective, looking only **outwardly** at the centurion, how could they **refuse**? He was a **good** man, and he **deserved** to have his request answered.

You know people like that, don't you - good, deserving people - fine, upstanding citizens - people who continually give of themselves - people who generously offer their time, ability, and resources for the benefit of **others**. They are friendly, loving, kind, and compassionate. They are the kind of people toward whom we are **drawn** - the kind of people after whom we would like to **model** ourselves. We are **impressed** - both with their **attitude**, as well as with their **actions**.

But you know what? Those people don't always see **themselves** from that same perspective. They often see far **less** in themselves to be impressed with than **we** see. That was certainly true of the **centurion** in our text. He didn't **feel** so deserving. Our text goes on to say, “*Jesus 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. That is why I did not even consider **myself** worthy to **come** to You.’*” Interesting, isn't it? The centurion's **friends** had said, “Jesus he **deserves** Your help,” but the centurion **himself** had said, “Jesus, I **don't** deserve Your help. In fact, I don't even deserve to have You step into my **house!**” The centurion's **impression** of himself was based on a different **perspective**. Whereas his **friends** could only see him from the **outside**, the centurion could see **himself** from the **inside** - and he didn't **like** what he saw.

What do **you** see on **your** inside? That's not a very pleasant thought, is it?

We all know things about ourselves that we don't want other people to find out. We know our sinful **thoughts**. We know our sinful **desires**. We know what is weighing **heavily** on our hearts. We know how **rough** and **stormy** the seas of our life have been. But we **mask** those things from others. When someone asks us how things are going, the common response is usually, "Oh, just **fine!**" We put on our "happy" face, and we **smile**, and continue on with the conversation. I catch myself doing it all the time.

But **inside**, we are like the **centurion**. We know that we are **not** just fine. We know that we are **not** all right. We know that we are **not** worthy, regardless of what anyone **else** might **think**. And by God's grace, we too turn to the only effective source of **help** and **comfort** - our Lord Jesus Christ. That brings us to the **final** impression in our text - the impression which **Jesus** had of this centurion. It was no doubt **refreshing** for Jesus to hear the centurion confess his own **unworthiness**. Such openness and honesty continue to be **rare** qualities even today. But it must have been even **more** refreshing for Jesus to hear the centurion make such a bold and comprehensive confession of his **faith**. In his own words he had said, "Jesus, I know that whatever You **say**, **will** take place. Just speak the **Word**. That's good enough for me!" That is the **essence** of **faith** - simply taking Jesus at His **Word**.

Jesus had obviously made an **impression** on this centurion. Has He also made an impression on **you**? Has Jesus left His **mark** on your life? Jesus says, "***Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.***" Jesus says, "***Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.***" Jesus says, "***God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.***" Is your life filled with weariness, burdens, and darkness? Are you carrying around a load of **sin** and **guilt**? Are things going on around you which are frightening because they are out of your control? Don't despair, because Jesus came to this earth to **rescue** us from all these things, and to take us **home** to heaven. Turn to **Jesus** - take Him at His **Word**. He didn't let the **centurion** down, and He won't let **you** down either. Be **impressed** with the love your Savior has for you. Come - follow - and believe. Amen.