

05/25/25 - Luke 7:1-17 - "Power that Bows, and Tears that Rise"

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[0 : 00] Today's reading is from Luke chapter 7, verses 1 through 16. After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

Now a centurion had a servant who was sick, and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant.

And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.

And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Therefore, I did not presume to come to you, but say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me.

[1 : 11] And I say to one, go, and he goes. And to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him.

And turning to the crowd that followed him, said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. And then those who had been sent returned to the house.

They found the servant well. Soon afterward, he went to a town called Nine, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother.

And she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, Do not weep.

Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, Young man, I say to you, arise. And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.

[2 : 25] Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet has arisen among us, and God has visited his people. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. I'll also end with the last verse of the word of the Lord. And this report about him spread through the whole country, or the whole of Judea, and all the surrounding country.

That is the whole word of God today. Thanks be to God. Sorry for the typo, Kimberly. Richard Baxter.

I love the Puritans and the theologians of the 17th century, and Richard Baxter is a great one from the 17th century. And he's remembered for being a pastor and a preacher, but he's not just remembered for powerful sermons or prolific writings and everything like that, but he's actually also greatly remembered for how much he visited people, how much he smelled like sheep.

He didn't merely just stand in a pulpit and declare the word of God, but he did. He also entered homes.

[3 : 49] He shared burdens, and he ministered to souls. He literally is known to smell like his sheep. As any pastor knows, and as many of you have seen in our own congregation, it's not uncommon to move between vast different worlds, as pastors may visit somebody who might be well-known in the community or maybe feel seemingly unknown to anybody.

This is pastoral ministry. We all smell like sheep. Pastors should smell like sheep. And we go from the well-known to the unknown or prominent to the overlooked or joyful to the grieving, all of that combined.

And Baxter served as a pastor in Kitterminster, a town where few had spiritual interests at all before his arrival. Once he arrived, he made it out to be his plan and goal to visit every home in the parish, every single home in the parish.

And he would sit with military officers speaking about eternity. He would also sit and kneel next to the bed of a dying child. He was the epitome of what a pastor looks like.

And one historian wrote that Baxter was equally at home in the castle, and he's equally at home in a cottage. No matter where he finds himself, he's at home because he's with the people that God has called him to minister to.

[5 : 26] And this historian wrote that the gospel of Christ was equally suited for both, castle or cottage, strength or sorrow.

And that belief is on display here in Luke chapter 7 today, all the way to verse 17. And this kind of offers us a paired portraits, two paired portraits, one of strength, the other of sorrow.

It almost seems like they should be separated. And first we see Jesus responds to the faith of a Roman satyrian, a man of power and responsibility.

And then it turns to meeting a grieving widow at nine, powerless in the face of death.

You can kind of sense the contrast. You've got a high-ranking satyrian, and you've got this widow who couldn't be at the more low in her entire life.

[6 : 38] These are not random stories that are just stitched together to fit in a nice little sermon with a bow. They are together to show us something, for God to speak through his word today, to show us that Jesus meets us both in strength and sorrow, transforming us by the power and authority of his word.

And for that we gather today around his word. And the sermon title today is, Power That Bows and Tears That Rise.

And that will be broken up into two separate sections. We'll just break up each narrative. I think that'll help us. And before we get into this, let's pray once again for God to help us, because this is not just any ordinary book or ordinary words or an ordinary message.

This is life-changing words, life-changing power. This is the word of God. So let's pray. Father, we come to you asking for you to speak to us, asking for our hearts to be submitted to you and your word.

Help our minds to be clear of the noise. Help our ears to be attentive to your call and our hearts to be transformed, to leave this place and leave this gathering different from the condition of which we came.

[8 : 26] Do this work today, Lord. Praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Power that bows, tears that rise.

Let's look at this first section, looking to strength, submitting to Christ.

And this will be from verse 1 all the way to verse 10. If you have your own Bible, it would be beneficial to have that open and follow along.

Or if you're an app person, I'm not opposed to apps, but Bibles are cool still. Amen. He said amen.

I didn't say it. Someone over there. And so in verse 1 of chapter 7, the gospel according to Luke, it says, after he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum.

[9 : 40] And so, you kind of see the transitional hinge that this verse has for us here. It takes us from what the past few weeks have been of the monologue of Jesus preaching.

over the last specific three weeks, he's now returning to Capernaum. So leaving that and now hinging here.

And shout out to my brothers and the Lord, David, Dawid, Dawid, preaching the word, Carmen, and Rick, holding down the pulpit.

It's awesome to be laboring alongside of y'all. And we see this transition here coming from what they all preached about to what I'm preaching about.

And we can't forget about Capernaum. Capernaum was a significant city. Jesus proclaimed that Isaiah, Isaiah 61, after the prophecy was being fulfilled, he rolled up the scroll and sat down.

[10 : 46] Remember the mic drop in chapter 4 of Luke? And they kind of doubted Jesus. Who are you? Joseph's son. We don't need to listen to you.

And anticipating their doubt, Jesus said, you'll demand I do hear what you heard I did in Capernaum. And so there was word already about what Jesus had done in Capernaum.

And we can't forget what we actually witnessed in Capernaum. Not a he said, she said, or word of mouth, but what he wrote down in his gospel, according to Luke.

And he went down to Capernaum and he was teaching them in the Sabbath in chapter 4. And they were astonished at his teaching for his word-possessed authority. Remember when the demon came to church that day?

The demon in the synagogue of Jesus casting the demon out? And they marveled. What is this word? And here, it should pique our attention then.

[11 : 49] According to the series, Jesus entered Capernaum. We got to be on our seats. Oh man, what's going to happen next?

Well, what we know is what we've been seeing unfold all along. That Jesus Christ's word is going to be authoritative and transformative with power.

It will continue to do so. And Luke brings us to the account of a centurion who had a servant who was deathly ill, but very dear to him.

In verse 2, we see that this servant was highly valued. Now, centurions are equivalent to modern-day military captains.

They had about a hundred soldiers underneath their authority and who they led. And on this day, this Gentile, this Roman centurion commanded reputable Jews to find Jesus to heal his son in verse 3.

[12 : 58] And as they found Jesus, it seems that this centurion, upon sending these Jewish men, his heart was kind of in the wrong place.

It's kind of like he sent them and saying, my servant's about to die and we've got to sell this one. You've got to make it sound good.

Not only that, we've got to make it look good, so let's send the Jewish men, not our Gentile buddies. They had to sell Jesus on this pitch. And in verse 4, we see, and when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, pleaded with him earnestly, saying, he is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation.

The centurion would be known as a God-fearer, one who accepts the Israelite God but hasn't been proselytized into that faith and immersed. But he fears God.

And in verse 5, it continues, and he is the one who built us our synagogue. He funded the whole project. Now that's a sales pitch. Right?

[14 : 13] I mean, you've got Jewish men, check. You've got a great sales pitch, check. Sell them the car. Right? But notice, they boasted in this centurion's works and perceivable worthiness as a persuasive justification of why Jesus Christ should help the centurion.

Regardless, Jesus Christ, it's pretty plain here in verse 6, Jesus Christ went with them. setting the tension for the next scene. And so his tension is growing, perhaps between the sending of these Jewish elders and receiving the word that Jesus Christ, it worked!

The centurion got word that Jesus is on the way. He's like, oh, this is happening. The centurion reflecting on his own worth seems to have had second thoughts of his actual worth.

And he started to be reckoned with his unworthiness, sort of an inner tension. And Luke continues here, when he was not far from the house, Jesus was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends.

He said, forget it. The show's over. I am not worthy anymore. Here, here's my buddies. They're Gentile. They smell like Gentiles. They look like Gentiles.

[15 : 52] They're Gentiles. Right? He sent his friends saying to him, Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof.

Verse 7, therefore, I did not presume to come to you, but say the word and let my servant be healed.

The longer time passed in the heart of this captain to boast and send men out became quite convicted.

to send men to boast in his worthiness of why Jesus should be justified to come to him and help, the more conviction that fell upon the reality of his actual unworthiness.

And he submitted himself here, full disclosure, I am not worthy. I'm putting up a front of being a great guy. He submitted himself to Jesus completely.

[17 : 02] Full disclosure. We see the centurion's heart on full display in verse 8. He says, For I too am a man set under authority with soldiers under me.

And I say to one, go, and he goes. And to another, come, and he comes. And to my servant, do this, and he does it. In other words, no matter how reputable this centurion was to command with authority, he recognizes that while he does share authority with Jesus Christ, Christ's authority is even greater than any earthly authority known to man.

In fact, the longer he reflected upon this vast chasm between his worthiness and unworthiness, his authority versus Christ's authority, the more unworthy he actually felt.

Church, until we are acquainted with the depths of our unworthiness, the chasm, until we are acquainted with that depth and the divide, we cannot truly grasp the height of God's grace in our lives.

are you acquainted with your unworthiness today? Do you recognize that?

[18 : 33] Because this is serious because a Christianity that forgets sin, that forgets unworthiness, forgets Christ, forgets it.

C.S. Lewis, in his writings, letters to Malcolm, he says, the true Christian's nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cesspool.

How about that to flatter y'all today? Good morning. Brent's back in the pulpit. Cesspool! That's a right-left. Harry's like, that's not a hook.

We've got a professional boxer here. But anyhow, this is important to understand. We have to come and be acquainted with our unworthiness.

Lest the worthiness of Christ be completely distorted or completely minimized altogether, that we bring him nothing but our sin. Full disclosure to Jesus Christ.

[19 : 42] The true Christian's nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cesspool. Are you attentive to that? In verse 9, when Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him and turning to the crowd that followed Jesus, his entourage of folks, he said, I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.

God is not moved by credentials.

Well, hot dog. Wow. God is not moved by credentials.

He's moved by contrition to be grieving our sin. Full disclosure before the throne of grace. Here on full display is the foundational, the fundamental, the essential perspective of faith that pleases God.

A perspective that sees ourselves rightly in order to see God rightly. That we are unworthy and God is wholly worthy.

[21 : 09] Have you admitted to Jesus Christ what the centurion did? Have you admitted that? That you're not worthy?

humility. The centurion's humility was the turning point of his faith after all. And those who cannot see sin as a stench will never smell the sweetness of God's grace.

Maybe you were brought here today not by any mistake for God to speak to you to make clear to you that Jesus is not looking for some robust resume of credentials and reasons why you should be justified in his sight.

But he's just looking for repentance of your sin. The centurion shows us today that faith is sufficient to receive God's grace.

In fact, what if your resume is actually the barrier that's hindering you from receiving God's grace? What if your resume is actually the barrier between you and God and that God today is asking you to lay your resume down, completely throw it in the fire, full disclosure, unworthy?

[22 : 52] Jesus meets us in our strength, transforming us by the power and authority of our word. Just as Jesus honors faith in the strong, he now draws near to grief in the weak, from a Roman captain to now a grieving widow.

The next scene turns from strength now to sorrow. In the second section, sorrow seen by Christ, going from verse 11 to verse 17.

Verse 11 tells us that Jesus traveled to nine, a journey of about 20 miles, it would probably take him a day to get there. And verse 12 says that as he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother.

She was a widow and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. The scene is set that this was fairly significant.

This is a significant moment, a significant crowd. Help me out, Wyatt. Whatever the height of the centurion's strength was, right, whatever that was, this story kind of rests in complete contrast of that, right?

[24 : 30] With strength to display utter weakness, right? He goes from strength to now display utter weakness. You see, many of us within our church body, I think surprisingly over the past several years, recent years, we've lost loved ones in the church.

We've walked through a lot of grieving church members here. And if that's you today, you know this sorrow very, very well.

You know that piercing pain in your gut that you lie down and go to sleep with and you wake up, you can't escape sorrow. It's just that inner reality just discovering the finality of death.

You will never again talk to that loved one on this side of history. Drawing near to this funeral, this huge, significant funeral, Jesus found an open coffin.

This is a funeral bier that the passage refers to, surrounded by professional mourners! that are leading the charge of a wailing crowd, a grieving crowd, and beside the coffin, Jesus finds a widow whose only son, only means of sustenance in life, that was her only hope.

[26 : 17] To live, to have anything, and now she's just going to be an outcast in society. Her only son lies dead in that bier.

the future looks bleak and completely hopeless. And in verse 13, when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her.

Jesus Christ, the son of God, has a heart that is not hindered by distance that we saw with the centurion.

He does not have a heart that is hindered by pain. He doesn't simply observe pain either. He enters into it.

Lamentations talks about this being an attribute of God. Lamentations 3, his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

[27 : 30] And he didn't turn around as she was grieving. He didn't say, I'll be praying for you. He knelt down with her and said, do not weep.

And now, this isn't to be mistaken that he's telling this poor widow, suck it up. Right? That's not it. He's not saying to just chin up, quit being a baby.

God is with you. right? No. This was not suppression of emotion. But Jesus was expressing genuine care in this gentle imperative of this sentence that's translated a little bit better of do not go on crying.

Kind of insinuating that something else greater is coming. That he's about to do something. Not that the crying was the end of it.

He's saying, do not go on crying, which is a precursor to what happens next. And then verse 14, after he's with the widow on the ground, I mean, the imagery that I have in my head is vivid.

[28 : 59] then he came up and touched the bier, the open casket, and the bearers stood still, rightfully so.

If anybody knew anything about Jesus, Jesus was making some pretty heavy claims about himself. And just as Jesus touched the leper, by this touch of the bier, Jesus would, by every realm of ceremonial cleanliness, according to Numbers 19, Jesus would be unclean from touching this bier.

And yet again, we see Jesus embodying the spirit of the law of Hosea 6.6, of mercy above sacrifice. And he said, as everyone stands still, young man, I say to you, arise.

And the dead man sat up and began to speak. Anyone familiar with the Wizard of Oz?

I'm sure she was surrounded by all these people, or he was surrounded by all these people saying, who are y'all? Why is everyone crying? Why is my mom on the ground? And Jesus gave him to his mother.

[30 : 32] When Jesus speaks, even the dead respond. His word does not merely comfort the grieving, though it does, but it speaks resurrection, to the dead.

What an image of regeneration, according to Orthodox Christianity. Dead men don't hear.

I don't know if you know that. Jesus speaks and the dead are raised. This is powerful. This lifeless son was resuscitated by the power of God.

God. The same power that regenerates the spiritually dead to come alive. And his word is mighty to resurrect all the dead, and that it will.

Now, even in our midst right here today, bringing spiritually dead to life. And he will also do it later. Ken Hughes comments on this, Carmen's best friend.

[31 : 39] He says, the voice that raised that poor, babbling young man, saying, who are all these people in that coffin, that same voice will be trumpeted into the depths of the sea, into the roots of the mountains, into the diffused dust and lost molecules of God's physically dead children, and all who know Christ will hear it.

This is an eschatological good news that Christ's word will stand forever and will resurrect the dead.

Friends, if you're here today and wondering whether there is hope in this life, if you just straggled in to see this cool looking church and witnessed the greatest people that I know on this earth, y'all, man, this story answers it.

Yes, there is hope. Profound hope, powerful hope, authoritative hope, resurrection hope. Apart from Jesus Christ, guess what?

There is no hope. No hope. No hope. hope. But Jesus Christ meets you where you are.

[33 : 07] If you are there with no hope, full disclosure to Christ, lay it down before him. He doesn't need an invitation to raise the dead.

He doesn't. He just needs to speak. hear him speak today through his word to everyone here today.

One word from Jesus turns a funeral into a family reunion. If you are hearing this today for the first time, turn from your sin, cling to him, join the family.

This family is great. The church. We see verse 16, fear sees them all and they glorified God saying, a great prophet has arisen among us.

And they were also saying, God has visited his people. The Jews in this gathering would have seen in Christ what God's people saw 500 years ago in 1 Kings through Elijah in a very similar and parallel scene.

[34 : 20] they're starting to connect the dots. There's something about this Jesus that it seems pretty plausible that this man is God and that he is.

And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country and Luke ends with his usual summary statements that he loves to use.

Truly no one is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Truly no one is beyond the reach of Jesus Christ. Jesus meets us in our strength, the heights of our strength, whatever strength we might think we have.

And he also meets you in your sorrow. Transforming us by the power and authority of his word. Knowing that our salvation is not up to us or our worthiness as seen in the life of the centurion or the deadness of a widow's son, we can rest within the sovereign grace of God's equitable grace that he bestows and is distributed according to his will alone and his power, his word that needs no invitation.

The only thing that we bring to grace, if we bring anything, is our desperate need for it. Right? For the centurion, God doesn't desire a perfect sales pitch.

[36 : 10] He desires humility. For the widow's son, God doesn't need anything. That's pretty clear, right? He doesn't need anything. Stand at the door and knock, yeah, taken out of context, yeah, you might think that that's true.

But not here. God does whatever he wants. He is sovereign over life and death. For he alone initiates salvation by the power and authority of his word.

Going back to 17th century Richard Baxter, he once said, he thought of himself as a dying man. He said, I preached as to never to preach again as a dying man to dying men.

He knew exactly what this passage reveals. He knew precisely what this passage reveals. Whether you're standing behind a pulpit, or whether you're dressed in armor, or whether you're wrapped in burial clothes, we all need the voice of Jesus to speak life.

There is no life apart from Christ's word. Ever. Now, maybe the question that I must ask is that, do you want him to speak?

[37 : 35] speak, or are you just trying to control the conversation, we'll say? Do you want him to speak, or are you still trying to control the conversation?

whether today you feel strong like the centurion, or crushed like the widow, hear this.

In sorrow or strength, we can trust the one who reigns in power and stoops low in compassion.

May our power bow, may our tears rise, as we surrender to the one who holds authority over the skies.

Let's pray.