Luke 7:9 When Jesus heard these things, he was amazed at him. He turned to the crowd that was following him and said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.”

 I think that most of you are aware that one of my favorite passages in the New Testament is Hebrews 11:1. I like and treasure that passage because it is literally God’s definition of what faith is. Hebrews 11:1 says, **“Faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.”** Let’s just give those words a bit of thought.

 Those words tell us the nature of faith. Faith is described as a hope, in this case hope is that Greek word that means “a sure and certain confidence.” So we simply understand then that faith is a sure and certain confidence. What does this mean?

 It means that though I have never seen God the Father or his kingdom of heaven I believe in him. Though I have never seen God the Son, Jesus Christ, I believe Jesus existed and that he did exactly what the Holy Spirit recorded in the Bible that he did. And yes, I believe in God the Holy Spirit and that this Holy Spirit is responsible for the revelations, facts and realities of our knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who has the responsibility to open our hearts and minds to this hope of God.

 I can go on with faith things. I believe in heaven and eternal life though I have never seen such, nor have I actually experienced such. I believe in hell, a place of eternal torment for those who refused to trust and believe in Jesus. I believe in God’s almighty powers, which would put any and every superhero this world could imagine to shame. I believe in angels and demons and yep, I believe that God in his infinite wisdom, created this world, that is, God called into being matter and time and all the components of this present world of ours and that He did it in six days of creating. Yes, I believe God rested from his work of creation on the seventh day. I have faith in these things, a sure and certain confidence in all of these things that I have never seen.

 But I can also tell you that I have a basis, a reality basis for this faith of mine. For instance, it is clear in history that Jesus was a real person and that he lived exactly at the time the Bible says he did. For that matter, the times, people and history given in the Bible has always proven to be accurate. This is backed by historical evidence. For many years, people doubted there was ever a guy named Pontius Pilate and then archeology found the evidence of his existence and life. There was a census commanded by Caesar Augustus at the time the Bible says. In other words, the Bible, both Old and New Testament has proven itself to be true.

 But honestly, none of that matters to me. It doesn’t matter because God’s Holy Spirit has given me faith! He has given me that sure and certain confidence of the truth and reality of God and his Son Jesus Christ. God has done this through his holy Word, the Bible. The Bible has proven itself trust worthy and reliable. The Bible has shown itself to be the revelation of God and all that we need to know in order to have eternal life and salvation. In order to have eternal life and salvation we simply need to have faith in Jesus and what Jesus is about. Sure and certain confidence that heaven is my home and eternal life is my destiny all because of Jesus and what He did and accomplished.

 Now, with all that said about faith there are still a few more things for us to learn and have driven home in our hearts. Those things are revealed in our text for today. Let’s consider our text with the theme: **A GREAT FAITH.**

 The first thing we should do is just familiarize ourselves with all that we can know of the situation. Jesus, as the text tells us, has just finished preaching and teaching the people some awesome and wonderful truths. If you look at Luke chapter 6 you can see those teachings highlighted for you. There are the blessings and woes of Jesus. There was the teaching on love for your enemies and following that the teaching that you first needed to take care of the beam in your own eye before you could get all wrapped up in the splinter of your brothers’ eyes. Luke concludes all of this with the teaching that when it comes to faith, faith is something that listens and then does. In other words, true faith has a definite impact on the life of a person.

 Now I would also like to mention that right before all of these teachings of Jesus are spoken of Luke tells us that around Jesus there was a large crowd, a crowd from Judea, Jerusalem, Tyre, and Sidon. Pretty much the entire area of the Jewish nation was found before Jesus. That section also reports this: **“These people who came to listen to him and be healed of their diseases. Those who were troubled by unclean spirits were also cured. The whole crowd kept trying to touch him, because power was going out from him and healing them all.”**

 After this teaching we find Jesus headed to Capernaum. Please note a number of the disciples were from this city: James, John, Peter, Andrew and Matthew. In all likelihood, Jesus was headed there for a bit of R&R. We are told there is a Centurion there, a Roman commander of 100, no doubt the commander of the garrison that we know had residence in this city. The Centurion has a servant that he highly treasures and we are told that servant is going to die. The Centurion asks the leading Jewish elders to go to Jesus and seek his help. We are told they do just that.

 Here is what we know of the Centurion. It is clear by what is said in the text that this man is a believer, a believer in the Old Testament and the promises of God found therein. This man, motivated by his faith in God, of his own expense, saw to it that a synagogue had been built for the Jewish population. It is clear in the text that this Centurion is a convert to Judaism, a strong believer in the promises of God and a man who clearly acts and is motivated by his faith.

 We are told the Centurion heard about Jesus. I submit that this Centurion was actually in the crowd of people who had just listened to Jesus and who had witnessed the miracles and wonder happening around Jesus. This Centurion most likely, was with the very Elders who came to Jesus as Jesus is headed to Capernaum. I say that based on the record of Matthew about this incident. Matthew says the Centurion came himself and spoke with Jesus. The two records come together when you realize that they are all on the road together, with the Elders speaking to Jesus and the man, who asked them, standing right there. What I want you to grasp is that on the basis of what he heard and saw from Jesus himself, this man was seeking the help of Jesus.

 Note he sent the Elders to plead his case, though he is right there. He does not send them because he hopes they can better persuade Jesus as Jews, but rather the text tells us he sends them because he does not consider himself worthy enough to approach Jesus. In other words, he understood his sinfulness under the law and, just as important, he understood the awesome and divine nature of Jesus himself. How could he, a mere man, a Gentile, approach and beseech the favor of the promised Messiah of the Jews? If you just think about it, the very humility of this man is a wonder to behold.

 It is as Jesus is getting closer to the city and the house of the man, that the man again speaks to Jesus, through the elders. It is this message that shows his great faith. And again, I will tell you that I think this could all happen in this way because the man himself was trailing behind or perhaps even before Jesus on the road. Matthew records it that the man spoke to Jesus himself. Again, the two texts are reconciled as you realize the Elders are speaking to Jesus with the man right there, perhaps they were serving as translators, for this Roman authority. He sent this message. **“Lord, do not trouble yourself, because I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”**

 Do you see what I see? This man is not acting for himself, but rather is acting on behalf of another. He is not seeking his own healing but the healing of someone he treasures and cares about. Clearly there is nothing selfish in this man. Selflessness is a part of this man’s life. Even the Jewish elders argue that he is worthy of Jesus’ attention because of all good and great things he has done for the Jewish people of Capernaum and his love for the nation of the Jews. The man is not out for himself, but rather as a Roman Centurion, he is still a humble soldier seeking to do what is best for others.

 This man doesn’t want Jesus to trouble himself. He doesn’t want Jesus to go out of his way or to put any kind of great effort into helping him by going all the way to his house, when the man knows that all Jesus has to do is say the word. Give utterance, just give thought to the healing and Lord, that healing will be done. My entire life I have been in awe of this man.

 This man trusted in Jesus. This man trusted the power and divinity of Jesus. Though his exposure to Jesus was pretty slim, what he had seen and heard of Jesus was already enough to convince him that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah and Savior of the world promised in the Old Testament. This man grasped who Jesus was. He grasped that Jesus is indeed, God and Lord.

 Just as awesome, this man grasped that all Jesus had to do was give the command. “Lord, speak and your servant will be healed.” He absolutely trusted and believed in Jesus and his power. He trusted the authority, the divine authority of Jesus to heal just by command. This man is not acting because of experience but rather because of faith. Faith in the power of Jesus to heal by his word.

 We are told that is exactly what happens. As I picture it in my mind, the way to the Centurion’s house was ahead but at these words of faith, Jesus stops, speaks, and then takes another direction. Again Matthew records that Jesus says to the Centurion, **“Go. Let it be done for you as you have believed.”** And yes, Matthew agrees with Luke. By the time the Elders and the Centurion got to the house, the servant was healed.

 What an awesome example of faith. Faith that is humble before the Lord. This Centurion was a man of authority and power and yet he does not command, he does not demand service from Jesus. This man had done wonderful things for the Jewish population around him and had even shown a love for everything the Jewish faith was about. Still, he does not, on the basis of his life and works make demands of Jesus. His faith is humble. Is this not the same type of faith we are to have? Not a haughty, “Lord you owe me this because I am so good” but rather the same humbleness that seeks the goodness of God despite our low and sinful estate.

 And his trust! He trusts that Jesus need only say the word and the healing would be done. He trusts the authority and power of Jesus, yes, trusts that Jesus would grant his wish because he has seen the compassion and love of Jesus in action. This action of simply letting Jesus know that you grasp his power and majesty is indeed a great example of faith.

 Again, is this not the same faith we are to have? To trust the Lord. To trust he will do what is right. To trust his divinity and power to fulfill and accomplish what he says he will. Jesus says that he died and paid for our sins. Believe that. Jesus says that He will always be with us, that He will always do what is best for us and that he will never give us more than we can bear? Believe that! Jesus says that his resurrection shows that He is the Son of God, our God and Lord and that in that resurrection is your hope and confidence for eternal life. Believe that. Jesus has revealed to us in His Word, through the Holy Spirit, that He sits and rules over all things for the good of His Church. Not a single soul can be snatched from his hand. Our salvation is sure and certain. That is to be our hope!

 Please note that it is Jesus who is amazed at and compliments the faith of this man. Wow, to have Jesus speak of your great faith! It must have indeed been such a faith.

 By the way, just to really jog your mind, think of this. There are those who think that it is possible that this Centurion and the Centurion at the cross are one and the same person. When I first ran across that idea I was just stunned. The Centurion at the cross was the man who oversaw the crucifixion of Jesus. If it was the same man, he had to do his Roman duty and at the same time he had to know and trust that the man prophesied to hang on a tree was the same man that it was prophesied would come back to life and live again! Now think about the Centurion at the cross saying, **“Surely this is the Son of God!”** His faith was never shaken in Jesus Christ, Savior of the world.

 I pray we learn from this man’s faith. I pray we trust and hope in Jesus the same way he did. I pray that Hebrews 11:1 is true in our lives: **“Faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced about things we do not see.”** Amen.