

Sermon; ARE YOU WORTHY?

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May 29, 2016 Memorial Day

Old Testament Lesson; 1st Kings 18: 20-39

Responsive Reading; Psalm 96

Epistle Lesson; Galatians 1: 1-12

Gospel Lesson; Luke 7:1-10

My sermon title for today is, Are You Worthy?

This is the Sunday before Memorial Day and we honor a large group of individuals that proved that they were intensely worthy by giving their lives for us, our country and for God.

Our Gospel Lesson is about a centurion. A centurion was a Roman commander of about 100 men; if he was a 1st class centurion that number would be about 600 men.

Of the hated Roman occupying military, this centurion was cut of a different piece of cloth than most of his counterparts.

First of all he deeply cared for human life. Our lesson says that, "A centurion there had a slave that he valued highly, who was ill and close to death."

Most would consider a slave to be property and quite disposable, but this commander valued his slave as a human.

Secondly he had a close relationship with the Jewish elders, “When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave.”

Those Jewish elders came to Jesus. “When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.”

Ok, are you following this? Here is a commander who is supposed to keep the residents of this occupied nation under the Roman thumb so they will not make waves. The Romans typically did this by brute intimidation.

Is he a narrow minded tyrant? It seems not. He is not a Jew nor a follower of Jesus but he cares enough for the people under his control that he builds a synagogue for them. He cares enough for a slave that he goes out of his way to save the man’s life. He does not know Jesus but knows what is going on in his area of responsibility. He knows that this guy Jesus saves lives and is not too proud to give it a try for the sake of his slave.

Earlier in the Bible a foreign commander goes to Elisha to be cured of Leprosy and is very put off that Elisha just sends a

servant to tell him to go bathe in the Jordan 3 times. That commander thought he deserved the personal touch and attention.

This centurion has a completely different attitude. When Jesus goes to the slave the centurion stops him. "The centurion sent friends to say 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 only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. For I also 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 slave, 'Do this' and the slave does it."

This centurion has a firm grip on a concept that is totally foreign to the Jewish leaders. This centurion knows that Jesus is under a greater authority and that authority gives Jesus authority.

This centurion only knows the emperor as God to him but through that knowledge understands that Jesus is answering to a God that gives him authority to complete his "mission" just as the emperor gives the centurion the authority to do what he was sent to this outpost to do.

This is crazy, a man who probably does not believe in a monotheistic God, has a better concept of the power of God than the God fearing Jews. Ouch!

The reaction of Jesus is the same, “When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” And the servant lived happily ever after!

In our Old Testament lesson Elijah showed that he was a worthy prophet, in our responsive reading we see that God is definitely worthy of our praise, in the Epistle Paul says that the Gospel, the Word of God, is worthy and anything less or different from God’s word is not worthy, but what makes us “worthy”?

I am not here to beat up on anyone but I am here to challenge you.

There was an old country song that said, “She doesn’t know she is beautiful though I tell her all the time.” I think that is what makes a person beautiful.

I think that if you think you are beautiful, then you are not. If you think you are nice then you are not, and if you think that you are worthy you are not.

Don’t panic yet, I’m not finished.

If you want to be beautiful then you are already beautiful. If you want to be nice then you already are nice. If you want to be worthy then you are already worthy.

If you want to be better than you are, if you are willing to step out of your comfort zone to improve, then you are doing what God has sent you to do.

God did not send you here to be a bump on a log. God did not send you here to think that your sweat don't sink. God sent you here to sweat for the kingdom. God sent you here to praise him and his beautiful creation so that others might know how awesome God is and how He can be relied on. This does not mean you have to feel guilty about where you are now.

On the contrary God has put you here to be at this stage and God challenges you to take it from here and to run with it.

The Jewish elders told Jesus that this man was worthy of you doing this for him. *They* said that he was worthy and that is a whole lot different from *him* saying he was worthy.

When people pray for you do they say, "God this person is worthy of you doing this for them."?

When I pray for members of this church I say that I believe you are all worthy. The only person I would not say is worthy is me and that is not because I have anything against myself, it just is that it is not my job. My job is to be the person that you will tell God is worthy.

So, Are You Worthy? Yes you are worthy. You are worthy just as long as you do not think you are the most worthy.

God created you to be worthy. Be worthy for God.

Hallelujah and Amen!