

Luke 7.1-10; 1Kings 8.22-23, 41-43; Ps.96.1-9; Gal.1.1-12  
29.5.16 – Trinity 1 - 8 & 10 a.m. St. Andrew's, Totteridge

*May I speak in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Luke ends his account of Jesus' instruction for his disciples with a challenge - even those who feel specially chosen can fail. Just naming Jesus as Lord is not enough – the true disciple hears Jesus' words and acts on them (Luke 6.12-49), a salutary reminder for all of us who feel called to follow the gospel and the teachings of Christ.

Yet this is Paul's message to those aggravating Galatians whom, he feels, are beginning to wander dangerously from the true path by adhering to Jewish Law rather than the heart-felt truth of the gospel.

It's as though he feels that his authority is being challenged – but he's not seeking their approval or wishing to appease them. His authority is of divine origin, granted him by revelation, and he uses that authority to bring them back onto the true path, the path which teaches that the gospel is for everyone, Jew & Gentile alike.

This is a message revealed also to Solomon in all his glory (1 Kings 8), when he appeals that even foreigners should be heard by God in the Temple, so that all the peoples of the earth should come to know God's name and to “follow him with all their heart” (8.23). – and this is the same message that Luke brings over the next eight Sundays with a series of themes; firstly that the gospel is for everyone; that anyone can be saved – Gentiles, women, the poor, outcasts as well as the privileged.

Jesus is the Saviour of the world, not just in the sense of saving us from our sinful selves, but also in the sense that he is the ‘healer’ – the Greek word for ‘save’ is the same as that for ‘heal.’

If the disciples had cared to reflect on their own heritage they may have remembered Solomon's great visionary prayer for the dedication of his new, magnificent temple, a place where all were encouraged to bring before God whatever concerned them, inter-personal conflict, defeat, insufficiencies of any kind.

Is it the case, I wonder, that fewer people do so these days because we have grown so used to comparative health & plenty? Solomon's vision is limitless – the only criterion is faithful belief – that is enough to evoke a response from God (1 Kings 8.41-43) – there's a home for everyone who comes in that spirit to Jerusalem.

When Paul took the good news of Jesus to the churches in Galatia he carried with him an invitation to be part of the new Jerusalem, a “new creation” (Gal. 6:15) – he was outraged that what seemed to matter to them most as a guarantor of faith was circumcision! – I cannot help but see a parallel here with the churches modern day obsession with sexuality and gender!

Corporately and individually we need to be continually confronted with our own need for self-examination, especially in deciding over real and complex situations, and just as Jesus confronts his disciples over the matter of the Centurion's servant.

Some Jewish elders have approached him with a special request from a Roman stationed in Capernaum, a Gentile soldier in the service of Herod. He has a sick slave whom he values highly and believes that the teacher who has just arrived in the city can heal him, but he is reluctant to approach Jesus directly. Is this because of the rebuff that a Gentile would normally expect from a Jewish priest of the day?

The elders are happy to bear the Centurion's message for him because, despite the loading of resentment against a Roman in the Jewish society of that time, he has for them been an enlightened individual who has taken an interest in their culture and faith, even to the extent of building them a synagogue. How many military residents in foreign lands today would bother to make the same effort?

Though obviously a man of sensitivity, humility, and compassion, the Centurion also has faith in J's power to heal. A leader himself, he doesn't expect J to come at his beck and call. Maybe he is also sensitive to the defilement involved for a holy man in entering a Gentile house or in coming too close to sickness or death. Either way, Jesus response is one of amazement and gratification at having found such faith in Israel – and most pointedly, that this faith, which exceeds even that of the disciples, is that of a Gentile.

*Spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## Luke 7.1-10

### Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

7

After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. <sup>2</sup>A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. <sup>3</sup>When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, 'He is worthy of having you do this for him, <sup>5</sup>for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.' <sup>6</sup>And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, 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; <sup>7</sup>therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. <sup>8</sup>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.' <sup>9</sup>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.' <sup>10</sup>When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

## 1 Kings 8.22-23, 41-43

### Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

22 Then Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands to heaven. <sup>23</sup>He said, 'O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and steadfast love for your servants who walk before you with all their heart,   
41 'Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name <sup>42</sup>—for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm—when a foreigner comes and prays towards this house, <sup>43</sup>then hear in heaven your dwelling-place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

## Psalm 96

### Praise to God Who Comes in Judgment

- <sup>1</sup> O sing to the Lord a new song;  
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
- <sup>2</sup> Sing to the Lord, bless his name;  
tell of his salvation from day to day.
- <sup>3</sup> Declare his glory among the nations,  
his marvellous works among all the peoples.
- <sup>4</sup> For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
he is to be revered above all gods.
- <sup>5</sup> For all the gods of the peoples are idols,  
but the Lord made the heavens.
- <sup>6</sup> Honour and majesty are before him;  
strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.
- <sup>7</sup> Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
- <sup>8</sup> Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts.
- <sup>9</sup> Worship the Lord in holy splendour;  
tremble before him, all the earth.

## Galatians 1.1-12

Paul an apostle—sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— <sup>2</sup>and all the members of God’s family who are with me,  
To the churches of Galatia:

<sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup>who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup>to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

<sup>6</sup> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— <sup>7</sup>not that there is another gospel, but there are some who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. <sup>8</sup>But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed! <sup>9</sup>As we have said before, so now I repeat, if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!

<sup>10</sup> Am I now seeking human approval, or God’s approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

<sup>11</sup> For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; <sup>12</sup>for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.