

The Centurion's Faith  
Matthew 8:5-13

Introduction

How often are we really truly amazed by something? Usually we are astonished by seeing or experiencing something we have never seen or experienced before. It is usually a surprise. We are amazed by things we aren't expecting. We can also be amazed by things we are expecting, things we see coming. We are amazed not from surprise, but from the experience. We knew it was coming, but when it happened, it was more or better, or at least different than we expected it to be.

There are thousands of photographs of the Grand Canyon, and yet people are still amazed when they see it for themselves. Just as Washington DC, and Paris, and Rome, and Egypt, and so many other places have been photographed all over the place. It is different, it is amazing seeing them up close.

It can be amazing to see and experience something first-hand, even something you already know about. It isn't like you are surprised it happened, or surprised at how it looked, but to see it first-hand is different than hearing about it, or seeing it on TV, or seeing a picture. Haven't we all said, "You should have been there"?

Last Summer, my daughter had the opportunity to go on a tour of the churches the Apostle Paul visited on his missionary journeys. She saw lots of ancient ruins, Greece, Turkey, and Rome. She took lots of photos, and saw all kinds of stuff. She brought me an icon from the Orthodox church in Turkey. It has been fun listening to her stories, and seeing her pictures, but it would have been even better to have gone with her.

I have studied all these places, and I have seen lots of photographs, and maps, and satellite images, and everything, but to see them would be amazing. It is a different experience.

We are told, Jesus was amazed 2 different times during His ministry. The first happened when He went back to visit His home town.

**Mark 6:1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup>When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.**

**"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! <sup>3</sup>Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.**

**<sup>4</sup>Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." <sup>5</sup>He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their lack of faith.**

People who had seen Jesus grow up. People who knew Jesus half-brothers and sisters, (same mother, different father). These people who knew Jesus' family refused to believe Jesus was the Messiah, God's Son. The very people who should have been able to figure it out after seeing how Jesus lived, and played, and worked, and grew up. Those people who were looking for a Messiah, these were the people who refused to believe, and upon actually seeing it, Jesus was amazed. He was amazed at the lack of faith of the people who should have had the most faith.

The other time when we are told Jesus was amazed, was when He met a Gentile. A person who was not looking for the Messiah, but a person who wanted to know and have a relationship with God.

**Matthew 8:5 When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. <sup>6</sup>“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.”**

**<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.”**

**<sup>8</sup>The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. <sup>9</sup>For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”**

**<sup>10</sup>When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. <sup>11</sup>I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>12</sup>But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”**

**<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.**

Jesus was amazed at the faith that was found in a man whose faith had changed his life. A man whose faith was unlike everyone else Jesus had met. Even John the Baptist asked for confirmation of Jesus' Messiah-ship at one point. His 12 disciples were always questioning, and experiencing a lack of faith, but when Jesus met this foreigner, this Roman, He was amazed. He was astonished. It is quite a different thing to know about real faith, or even a lack of faith. I don't think Jesus was surprised at the faith of the centurion, nor was He surprised at the lack of faith of the people from His home town. Instead, I think seeing it up close and personal, it was an amazing sight.

## **1. The Centurion**

- a. Roman soldier over 100 men
  - i. The centurion was a Roman soldier over 80 to 100 men.
  - ii. They were responsible for the training and discipline of their men.
  - iii. In battle, centurions fought alongside their men. They never stayed back and directed. Most of them rose up through the ranks, and although they are compared to modern day Lieutenants, they are more like a non-commissioned officer.
  - iv. They were real soldiers, fighting down in the trenches with the rest of the real soldiers.
- b. Other centurions in the NT

- i. At the cross declared Jesus was the Son of God, or perhaps at least the son of a god. Mt 27:54
  - ii. Cornelius in Acts 10 was from the Italian Regiment. An elite force. He was a believer in God, and became the first Gentile to become a Christian. He was known for his faith in God, and his kindness, generosity, charity, and prayer life.
  - iii. Julius from Acts 27, was the centurion who guarded Paul on his trip to Rome. He was fair, and kind. He took care of Paul, and listened to him. He saved Paul's life as well as the lives of the other prisoners travelling with Paul instead of killing them all when their ship ran aground as he was supposed to.
  - iv. The centurion in Acts 22 was following orders when he prepared to flog Paul. As he stretched Paul out in order to properly flog him, Paul explained clearly what he was about to do was illegal. The centurion stopped, and went to his superior to inform him.
- c. The centurion whose servant Jesus healed.
- i. These centurions in the NT stood up for what was right. Maybe because they were not a part of the ruling elite class, or maybe because they worked their way up through the ranks. These men who were mentioned in the New Testament were known for standing up for what was right.
  - ii. This centurion did even more than that.
    1. **Luke 7:3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. <sup>4</sup>When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, <sup>5</sup>“This man deserves to have you do this, <sup>5</sup>because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.”**
    2. Not only that, but this man requested Jesus not come to his house.
      - a. For a Jew to enter the house of a Gentile would make him unclean. Jews were not to do this. Nor were they allowed to eat with Gentiles.
      - b. To spend time with a centurion was even worse. He represented the occupational Roman army. For Jesus to go to his house would not make any difference to the centurion, but it would make things much harder on Jesus.
      - c. The centurion knew this, and asked Jesus not to come.
    3. He humbled himself
      - a. To a Jew – a person who belonged to a race the Romans ruled over. A person who Romans would have looked down on.
      - b. To his servant. This servant was highly valued. Instead of just letting him die, this Roman soldier went to get help.
      - c. He humbled himself to Jesus. He looked out for Jesus. He had more faith in Jesus than anyone Jesus had met. Because of this, Jesus was amazed.

## 2. The Centurion's faith

### a. Resulted in the servant's healing.

- i. Unlike the people of Nazareth. They had so little faith

1. Jesus did nothing there.
2. God works through people. It isn't like He can't do anything here without us. It is more like, don't call upon God, if you aren't ready to give yourself to God.
3. In The book of Judges
  - a. The Israelites had walked away from God, and were worshipping other gods.
  - b. The nation was overrun by their enemies who oppressed them.
  - c. They called out to God for help.
  - d. Through a prophet, God told them to have the false gods they were worshipping help them.
  - e. It wasn't until they threw away all those worthless idols and gods, that God helped them.
- ii. How much is Jesus able to do in our lives?
  1. How much faith do we have?
  2. Is God able to work through us, and for us? It isn't like God can't work through people without faith. He chooses not to.
  3. Is He able to work in our lives? Do we have the faith to be used by God? The faith of that centurion resulted in Jesus' amazement.

#### **b. Resulted in Jesus' amazement**

- i. When was the last time we amazed God?
  1. I know God sees the future.
    - a. There are times I struggle with talking to God. Am I trying to tell Him what to do? Isn't He really in charge, and not me?
    - b. God understands the results of the actions and reactions in all situations. How can I, in my very limited understanding make a request of Him?
    - c. The great thing about this, is God wants us to talk to Him, and to make requests, and to trust that He will take care of things.
    - d. Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
  2. So, if God knows the future, and He knows what we can and will do, is it possible to amaze Him?
- ii. I don't mean like the people from Jesus' home town.
  1. We are all good at that. We are all good at being a couch potato Christian. It is easy to sit back and watch.
  2. There was a tech on a computer hotline who was trying to help a customer troubleshoot his computer. The tech asked about user's download speed. He asked, "How fast does your computer go?" The caller answered, "It's not moving. It's just sitting there." The Tech was amazed at the user.
  3. We are all good at pledging ourselves to God, and then turning away, or doing nothing. I bet God is amazed every day at how

short-sighted we are. I bet He is amazed at seeing us just sitting there, instead of moving.

- iii. I hope we can amaze God the same way the centurion did.
  1. I hope the way we live out our Christian walk will absolutely thrill God.
  2. The story of Job begins with Satan roaming around the earth, then coming to God. After seeing all the people, and how they lived, God said the following. **Job 1:8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”**
  3. Can you imagine God bragging on us? Can you imagine God looking down from Heaven and saying to anyone who will listen, (don’t forget – when God talks, everyone listens) He says, Have you considered *put your name in here*?
  4. I hope we can be like Job. I hope that how we live, and what we do, we can amaze, impress, or make God proud.

## Conclusion

In Jr Worship today, as they study this same story, they are being told the centurion believed backwards. In other words, most people believed after they saw the miracle. The centurion believed before the miracle. He knew Jesus had the power. He knew Jesus could do this. He believed in Jesus without needing the demonstration.

Apparently this man understood who God is, and upon hearing about Jesus, accepted Him as the Son of God. Needing no proof, this soldier put his confidence in Jesus. I can just imagine, a few years later, Jesus is up there in Heaven, talking with the Angels, telling them stories about what He did while He was here on this earth, and when He got to the story of the Centurion, He would have said, “You should have been there.” It was so unbelievable, it is hard to put into words.

My first full-time Youth Ministry, way back in the 1980’s was with the Capital City Christian Church in Frankfort, KY. This church has supported a mission in Haiti for decades. Much like our church and the Jamaica Mission, they send a team to the mission every year. Right now 13 members of the church are in Haiti. They were due to come home last week. All those plans have been changed. All 13 people are fine, and unharmed by the earthquake, but now are busy helping the people in Haiti in a different way.

I know God put them in Haiti at this time to be used by Him. We can help – long distance. They can help right where they are. There are lots of ways you can help the people at Haiti. Look at the Welcome center for more information about this, or to make a contribution.

There are lots of ways you can be that centurion. There are lots of ways you can amaze God. Like the people from the church in Frankfort, sometimes He will put those ways right in front of you. At other times, you will have to search out ways to be used.

We can be that man. The decision is yours. There are a great many things we can do to be that man.