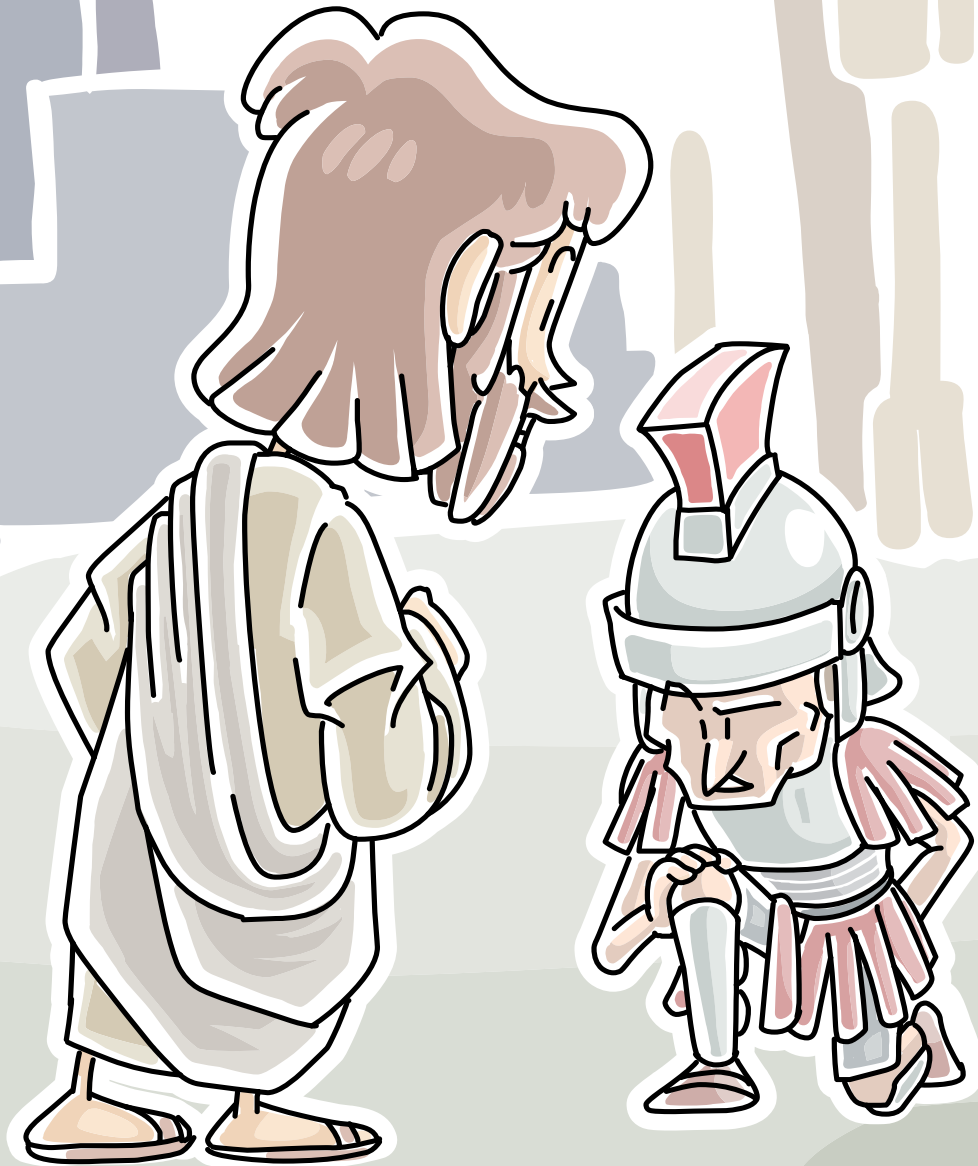


The soldier's request



Colour me!



Luke 7:1-10

After Jesus had finished teaching the people, he went to Capernaum. In that town an army officer's servant was sick and about to die. The officer liked this servant very much. And when he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish leaders to ask him to come and heal the servant. The leaders went to Jesus and begged him to do something. They said, "This man deserves your help! He loves our nation and even built us a meeting place." So Jesus went with them.

When Jesus wasn't far from the house, the officer sent some friends to tell him, "Lord, don't go to any trouble for me! I am not good enough for you to come into my house. And I am certainly not worthy to come to you. Just say the word, and my servant will get well. I have officers who give orders to me, and I have soldiers who take orders from me. I can say to one of them, 'Go!' and he goes. I can say to another, 'Come!' and he comes. I can say to my servant, 'Do this!' and he will do it."

When Jesus heard this, he was so surprised that he turned and said to the crowd following him, "In all of Israel I've never found anyone with this much faith!" The officer's friends returned and found the servant well.

Commentary

At this time the Jews looked down on most foreigners and felt that they didn't deserve God's promises and blessings. This Roman officer was part of the occupying power that had taken over the country, and would normally have been feared, hated and avoided. However, the officer had impressed the local leaders with his generosity and care for his men, and so they felt that he deserved help. It must have taken courage for them to choose sides like this. Jesus, of course, didn't see it as a case of this side or that, but simply responded to someone in need.

Perhaps the officer realized it might be awkward for Jesus and the others to enter his house, so he sent a message asking Jesus to command healing from a distance, just as he commanded his men. Most people felt they needed to be near Jesus or even to touch him to be healed, but this man had a bigger faith than that, and his faith impressed Jesus.

This officer wasn't the only outsider to catch Jesus' attention during his ministry. He often found true faith not among those of his own nationality, but in the hearts of those who were on the edge or even despised foreigners. It challenges us also to be on the lookout for faith in unexpected people and places.

Bible text taken from Contemporary English Version. Anglicised edition copyright © British and Foreign Bible Society 1997, 2012. Reproduced with permission from The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF). Taken from The Barnabas Family Bible © Martyn Payne and Jane Butcher 2014.

Questions

- ▶ Why did the Jewish leaders feel that this army officer deserved Jesus' help?
- ▶ Do we sometimes decide that some people are more deserving of our help than others?
- ▶ Why was Jesus so impressed by the officer's faith?
- ▶ How do we show that we have faith in God?



Visual aid

Find a picture of a first-century Roman army officer in a book or on the internet.

Activity idea



Give the Roman soldier a name and choose names for other imagined members of his family and his servants, including the one who was ill. Now, as a family, become this Roman family and talk together in character about what happened from your different points of view. Who was the one who heard about Jesus and suggested going to him? Who among you doubts that Jesus will turn up? What do the servants think about the people in charge of them? What does the servant who was ill think should happen? What exactly went on, that day, while Jesus was on his way?

Prayer idea

When we pray, we put our trust in Jesus, whom we cannot see, for the people in need whom we can see. Use some typical army commands to frame your prayers for others today:



- Attention: fix your heart and mind on God.
- Present arms: make a short and simple prayer to God.
- Quick march: get on with doing the best you can and be ready to become part of the answer to the prayer you have made.

Key verse

The officer's friends returned and found the servant well (Luke 7:10).

Old Testament story link

2 Kings 6:8-23: Elisha is under attack, but his faith in God helps his servant to see that God's invisible army is with them and they will be safe.



Colour me!

