

May 29, 2016
Luke 7:1-10

Proper 4C
Know Your Place

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Risen and Ascended Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Places. We all occupy different places in life. What are some of those places? Father, Mother, Son, Daughter, Husband, Wife, Grandparent, Friend, Farmer, Citizen, Veteran, family of a veteran or even a family member of one who gave their life for the country. Other places include lay person, elder, council member. You all are found in various places of life. Some of you have changed from student to graduate. Sometimes places in life change and that's okay. But you are often told to "know your place" especially in relationship to someone else.

In our text for this morning we have the centurion who had a servant/slave who was sick to the point of death, but yet this slave was highly valued by him. This Centurion sent Elders to Jesus to ask Him to heal this slave, servant, because the Centurion is worthy...because he loves the nation. He built the synagogue.

Then what happens, Jesus agrees to go, but as He comes closer to the house the Centurion sent friends to Jesus to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, For I am not fit to have you come under my roof. Therefore, I did not deem worthy to come to you. Rather say the word and let my child (servant) be healed...."

The Centurion knew His place. He knew where He stood in place. He knew his place before the Lord.

We occupy many places. You heard just a few of them just a minute ago, if I asked each of what places you occupy the list would be longer and rightly so, for we all occupy different places. These are the places to which God places us.

Now, before we get to our standing before God...for that's the most important, what is your standing in the world. To the world, maybe you are worthy, just like the Centurion was. This centurion was a pious man, He worshipped God along with His Jewish neighbors. Our text even tells us that He built the synagogue. And the Servant that He wants Jesus to heal...is much more than a piece of property, this Centurion cares for the Servant. Even in the Greek in verse 7, "my servant" can also be translated "my child".

Did the Centurion ask his elders to say those things about Him, I don't think so. The Centurion knew His worth in the eyes of God and it wasn't pretty. Yet before the world he had great worth.

What's your worth to the world? Maybe it's great and grand. Maybe you sell your faith for pride and self. Perhaps you try to protect yourself and raise your self-esteem, your self-ego. That is after all what society and even the schools teach. They focus on the individual, the self.

Many times you focus on the self, the individual. You focus on your pride, where the self is the only thing that counts, the self is the only thing that matters.

Pride is the antithesis to the faith. Pride is oftentimes disguised as self-esteem or positive self-regard. It's all over. We want to be seen as worthy, so we join in belittling others. We work extra hard, spend more time in the gym to be the best athlete. We want to be in the inner crowd, so we dump our faith at the door and let words spew out of our mouths we typically don't say. We dump our faith at the door and eat and drink till our stomachs are full and our head is spinning. We do this to be seen worthy in the world. This pride can destroy your faith. Many times it does. Many times trying to become "the best you can be" as the focus is on the self, takes the focus off of God.

When I was at the store, looking for graduation cards, this focus on the self was on the good majority of the cards. "Success lies in your hands." "You control your future." And other things such as that. You, you, you...me, me, me. Drives a wedge between you and your faith. It may mean that you are worth something to the world...leaves you helpless and hopeless in the eyes of faith.

The Centurion...he was seen as worthy to the world, even his elders said that. But the Centurion sent his friends to Jesus saying, "I am not even fit to have you come under my roof." The Centurion also knew his place in his military power. "For I, too, am a man set under authority, with myself having soldiers and I say to him, 'Go' and he goes, and to another 'come' and he comes and to my servant, "Do this," and he does it." Really though, this Centurion knew his true standing with Jesus. He knew the place of faith in his life. He knew that Jesus could heal his beloved servant by just saying a word.

The Centurion saw himself as an unworthy servant in great need. He was helpless in the face of death. Dr. Biermann writes about this in an article on this section of Luke: "Certainly aware of his place in the hierarchy of the Roman military, he's even more conscious of the place he occupies in the infinitely significant spiritual ordering of the universe. Only God is God and He is but a broken and desperate creature."

The place of faith in His life is great. He has a desperate need and he shows it and knows that He is unworthy. Do you know your desperate need of Jesus as the Centurion did? Dr. Biermann points out: "So those who know the score—who know their desperate need—renounce pride, plead for mercy, and find it."

Each week you all confess that you are poor miserable sinners, just as I do. As we plead for mercy, it shows that we know how unworthy we are to have Jesus come under our roofs. It shows our place in the presence of Jesus. As we are broken, helpless, and hopeless we come and plead for mercy. As Jesus heeds your cries for mercy, He takes His place. Actually He takes your place. You see, you deserve the place He went to.

He takes His place on the cross for you. As He's taking your place on the cross. He's suffering hell on the cross for you, when you should be. He's dying in your place to take away your sin. He's dying in your place so that you don't have to. He's dying in your place because He loves you and desires for you to be saved. He's dying for you so that your sins are forgiven.

He then takes His place after His death in the tomb as He waits His resurrection. He then lives again for you, ascends into the heavens and takes His rightful place at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, where He promises to return from and bring restoration to His creation. He promises to return to bring you out of your gravely places and into the renewed and restored creation.

Jesus not only takes His place on the cross and the right hand of God the Father Almighty. He also takes His place in your lives. You and I would join with the Centurion, "I am not fit to have you come under my roof." Yet that's exactly where Jesus comes. He comes under your roofs and lives with you.

Jesus is greeted with great faith of the centurion and as we confess our sins, he again is greeted with great faith. With the Centurion though, Jesus is not content only to say a word and walk away having delayed the servant's death for another day. NO, now He presses on in His task and not only enters our roof, but He stays there. Jesus definitely knows His places and that is with us. After all His name means that, "Emmanuel – God with us." He lived out this task of coming into the homes of the sick and the sinners and into homes where there is death and dying. He told Zaccheus, "I'm going to your house today." He went into the house of Simon Peter and healed Simon's mother-in-law. He went into the house of Jairus and raised His daughter from death. He spent much time in the house of His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

He comes under the roofs our homes and also His house, the place where we worship Him and receive His great gifts. He is here in this place giving to you all sorts of great things. He gives you the forgiveness of your sins. He gives you the Law that convicts you and causes you to plead for mercy. He shares with you the message of the cross and empty tomb. He even takes His place under the roof of your mouth when you receive His body and blood for your forgiveness.

You see you stand in many places in life, but where you stand before God is of most importance. The Centurion understood this...He knew that God was all powerful. He knew that God could even heal his beloved servant with just a word. The Centurion knew that He didn't have a leg to stand on before God and knew he wasn't worthy to have someone as prominent as Jesus Christ come stand in his house. Yet as the Centurion counted himself unworthy, Jesus counted Him worthy.

As you confess your unworthiness before God, Jesus counts you worthy. You have great worth to Him. And the standard of worth in the Kingdom of God, is given to you in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. It's the confession that God is indeed all-powerful and that He is the

only true God, which that faith is only given to you from the Holy Spirit. It's not just that confession, but it's also the confession, the admission that our worthiness before God doesn't depend on us and what we do, but only on what Christ does for us. It's the confess that we actually our unworthy and have no place before God. As this faith is given to you, you are found worthy to have Christ come to you and stay with you and reside in you. His place is in you and with you. As Jesus Christ is with you, pride is displaced and your worth isn't ultimately valued based on what you do in this world, but has everything to do with what Christ did for you on the cross and the empty tomb, and with making holy that the Holy Spirit does for you.

No matter the places you stand in your life, know that you do have a place in the kingdom of God, and that place is yours because God chose you to be one of His dearly redeemed. He chose you at your baptism, and continues to remind you of that in the Divine Service, when you receive Absolution and the Lord's Supper, and in the hearing of His word. You have worth, you have value because of Christ.

In Jesus Name. Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus your Lord and Savior. Amen.