BUT SAY THE WORD

Luke 7:1-10

Key Verse 7:7b

“But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Have you heard that our words have power over water and rice? One Japanese scientist named Dr. Emoto tried to find out what kind of power our words have over waters and rice. And he was amazed to find that water molecule responds to our words. If we say ‘I love you’ it forms a beautiful molecule. But we say ‘I hate you’ or expose it to heavy metal music, it forms painful and ugly molecule. Furthermore he put steamed rice in two identical separate cups. He said to one cup of rice “I love you” and the other cup, “You fool” for 30 days. Then one cup of rice which heard “I love you” still stays white and looks good, but other rice in other cup becomes so dark and contaminated. It simply shows the power of our words over waters and rice. And we know 72% of our body is water. If the molecular structure of the water in our entire body responds negatively because of our negative words what kind of effect will it have over our whole body? It will be destructive. In today’s passage we want to learn the power and authority of words. But it is not about man’s words but about the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Today’s passage can be divided into two parts.

Part I. The centurion heard of Jesus. (v.1-6a)

Part II. I have not found such great faith even in Israel (v.6b-10)

**Part I. The centurion heard of Jesus. (v.1-6a)**

Look at verse 1-6a. “**When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, 5because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” 6So Jesus went with them.”**

The centurions are the commanders of 100 soldiers, and they are basic front line commanders who take care of actual works. Scholars say that they are famous for their discipline.

If we want to describe the centurion in these verses in one word what could it be? He is the man of \_\_\_? “Love”. Some elders of the Jews came to Jesus and pleaded earnestly with him, saying ‘This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation.” In addition to the love of the Jewish nation which was under his ruling he also loved his servant whom he valued highly. So he wanted to send some elders of the Jews to Jesus, asking him to come and heal his servant. At that time the relationship between Romans and Jews were pretty bad. Rome ruled the Jewish people through powerful army, and the centurion was the symbol of the Roman army. But the elders of the Jews were willing to plead with Jesus earnestly saying, “This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue”. The love of the centurion was not just verbal service. He used his own money to build Jewish synagogue. Centurion’s salary was not high at that time. So probably he was not rich, but he built their synagogue out of his own pocket. He respected Jewish religion although he did not believe it personally. Most of all, he loved their nation and the elders of the Jews were touched by his love.

They knew his love was genuine. So they pleaded earnestly with Jesus. The centurion asked Jesus’ favor for the sake of his servant. Although he valued his servant highly servant was servant at that time, and they were regarded as disposal things. If your favorite laptop is broken, and it turned out to be almost impossible to repair, and repairing cost is more than the price of a new one, you will probably throw it away and buy another. But the centurion did not do so. Although his servant was about to die which means it was impossible to heal, he did not give up. Out of his love for him he must have sought all possible means to heal him. Probably he had spent more money to heal him than the money to buy a new healthy and able servant.

But nothing worked out. Then finally he remembered that he heard of Jesus and that Jesus healed sick people miraculously.

The centurion remembered Jesus whom he heard of when he really wanted to heal his servant. Out of his deep love for him he came to Jesus by sending his friends. His love for his servant eventually opened his spiritual eyes toward Jesus.

From this, we can learn one thing. If we love one person deeply being ready to pay all and any cost all the way, God can lead us to Christ through the love. God’s heart is the heart of compassion for one lost soul, and God is willing to pay any cost even the cost of the life of his own son. Bible is full of stories which reveals God’s heart for a lost person. For example, a shepherd is going out to seek one lost sheep, leaving 99 sheep on the open country. Economically it does not make sense. Human reasons or common sense cannot explain the heart of God – his unlimited compassion for one lost soul.

When we look at the scene of Jesus’ crucifixion only, Jesus was also crucified for one lost person, and that person was the robber on the cross. Figuratively speaking, Jesus was crucified to save him. **The robber said to Jesus, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus promised him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43)**

True love does not have any limit. When the centurion truly loved his servant and tried to heal him at any cost, he helped himself the most because he ended up knowing who Jesus is. Although he probably spent more money to heal him than buying a new healthy and able servant his love was well paid off. He was rewarded all the more because it opened his spiritual eyes toward Jesus.

One of my friends asked me, “How can the centurion be the man of love so much despite his high position. Where did his love come from?” I told him that I will pray about it. The answer I got is ‘his love came from God.’ The genuine love of the centurion is none other than the love of God, and all human being is created in the image of God who is love.

We all have the true love of God in our hearts although we may not be aware of it or we may not practice it so far. That is why the Bible calls us ‘children of the Most High.’

**Part II. I have not found such great faith even in Israel (v.6b-10)**

Look at verses 6b-7a. “**He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.”**

What do these verses show about the centurion? It shows that he is a man of humility. He was an army officer of Roman Empire which ruled the land. So there was no reason for him to feel that he was not worthy or undeserving. But he said, “for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you.” And he called Jesus, “Lord”. “Lord, don’t trouble yourself.” If he called Jesus, “Lord”, who was the centurion? He was the servant of Jesus. He was a centurion of Roman army, and he came to ask Jesus’ help for his servant. But before Jesus he acted as if he were a servant who was not worthy even to come to his master, Jesus. What amazing humility this man had? His humility reminds us of Jesus’ humility as a servant described in Philippians 2:5-8.

**Philippians 2:5-8**

**5  In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
6  Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; 7  rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8  And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!**

Jesus humbled himself by taking the very nature of a servant and becoming obedient to death. Although the centurion was a soldier he had Jesus’ humility in his spirit. He found himself as a servant before Jesus.

Now look at verses 7b-8. **“But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8For 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.”**

The centurion explained the reason why Jesus did not need to come to his house. It was because Jesus had authority, and therefore just saying the word was enough to heal his servant. Although the servant was about to die away from Jesus he did not doubt that Jesus’ words which represented Jesus’ authority had such a power to heal his servant without any problem.

As a man with authority and under authority he knew how authority works.

Merriam Webster’s dictionary defines ‘**authority**’ as “**the power to give orders or make decisions: the power or right or control someone or something.”**

Somehow the centurion figured out based on his own experience as an army officer that Jesus had such an authority. He knew that he could not command his servant ‘be healed’ although he could command him to do this or to do that. He acknowledged that Jesus had a higher authority.

Indeed Jesus’ words has authority as the word of the Creator God. When Jesus walked on the water Jesus commanded Peter, ‘come’, and Peter could walk on the water. But he began to sink when he looked at the wind and waves and lost his faith in Jesus’ word. Then Jesus said, ‘why did you doubt?’ Jesus’ words still had same power but when Peter doubted he could not experience the power and authority of Jesus’ words.

Once when Jesus was hungry he saw a fig tree. But he could not find a fig and then he said, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” His disciples heard him say it. The next day they found that the fig tree withered from the roots. Then Jesus said, ‘Have faith in God.’ If they believed and said to a mountain, “Go,throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them.” They would experience such power from God.

Most of all, Jesus’ word has healing power. And we all need healing. When we speak our human words wisely we bring healing. **Proverbs 12:18 “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”** How much more healing can we bring if we speak the word of God? Even when our human words can bring ‘healing’, how much more healing will the word of God bring?

Look at verses 9-10.

**9When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” 10Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.**

 Jesus was amazed at the faith of the centurion because he did not have bible study but he learned such great faith. Jesus said that he had not found such great faith even in Israel. “Even in Israel” probably means ‘even among those who learned the bible all the time and who have believed the Lord down through generations.” Indeed his faith amazed Jesus. And his servant was healed.

Today’s story shows that the centurion was a man of faith. So he was a man of love, and a man of humility, and a man of faith. Especially he believed the authority of Jesus. When he believed the authority of Jesus he was able to believe the authority of Jesus’ words. Then he could say, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Jesus said in **Matthew 28:18-20.**

**18Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

Before commanding his disciples, Jesus revealed the truth that he had all authority in heaven and on earth. Why do you think that is such an important information for his disciples before they are sent out?

It is because it will remove fear of men from the hearts of his disciples. “To go and make disciples of all nations” is a hard job. Most of all, they will suffer from fear of men as they face a lot of persecutions and troubles. They will suffer from fear of failure and despair. What then can help them to overcome fear of men and sense of failure? It is none other than the knowledge that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore they only need to fear Jesus and obey him.

The key verse, “But say the word, and my servant will be healed” can teach us three things.

First, it can teach us the importance of saying.

**Romans 10:9-10**

**[9] If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.**

So ‘saying’ is important, too. Just believing in our hearts is not enough. We need to declare with our mouth “Jesus is the Lord”. With our mouth that we profess our faith, we are saved. Truly saying is important. Our culture is good at ‘saying.” In our culture we say “I love you” many times to our wives or children. In Korean culture it does not have it. Korean husbands feel awkward to say ‘I love you’ to their wives because Korean culture does not have it. So I like our culture in terms of communicating many things clearly. For example, I heard ‘thank you for asking’. By saying this the person who says removes any possibility of negative interpretation from the one who asks the question. It is just a fantastic way of communicating. If you are silent after someone asks you a question the person who asks you the question can interpret your silence as rejection or unwelcome or many other negative ways. But by saying “thank you for asking” you cleared up all of those negative possibilities. What I am saying is ‘saying’ is important.

Thinking and our thought are important. But bible does not say, “God created things by his thoughts.’ Jesus does not heal anyone by his thought. But numerous places in the bible say Jesus healed by saying, and God created the heavens and the earth by his command. So saying is important.

Secondly, ‘But say the word, and my servant will be healed’ teaches us the importance of saying the word of God. What we say is very important because our words also carries tremendous power as we saw it from Dr. Emoto’s experiment.

Now when what we say is so important, what is the best words we can say? The word of God. When we say the word of God, we are most powerful in our words but at the same time most influential and positive.

The best word we can say is ‘the word of God’. Truly to say the word of God is the best word we can say. In this regard the bible study is such precious occasions.

Thirdly, ‘But say the word, and my servant will be healed’ shows that Jesus’ word has healing power. We know the word of God makes us born again. We know that the word of God makes us wise in salvation through faith in Jesus. The word of God can be used for rebuking, correcting, teaching, and training in righteousness so that man of God can do every good work. But today’s passage clearly shows the word of the Lord Jesus has authority to heal.

We need healing not only physically but also spiritually. When I was born again by the word of God I was so sure about the power of God’s word, and I was diligent in teaching the word of God. As times goes by, I saw that the word of God works for those who listen, and it does not work for those who do not listen. So my faith in the word of God became weak. Generally I believe that the word of Jesus has authority to heal. But I did not believe it will work for everyone. But when I saw the healing of Neal I was amazed. I could not believe he could be healed. To my eyes he was beyond healing. I believed word of God together with medication will help him. But he was healed by the word of God. When mother Barry said that Neal needs the word of God, love, acceptance, and trust, like all of us, I was amazed to see why she mentioned the word of God first. I agree he needs love, acceptance, and trust, like all of us, but does he need the word of God? Well he got a seminary education. It seems he does not need the word of God.

Then I began to think why she said Neal and all of us need the word of God, mentioning it as the first item for him and us. Then I realized the word of God has authority to heal us, and we need healing continually.

Then, how can I strengthen my faith in the word of God for its healing power? Yesterday’s daily bread key verse helped me. Yesterday’s daily bread key verse is **Genesis 9:11 “I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”** When I look at it I was disappointed. The Lord used the big word, ‘covenant’, but the content of the covenant is just a simple fact that there will be no more flood to destroy the earth.

I was wondering what kind of covenant this is. This covenant does not have any kind of command given to Noah such as not to eat certain tree. So I was wondering what kind of covenant it is. Then God reminded me two things. The first thing about the covenant is that the covenant was established by God. It does not require any obedience on man’s side. God established it as a fact. The second thing is the covenant is just showing the fact and reality. What I mean is this.

What if someone does not believe the covenant of God? He will suffer from fear of flood whenever heavy rain comes down. But to those who believe the covenant they will not suffer from any fear of destruction of the whole earth by flood. The covenant displayed the simple fact and reality. Those who believe do not suffer from fear, but those who do not believe will suffer from fear.

When I think about the covenant in Jesus’ blood it is the same. The covenant was established by God alone. It has nothing to do with man’s obedience. Sin and death was destroyed through Jesus’ death and resurrection. The covenant of God shows a fact. What if someone does not believe it? He will suffer from fear of death. But to those who believe the covenant they will not suffer from fear of death. God’s covenant in Jesus’ blood is a simple fact. Only those who do not believe suffer from fear of death.

So the fact that Jesus’ word has authority to heal is a simple fact like the fact that there will be no flood. Whether we believe it or not, it still has the same authority. If we believe it we can enjoy the healing power of Jesus, but if we do not believe it we do not enjoy it. We will just suffer from our wounds and scars without experiencing healing. Which is better for us? To enjoy healing from the word of Jesus or just to remain as sick people and suffer from wounds and scars? The answer is obvious.

 In sum, today’s passage teaches us the centurion is a man of love, humility, and faith. Today’s key verse teaches me three things; the importance of saying, the importance of saying the word of God, and the importance of believing the healing power of Jesus’ word. And we all need healing continually. So we need the word of God all the more. And we can bring a lot of healing by sharing the word of God. We all need to say the word so that the word of Jesus may bring healing to our loved ones.

One word: But say the word, and my servant will be healed.