

*Hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught... (Titus 1:9)*

In our three-year lectionary cycle, each year focuses on one of the Synoptic Gospels. This year, we have been hearing from Luke's Gospel. Luke reminds us over and over how powerful the Word of the Lord is. For example, the crowds ask, *What is the word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits and they come out!* (4:36). Unfortunately, many people in Israel were unable to appreciate fully the Word's power. Instead, it's a Roman centurion – a Gentile – who showed his faith in the Word of God.

If Easter weren't so late this year, we would have heard, on the last Sunday in May, about this centurion. He had a sick servant, so he sent the Jewish elders of the town to Jesus to have him come to his house to heal the servant. The elders tried to convince Jesus this way: *He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue* (7:5). But as Jesus agreed and came near the house, the centurion sent friends. This time, the friends came with a message directly from the centurion. *Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too 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 servant, 'Do this,' and he does it* (7:6–8). How amazing! The centurion not only trusts that Jesus' Word is powerful to save, but he trusts in that Word despite his own unworthiness. Though he is a man seen as worthy to his peers, he doesn't even see himself worthy enough to be in the presence of the Lord. But, all he needs is the Word of Jesus, and that will be enough. When the friends return to the house, they find the centurion's servant healed.

How do *we* seek the Lord? With what words, and with what intentions, do *we* pray? Do we seek God as worthy ourselves because of who we are, what we've done, or how much we've given in our lives and of our riches? Or do we seek him despite our unworthiness, trusting that his Word to us is sure?

The power of God's Word isn't in our worthiness. God's Word comes to us in power *despite* our unworthiness. Jesus, the very Word of God become flesh, came not to save the righteous, but sinners. He came not to call the worthy, but the unworthy. The truth is: *While we were still sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). Despite your sin, despite your pride, despite your unworthiness, Jesus Christ came into the world and took those sins upon himself on the cross. Despite any doubt, he was raised from the dead for your new life.

This Sunday – like every Sunday – we come together to hear the Word of the Lord for us. That Word is powerful. That Word is faithful. That Word is sure. This is why we say, "Amen!" ("Yes, it shall be so!"). In that Word, we find hope and assurance again from a God who calls even to us, unworthy sinners. *Your sins are forgiven.* This Word is sure. *This is my body, given for you... This is my blood, shed for you.* These words are sure, and they are for us. Despite our unworthiness, which we confess before God day-in and day-out, the Lord is powerful to keep his word. Jesus himself said, *I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also* (John 14:3)...to which we say, *Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!* (Revelation 22:20).

-Pastor Squire

"Restrain, O Lord, the human pride that seeks to thrust Your truth aside or with some man-made thoughts of things would dim the words Your Spirit sings."

("Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide", *LSB* 585, v. 5)