

Only Say the Word

(based on Matthew 8:5-10, 13)

For several days, Jesus had been on the mountainside teaching people about God's ways. When he came down from the mountain, he entered a town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Even though Jesus spent time in this town, and would have been known around the town for his teaching and healings, it was a surprise when a centurion approached him.

I wonder, "What is a centurion?"

The disciples stiffened. What did a commander of the Roman guard want with Jesus? The sun glinted off the centurion's sword hanging at his side, a reminder of his power and position. But Jesus saw the man was clearly worried.

"Lord, my servant is lying at home and he can't move. He is in a lot of pain," the centurion said to Jesus.

Without another word, Jesus said, "I will come and cure him."

Now the disciples were stunned. A centurion was asking for Jesus' help! He must have heard what was being said about Jesus, seen the men and women he had healed; but this man was puzzling. He had the power of the Roman army, yet he came to Jesus. He could have other servants, yet he cared so deeply for this servant that he asked for help.

The centurion lowered his head and replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof."

I wonder, "Why did the centurion think he was not worthy?"

The disciples were confused. What was this man, who certainly had position and power, saying? Did this commander of the Roman guard really truly understand who Jesus was?

I wonder, "Who does the centurion think Jesus is?"

The centurion stood straight again and said, "Only say the word, and my servant will be healed. I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and the servant does it."

Jesus was amazed. This man recognized that Jesus was from God and had God's power and authority. "Only say the word . . ." Jesus thought to himself and smiled.

Jesus turned to those around him and said, "I've never seen this kind of faith in all I've met, and yet you are the very people who are supposed to know all about God and how God works."

Then Jesus turned to the centurion. He wanted to embrace him, but he knew that would be too much for the soldier. So, with tenderness in his voice, Jesus said, "What you believed could happen has happened. Go and see." At that moment, the centurion's servant became well.

