

Good morning. Gosh, it's good to be here. It's been maybe a year. I'm not sure how long it's been. I should have looked to see, but it's always good to be in Bedford.

Shawna, that rocked. The best part about coming to Bedford is even if the sermon fails, the worship is amazing. And I'm grateful. So thank you very much. Thank you, Alan.

I want to thank Tim for inviting me today. It's great to be here and to be able to share a message with you all. I also want to let you know that Pam, who is standing right here, she has been going with me all summer long to preach at different churches. And it's been amazing. So when you haven't seen her here, she's probably been with me and she is going to bless you, actually, in the middle of my sermon today by singing.

And then I'll conclude the message after her song in the middle. So I didn't want you to think that it's a, wow, that's a short sermon, but she'll come up in the middle and really add some depth to what I want to talk about today. So, as Alan mentioned, I really love working with college kids. There's several of them that have popped in today that surprised me, and I'm grateful for that. So my ministry right now, and the last, well, really ten years plus, has been on the IU campus.

I love that. I love investing in kids lives. And just back in April was little 500. And that's one of my favorite times of the year. But most people only think of little 500 as being, oh, my, what goes on that weekend.

But I'm here to tell you that Jesus is alive and well on the IU campus and on that weekend. And I get to invest in a lot of young people's lives, men and women. I've got one of my female writers right up front here. We get to just invest in their lives and we have them over for dinner. We do anything we can just to encourage them as they do their ministry to other teams on campus.

So that's maybe a little insight that you didn't know, but it's. It's amazing what really does happen. The unfortunate part is the media only lets you see the other things. So I just want you to know Indiana University is doing quite well and Jesus is alive. And there's so many kids that love worshipping him.

So about right during that season, we had a small group of writers over and Julie fixed dinner for him. And it was incredible. But when we were sitting around the table, we were talking about different things. And I asked them, I said, what amazes you in life? And they had to think for a minute.

And I think sometimes, you know, you know, we take so much for granted that we don't think about what truly amazes us. But after talking for

a while, they came up with some things. One said, the human body, you know, it's truly amazing how our eyes can see and how different parts depend on each other. One said, nature, you know, it evolves, it changes, it dies, it grows. One shared, and I love this, that it was so amazing that here were a group of students and me sitting around a table that two years prior came from different places, didn't know each other, but somehow God had assembled them all together, and that truly is amazing.

So if I were to ask you today, what amazes you?

What would you say? I think one thing we might be right on our minds is the Olympics. You know, they're incredible. Not to mention that 22 IU graduates are participating in the Olympics this time around. And these athletes are amazing.

They have amazing ability. My son loves to talk to me about basketball plays in the tournament. He goes, you know that half court, last second shot? That's so amazing. The eclipse, that was amazing, right?

Everybody probably saw that, maybe didn't know what to expect, but you go, wow, that's truly amazing. Or maybe it's the sunset. So when I put this picture up, this is what my wife Julie loves. Every time we go to Florida, she wants to go out and see the sunset because she says it's amazing. And then the last couple of falls, I've gone with my son James to Montana.

He loves to hike, climb, camp. And those mountains we get to look at, they truly are amazing.

Or maybe it's little facts like the croissant was first made in Austria, not in France. Or the pasta was first made in China, not Italy. You know, those little facts amaze us. There are two times in the gospels where Jesus was amazed. You may be able to come up with one of them, maybe not both of them, because we gloss over things like that.

But there are two times when the word amazed is associated with something that Jesus sees. So we're going to look at at least one of those times that Jesus was amazed and unpack it and see how Jesus would challenge each of us to understand the deeper intent. We're going to look today at Luke 7:11-17. And if you are able, and you can stand, I want us to read together the word of God. I'll read with you, and I want you to read aloud the passages that I think.

They're either underlined or highlighted. It'll make sense when you see them on the screen. So let's read this together. When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There was a centurion servant whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.

The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him. This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue. So Jesus went with them. 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.

That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word and my servant will be healed. For I am a man myself, under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one go, and he goes. I tell this one come, and he comes.

I say to this servant, do this and he does it. When 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. Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant. Well, this is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. Let us pray. Father in heaven, allow us to see in your word purpose that we may apply to our lives. Allow ourselves to be challenged and to take steps at growing our faith and seeing your goodness in every day of our lives. In your name we pray.

Amen. You may be seated.

In these ten verses, we see that Jesus was amazed by this Roman soldier's faith. Do you know the other time where Jesus was recorded as being amazed? It's found in the gospel of Mark six six, where Jesus, talking to his followers, made this observation. He was amazed by their lack of faith. The Jewish people, those following and listening to him, were questioning where Jesus got his words.

He was just a carpenter or how he accomplished his works. They listened. But their choice to doubt and their lack of trust amazed Jesus. You know, we never read that. Jesus was amazed at art or architecture or even the wonders of creation.

He was never amazed at human problem solving or invention. Jesus wasn't amazed at the piety of the Jewish people or the military dominance of the Roman Empire. But Jesus was amazed at faith when it was present in an unexpected place. And when it was absent, where it should have been. So let's unpack this passage.

Together we read, and with great humility, I want us to embrace what I believe Jesus' intent was. For all of us who read it. Let's go back to the beginning. When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. There was a centurion's servant whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die.

Now. Capernaum was a small fishing village near the sea of Galilee, where Jesus had performed many of his miracles. A centurion was a roman officer, not liked by the jewish people. They represented the oppression of the roman government over them and often abusive. But this roman officer was different and was not looking to fool Jesus.

We can see a few things here. He highly valued his servant who was sick. Servants in that day were treated as property at best. Luke, our author, who was a physician, believed this man to be very sick, maybe even near death. Whatever his sickness, it is worth noticing the concern of the roman officer as I studied this.

This would not have been a typical centurion, roman officer characteristic. And Jesus saw the heart of this centurion. Let's keep reading verses three through five. The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some of the elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him.

This man deserves to have you do this because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue. Now, there's another remarkable thing about this Romans officer. He has a reputation for loving the jewish people. He even built them a synagogue, a place for God's people to worship. How unusual.

But this is what I believe. God uses unlikely people to help others see who he truly is. So as ironic as it would seem, the jewish people plead with Jesus to help him. If there was ever a man who deserves to be helped, it's him. I want you to hang on to those words for a minute.

If there was ever a man who deserves to be helped, it's him. You know, this reminds me of the first chapter of luke. We tend to forget that God chose wise Mendez, non Jewish, from the other side of the world to come and see his son. Did you ever think about that? Looking at the story of the roman officer, we see a similar theme.

I believe the roman officer is chosen by God, just as the wise men were, to show others that God is truly who he says he is. And their faith is strong, where it would be least expected or even believed throughout the scriptures. God uses unlikely people to impact lives for the kingdom in powerful ways. Let's continue. So Jesus went with them.

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. That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under authority with soldiers under me. I say to them,

go.

And he goes. I say to this one, come. And he comes. I say to my servant, do this. And he does it.

Isn't it interesting the way the jewish people see the roman soldier and the way the roman soldier sees himself? This is what I love about scripture. Even when we don't recognize it initially, there are deeper lessons. The jewish people see the roman soldier worthy of having Jesus heal his servant. But the roman soldier finds himself unworthy to come to Jesus.

So how often do we find ourselves thinking we are worthy of Jesus love because of the things that we do? I come to church every Sunday morning. Hey, God, check my attendance record. I serve in the children's ministry. And God, you know how those kids can be sometimes.

I joined a small group. And God, you know how those adults can be sometimes. And God in Bloomington, I'm even kind when the IU students drive so poorly and are on their phones when they cross the street. You know, I never mess up in a roundabout or even glance at my phone. God, I think I am worthy of having you heal me.

Just look at all I do. But that's not faith. That's putting ourselves in some kind of category of deserving his love. So the jewish people, followers of Christ, felt the roman soldier was worthy of having his servant healed. But in humility of all we should be.

The roman soldier deemed himself unworthy. And in a teaching manner so often shown by Jesus time and time again, he has mercy on the roman soldier servant. Because let's look at the very last part. When 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.

Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant, well, it was his faith that amazed Jesus, not anything that he had done to deserve his favor. I think Luke shares this story because he wants us to understand that Jesus saw the strong faith of the roman soldier an unlikely believer, and in his humility and reverence, deemed himself unworthy even in the presence of Jesus. Much less feeling. He deserved his healing hand, his servant. But he believes he can.

That's faith. He believes Jesus has authority over all things. That's faith. So let me read those verses six and seven again. Lord, don't trouble yourself, 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. But

say the word and my servant will be healed. This is what the roman soldier was saying. Even if you don't heal my servant, my faith knows you can just with a word. So hear me on this.

We don't deserve anything from God. He doesn't owe us anything. We can't do deeds to convince God to answer our prayers. That's not faith. Everything that God gives us comes from his generosity, his grace, his goodness, understanding.

That is faith. So when I read this, I have to do a self examination. When I look at my life, would Jesus be amazed by my faith or my lack of faith? How about you? Surely, since we're all in church on a Sunday morning, we may believe that we have an unwavering faith.

But if we're honest with ourselves, and if Jesus were to look at our lives, would he be amazed? And if so, how? Maybe at different times in your life both would be true. I know that's true. For me.

I can think of times when I didn't rely upon the faith I claimed to have and acted upon a situation, feeling I had to be in control. And feeling I had to be in control was really saying in this or that situation, I am not believing that God is in control. Control I am. Maybe there are times when I really don't feel Jesus will act on my behalf. And maybe I'm afraid to let the great teacher teach me what he needs me to see more clearly.

I remember when both of my sons hit the age of 18, ready for college. My oldest, sitting right out there, had decided to attend IU and live at the christian student fellowship house. Well, I couldn't have been more ecstatic. He was living out what I only wished I could have done when I attended IU. But my younger son, James, he was not feeling called to IU.

He was feeling called to either butler or Xavier in probably ways that I'm ashamed of. I selfishly tried to convince him that I knew what was best for him, but he felt called to attend Xavier, a Jesuit Catholic small college in Cincinnati. Reluctantly, I realized he needed to spread his wings and find where he belonged. The great teacher taught me quite a lesson. James thrived in that new community met incredible friends, found without my prodding, a protestant church where he grew and where I probably felt Jesus wasn't acting on my behalf to keep James at IU like Joseph had gone.

He was really acting on my behalf to show me what my son truly needed. And there have been times when I believe I've had an abundance of faith. Probably where it's most apparent in my life is thinking about where God truly wants me.

I believe he's led me to be a devoted husband, a focused and loving father, a discipler on the IU campus. And I believe, and I could be

wrong, that if there is another chapter of where he needs me to be, he will make it clear I have faith that wherever he wants me to go, I will go. Everything that God gives us comes from his generosity, his grace and his goodness. John reminds us in his book, and perhaps one of the most important things we must embrace fully is when Jesus tells us this. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you will find peace in the world.

You will have trials, but I have overcome the world. The goodness of God. His mercy never fails. He is faithful. He is a father and a friend.

He is so, so good. Do you love him? Trust him? Have an unwavering faith for him.

I love you, Lord.

Oh, your mercy never fails me. And all my days I've been held in your hands from the moment that I wake up until I lay my hand oh, I will see all the goodness of God.

And all my life you have been faithful and all my life you have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able. Oh, I will see all the goodness of God. I love your voice.

You have led me through the fire in darkest night. You are close like no other. I've known you as a father, I've known you as a friend and I have lived in the goodness of God.

Your goodness is running after running after me. Your goodness is running after me. After running after me. With my life laid down surrender now, I give you everything.

Your goodness is running after running after me.

And all my life you have been faithful.

And all my life you have been so, so good. With every breath that I am able. Oh, I will see of the goodness of goddess.

When Paul was addressing the new church in Thessalonica, just one year into existence and in the midst of much prosecution, I want you to embrace the words that Paul shared to that new church. We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightfully so, because your faith is growing more and more and the love you have for each other is increasing. Therefore, among God's churches, we boast about your perseverance and faith. Isn't that encouraging? Their faith is flourishing.

Their love is increasing. I challenge you to be a church where your

faith is flourishing and that your love for others is increasing. Do you know what I've heard the last two years? Sherwood Bedford has had the most impactful Easter service we have ever experienced. Maundy Thursday.

The dream of Roger Gales that became a reality has set the bar high for worship and preparing hearts for the hope of Easter Sunday. You should be very, very proud of that. It's a moment that I absolutely embrace, and I hear talk about it for weeks. I hope to spend more time with you in the future. You set an example of a church that truly embraces love.

When our faith trumps our selfish thoughts, he will find us worthy because he loves us. As Paul continues speaking to that new church in Thessalonica, he reminds us this, you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God. I received my counseling certification a few years ago. I did it for one reason. I saw many college students struggling with anxiety after Covid, a season where isolation overtook reason, but also seeing them believe a lie, that they were somehow unworthy.

A life. Surrender to Christ is a worthy life. Recognizing his love for us can only make our faith stronger, and it's not easy. Our next generation leaders, or for us, we are inundated with messages every day that affects our self worth because we feel that being satisfied comes from money, power, or approval. None of those things will bring us true joy or are part of God's plan and promise for us.

Or how about those powerful naysayers in our lives? Our critics would quickly say, in reference to our faith, oh, your Jesus is just a crutch. But the truth is, Jesus is the only crutch that will allow us to walk like never before. He stabilizes our feet. Isn't that powerful?

Isn't that the best? Jesus is the only crutch that will allow us to walk like never before. He stabilizes our feet. The goodness of God that Pam sang about rests in our ability to own our faith and live it out every single day. Are we living a life that's pleasing to him?

Could that feeling of unworthiness evaporate by surrendering our selfish ways and relying on him and not ourselves? Can we repent and accept the forgiveness that comes from him and him alone? Here are some truths that I want us to remember that are about being committed to a life of faith in Christ. Peter says, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim his excellencies from him who calls you out of darkness into his marvelous light. And Paul said in Galatians, I have been crucified with Christ.

It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life I now live in the flesh. I live by faith in the son of God who loved me

and gave himself for me. So would Jesus be amazed by your faith? Would he be amazed by mine? I believe this.

The roadblock to totally embracing faith is that we doubt that Jesus will truly act on our behalf. I know that Jesus can heal. I know that Jesus can provide. I know that Jesus can protect, that Jesus can give me wisdom. But will he?

The difference is a person of faith knows he can, so we trust him. And if he doesn't act as we had hoped, remember that it's written in the book of Isaiah. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways. Your ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways.

And my thoughts, your thoughts. Those moments in our life when we're unjustly accused and lied to and we cry out for the truth. Know that faith is knowing Jesus can make all wrongs right in his time, and living for him is where our hearts must go and not spiraling into things that we cannot control. God's plan isn't always clear to us, but that is no reason to lose faith. If I understood everything about God, he would not be God.

So I will keep believing in him, trusting him, elevating my faith, and know that his goodness is running after me each and every day. Jesus can, so I trust him. And that is the firm foundation of faith. Like you, I don't know what tomorrow will bring, but whatever happens, I know that he can do more than I can possibly imagine. His way, his plan and his goodness will prevail always.

Let's stand. I'll pray, and then we'll worship together.

Father, we come to you broken, but with hearts that love you and trust you. Forgive us in the times we allow ourselves not to surrender to you. Forgive us for those moments when our faith wanes, but know we are committed to keeping our eyes focused on you, your word. And we know that in your time you will embrace us and show us everything that you have prepared for us. We love you, we need you, and seek your unwavering goodness in your son's name.

Amen.

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