

Luke's Gospel: Chapter 7

Healing the sick, raising the dead, forgiving a sinner...

Jesus heals a centurion's servant (Luke 7 v 1 to 10)

This centurion was devout, kind and humble – yet he was not only a Gentile, but a Roman soldier, and therefore by default an instrument of Israel's oppression. It seems the centurion did not think he was worthy of a personal meeting with Jesus, and perhaps thought Jesus would not want to enter a Gentile's house, so he sent Jewish leaders as his representatives to Jesus (v 3).

- What was unusual about the centurion – in his attitude towards his servant, and in his attitude to Jesus?
- How did the centurion's understanding of the military 'chain of command' (v 8) help him believe in Jesus' authority over sickness? Why did Jesus 'marvel' (v 10)?

Jesus raises a widow's son (Luke 7 v 11 to 17)

This story only occurs in Luke's gospel. "A man who had died was being carried out" (v 12) – the tragedy is compounded when we are told that the boy was the only son of his mother and that the mother herself was a widow. The loss of her only son meant that there was nothing in her future except a life of poverty and misery.

"Young man, I say to you, arise" (v 14) – Romans 4 v 17 shows that this is what God alone does: God, "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." Jesus could speak to a dead person and bring that person to life.

- How does this story show Jesus' care and compassion for suffering people, and also his authority over sickness and death?

Messengers from John the Baptist (Luke 7 v 18 to 35)

- "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another" (v 19)? Why did John, who previously recognised Jesus as the Messiah and who baptized him, ask this question? Remember, where was John at this time (see Matthew 11 v 2)? Jesus' answer (v 22) was to tell John that the prophecies regarding the Messiah (e.g. Isaiah 35 v 5, 6) were being fulfilled.
- How did Jesus rate John? See verses 26 and 28. But what does he mean by "the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (v 28)?

Verses 31 to 34: "You are like sulky children," Jesus says. Those who have a heart to criticise will always find something to criticise. Many people were not pleased with *either* John or Jesus.

"Yet wisdom is justified by all her children" (v 35) or "by her deeds" (Matthew 11 v 19) – wise people are shown by their wise actions, including the wisdom to accept *both* Jesus and John, for who they were, and for what were called to be...

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A sinful woman forgiven (Luke 7 v 36 to 50)

- Compare the Pharisee's attitude to Jesus with that of the 'woman of the city'. How did Jesus answer the Pharisee's criticisms in verse 39? How did the parable apply to him?
- What made the woman act as she did? On what basis did Jesus forgive the woman (v 50)?

Again, this story only occurs in Luke's gospel. Jesus uses a simple and easily understood parable to illustrate the point: the more we are forgiven, the more we should love. We don't need to go and sin more in order to be forgiven more, but we do need to do become more sensitive to our current state of sinfulness.

"Do you see this woman?" (v 44) – Jesus explains the motive of the woman's deeply emotional devotion. She loved Jesus because in faith she anticipated his forgiveness.

Of the works done in this chapter, this is the greatest. Sickness that is healed (as in the centurion's servant), or life that is restored (as in the widow's son) are not permanent works of healing, because those bodies will one day die again. But sins that are forgiven are forgiven forever...