

## Surprising Jesus

Hi guys. As Yucan said, my name is Rhett and I am an intern here at Ethnos. Welcome back to you regulars and a special welcome to those of you that are checking out Ethnos for the first time. Thank you all for coming out. We are going to dive back into our Jesus: encounter series, a journey through the book of Luke for skeptics, seekers, and followers. Today I get to talk to you about some things that I think are really neat and that are near and dear to my heart. Let's pray together and then we can get started.

**[Prayer:** Lord, we thank You and praise You for who You are. I pray that right now You would open our hearts and minds to what You have to say to us. Amen]

Now what if I told you there were ways to shock Jesus, to surprise Him- in a good way? Some of you might be thinking, "Yeah that sounds pretty good, tell me more". Others might be wondering "Why would anyone want to shock Jesus? And what in the world could *I do* to surprise Him?". And still others might be questioning what Jesus has to do with them at all, maybe starting to think, "If I get up real quietly, will this guy see me make a break for the door?". The answer to that one is yes, so don't try anything funny. But to answer the others I think we should think about what kind of relationship we have or would like to have with Jesus.

Picture the alternatives to pleasantly surprising Jesus: I have three brothers and growing up we would do this awful thing where you would wait around the corner at the end of this long hallway that went down the center of the house and when your victim had walked there way down and was close enough you would jump out and yell something like "HEYWHATDOYOUTHINKYOU'REDOING!" and the one who got surprised would scream, or cry, or hit you. That's one alternative. We could surprise Jesus in a bad way. Something you may find interesting is that in our passage for today we will see one of the only two times Jesus was recorded as having "marveled" at anything. The only other time is seen in Mark 6:6 where it says "He marveled because of their unbelief" after He was rejected in His hometown of Nazareth. Not exactly a good surprise. The other alternative would be to not surprise Him at all; to do exactly what most people who are like us would do in our situation.

Now if you are somebody that considers your relationship with Jesus to be one of love and reverence then I would like to suggest that pleasantly surprising Jesus is one of the *greatest things* you can do. If you are somebody that considers your relationship with Jesus to be one of indifference, or even animosity, then I would like to suggest that pleasantly surprising Jesus is one of the *greatest things* you can do! I know that might sound odd, but hang in there and you can see if you agree with me at the end. You can surprise Jesus with a certain type of faith. As we go along to day I hope to show you two ways you can surprise Jesus with this faith as well as demonstrate to you why surprising Jesus is something we should *all* aim to do.

The Gospel of Luke was written almost two thousand years ago sometime in the early sixties AD and records the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Our passage for today puts us somewhere in the middle of Jesus' life of ministry and as we pick up from where we left off two weeks ago, we find that Jesus has just finished preaching to a large crowd in the region of Galilee about following His leadership and building our lives on the foundation of rock. He will now enter the near by city of Capernaum.

Now if you can open up your Bible or to the inside of your bulletin we will look at our passage for today: Luke 7:1-10 and answer some of our questions. That is Luke, Chapter Seven, verses one through ten. Luke is right after Matthew and Mark in the New Testament portion of your Bible. If you hit John you have gone too far. Everyone got the passage in front of them? Ok.

### **\*Read Passage\***

Wow. Isn't that awesome? We see here in verse nine that the centurion causes Jesus to marvel at his faith. And this is the type of surprise I am talking about here, to marvel at something, to be amazed. It's not that Jesus had no idea what was about to happen, but He was amazed at what happened. But what was so special about this centurion and his faith? Let's now examine the passage and our own lives to see if we can better understand this event. We will look at two ways you can surprise Jesus with your faith and then finally we will think about why that is something we should all be doing.

### **Sermon body:**

**I.** The first way you can make Jesus marvel at your faith is to *admit your need*. Admit your personal need for Jesus. You can make Jesus *marvel at your faith* when you admit personal need for His help no

matter who you are right now. Lets explore this idea by looking at one common obstacle to obtaining faith, and how that same obstacle presents with us with an opportunity to do the amazing... to make Jesus marvel.

The obstacle I want to talk about is something I'm calling the "But they aren't the type" mentality. Many people may not seem like 'the type' of person that wants help and healing from Jesus. They may be the last person one would expect to admit their need for Jesus. However, people of all ethnic, religious, political, economic and social backgrounds can respond to Jesus, no matter what our preconceived notions about them tell us.

If we look at the passage we see a great example of this. In verse two it says this man was a centurion. The centurion was a gentile at a time when Jesus was ministering to Jews, God's original chosen people. In other words, his ethnic and religious background did not make him a prime candidate for Jesus seeking. Also, military officers such as the centurion were generally seen as enemies to the Jews because of the imposed rule and unwelcome presence. So, even this guy's occupation made him seem like he would be a lost cause. The people there had little reason to think this man would call on Jesus or that Jesus would agree to help. He definitely was not 'the type'.

Now I want you to ask yourself: Are there people you feel don't or can't have faith? A college student who likes to party, an atheist co-worker at a science lab or research facility, a neighbor that has grown up in another religion, a family member who is a wealthy businessman and seems to only care about money... Some of you may know that I myself was once one of those people who was not the type. Not the type to admit my need for Jesus. Not the type to humble myself before God and ask for His help. I was a proud agnostic... I was one of those people you would see and think, "No way will he ever listen. He is too stubborn. He's just not 'the type'". But, if you haven't already noticed, I have not only recognized my need for Jesus, but I also made a conscious decision to give my life to Him— much to the surprise of everyone who knew me, including myself.

So, if people who are not 'the type' like myself, like the centurion from our passage, like your co-worker or family member *can* admit personal need for the help of Jesus and *can* surprise Jesus this way, then what does all of this tell us we should be doing? We should be telling anybody and everybody about Jesus! Tell ANYBODY and EVERYBODY about Jesus. You might be surprised who responds. In verse three we see that the centurion 'heard about Jesus' before sending for His help. It doesn't specify how he heard but can't you just imagine some excited guy, from that crowd Jesus had just preached to, running around grabbing random people by the shirt and shaking them and yelling in there faces "Have you heard the about Jesus!?" You know, so blinded with joy that he completely disregards that two foot bubble of personal space that we like to have. I like that. And although I don't recommend yelling in people's faces or invading their personal space, there is something to be said for having that kind of mentality. We should be thinking of giving up our "but they aren't the type" mentality for an "everyone can be the type" mentality. Don't let your preconceived notions about people stop you from sharing.

Now if you are here and you haven't yet accepted Jesus as your Lord and savior, know that you can respond to Jesus even today. Maybe you are sitting there thinking, "But Rhett I'm *really* not the type... I only came here today because I wanted to get my coworker off my back so he would stop inviting me to church!" Well don't count yourself out yet. You can be like that centurion, a person nobody expects it from; one that shocks everybody. Not only do you have the potential to give your life to God, but you can make Jesus marvel at your faith! As we just looked at, anyone from any type of background can call on Jesus!.

We can't earn God's help, not even by good works. No one is 'worthy'. We see in verse six that although the centurion has funded the building of the local synagogue in Capernaum and was even vouched for by the Jewish elders, he says he is not worthy to be in the presence of Jesus, recognizing he has not *earned* Jesus' help. Yet, he has this dying servant whom he really cares about. He understands that he needs Jesus. He has faith in the authority of Jesus, it's that faith that results in the healing, and his faith makes Jesus marvel. So we can surprise Jesus with our faith when we admit our need, especially if we aren't the type. We have seen the first way you can surprise Jesus with your faith. Let's move on.

**II.** A second way you can make Jesus marvel at your faith is if you *acknowledge His authority in difficult situations*. Having faith in Jesus' authority may be more difficult in certain contexts. I'm sure many of you have experienced this personally. One's faith may be more likely to waiver in contexts without Christian influence, fellowship, and support and when one is unable to directly see or understand how God is working in a situation.

Look at verse seven with me. The centurion said, “Just say the word. I know you don’t need to come under my roof to help me. Just say the word and he will be healed.” Do you understand how truly amazing this is!? Look back to the beginning of the passage. Does it say, “and when he witnessed the miracles of Jesus he sent some Jewish elders? No! It says he sent them, “when he heard about Jesus”. No where between this man hearing about Jesus and his confession of Jesus’ authority does he ever come face to face with Jesus. Furthermore, he doesn’t need Jesus to come to his house to perform the miracle. He doesn’t need Jesus to show up in person! This man had faith! Not just any faith but faith that Jesus had not even seen in all of Israel! The Jews, the decedents of Abraham who was the ‘Father of faith’, didn’t even have faith this great! And so he made Jesus marvel.

Let me share something from my own life to help illustrate this point. This past year I have had three surgeries that had to do with some nerve damage in my left hand. My second surgery was probably the worst because they took nerve from my arm and leg and had to detach and sew back my peck muscle in the process. The first few days after the surgery I was kind of a mess. I could only use one arm, my leg was so sore I couldn’t really walk, and I was tired and in pain almost constantly.

I was really fortunate during that time to be surrounded by people who demonstrated Christ like love and gave me assurance of my faith. I had people to keep me company and take care of me. I got meals, phone calls, get well cards, and home visits from friends from church and we would pray together. My environment was as supportive and loving as possible yet my physical suffering still affected my relationship with God. And although I still had faith, I was a little bitter about the way things were going. Now if that was my attitude in such a positive, Christian supported environment; then can you imagine what it might have been like for someone like me who was suffering, but didn’t have anybody around that supported their faith or gave them hope? Not good not good. No matter what the situation, or how severe, Jesus has the power and authority to bring healing. And just like the centurion understood, you don’t need to see Jesus. You don’t need to be in His presence for this healing to take place. So when you feel isolated and lost, and you are at that breaking point, realize that the God Who had Jesus who died for you on the cross would not withhold any good thing from you. Put your faith in the authority of Jesus and pray for God’s healing in your life. Because in these difficult situations where you feel alone and you can’t see what God is doing in your life, it’s during these times that you can make Jesus marvel at your faith!

So we have seen that you can surprise Jesus with your faith when you **admit personal need** and when you **acknowledge His authority in difficult situations**. **III.** Now I want to show you why surprising Jesus with our faith is such a desirable thing. **Surprising Jesus with your faith glorifies God.** Surprising Jesus with your faith *glorifies God*. You might be thinking, “Rhett I thought you said that this was going to apply to people with any type of relationship to Jesus?”. But I assure you, that hasn’t changed. We all have a need for God, and that God has made the greatest gift available to us to satisfy that need, His grace. And I talked about how there is nothing you can do to earn that gift of perfect love and compassion. Well the good news for you and for me is that when we have faith in Jesus we are able to glorify the work that He has done. And by glorifying God we fulfill our very purpose as His creation.

When you surprise Jesus with your faith you demonstrate appreciation and love in the best kind of way. Imagine you have a friend who is a multi-billionaire. And this friend paid for an organ transplant that saved your life, and not only that but he was the one who gave you his kidney or whatever. Now it comes time for your friend’s birthday and you are supposed to be working the night of his party. You let him know not to expect you and you try to think of an appropriate gift to send him, but he is a billionaire. What could he possibly need from you? So your friend is led into a dark room and when the lights come on his eyes adjust as he hears voices shout surprise. As he scans the room he sees a familiar face and starts to smile and cry. You knew you couldn’t pay him back for what he did for you. But you returned his love in the only way you could. You showed up. It wasn’t easy. You had to deal with your boss and you are not the type to miss a night on the job for anything. But you showed up. In a similar way I think surprising Jesus with our faith is like showing up when your friend didn’t expect you to and it gives God the best kind of joy. When you think about the value of the gift He gave, it’s the least we can do.

All of us no matter who we are or where we come from have the potential to make Jesus marvel at our faith. **If we admit our need for Jesus and have faith in His authority in difficult situations we will glorify God.** All of us should want to do this. All of us should want to glorify God: the God that has given us the ultimate gift in Jesus Christ on the cross. If you have that great faith you will see the powerful healing it brings to your life. I want to give a couple of challenges today before we leave, but before we get there I’d like to see if there are any questions or comments about this passage and what God is saying today? I’m going to invite Yucan up to help guide this time.

## [Q&A]

I want to challenge you as you leave today. If you are new to church and to Jesus, and you have been holding back because you have felt like you aren't the right type of person, that sure grace and healing sounds great but changing who you are seems inconvenient. If that is you today, I challenge you to acknowledge the authority of Jesus and see the healing that follows. Maybe God is moving you, even now, to respond to that call. Be willing to surprise yourself, to surprise others, to surprise Jesus. Make a commitment today to pursue a relationship with Jesus: fill out a connection card, grab a Bible or book off the back table, ask somebody here about getting into a community group or GIG... Make a tangible step. But perhaps even more importantly at this moment, pray to Jesus and say "Jesus, I acknowledge your authority in my life. I put you as the ruler, not me." If you pray this prayer, I want to invite you to come up in a few moments and take communion and tell our leaders up here about your decision.

Or maybe this past month you have had troubles with finances or relationships or you are just at a dark time in your life. You don't see God working or feel His presence. I encourage you to take refuge in His authority and as you come and take communion, turn to Jesus and pray for healing in that area of your life. Don't let your circumstances dictate your faith.

Lastly, as summer begins I invite you to see this time as having a great potential for glorifying God and for growth: Personally, spiritually, but also growth as a church through evangelism. Talk to those neighbors and friends and co-workers, ask them to come check out church one Sunday or to bring their kids out to one of the backyard Bible clubs, or just ask them out to coffee and share about what God is doing in your life. If you have that yellow connection card, and you want to get involved just go ahead and fill it out if you haven't already and drop it in the baskets up here on the communion tables. Let's pray.

### **Prayer:**

Lord would we be able to have the type of faith that makes you marvel. Would we cause you to be amazed, not at our unbelief, but at our great faith in the face of difficult situations. I ask that You would fill us with your Spirit as we go today, that it might guide and strengthen us. Thank you for that precious gift you have made available to us through Christ Jesus. May we glorify you in everything we do. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Yucan is now going to lead us in communion.