

Sermon Luke 7 1 10 2nd Sunday af Pent S C

Sermon: 2nd Sunday after Pentecost

Text: Luke 7:1-10 (v. 6)

Theme: What is your Curriculum (CV) before God?

Goal: The worthiness before God doesn't depend on us or on our deeds or position; God is gracious with us in spite of our unworthiness.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: What is your Curriculum Vitae, your CV? When we are applying for a job or a position, the more we add to our CV the better chance we have to get the position.

Some of us have a long Curriculum. Others don't. I can boast of the numerous studies, positions and titles I have, as many of you can do it as well. - I had a very emotional experience about this when I was in Germany last March. Before one of the presentations on Mozambique I did to several dignitaries of the church, I was introduced by a friend; and after mentioning several titles and positions of my carrier he said: And what is the next step of his carrier? ... To be a missionary ...

But how does our CV help our salvation? It does not, it can even hinder it. Jesus said once: "From everyone who had been given much, much more will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked" (Luke 12:48). I'm sometimes concerned about this. It's better not to have a long CV, but be a simple and humble servant of the Lord.

I – The Centurion's CV according to the Jewish leaders

Our text presents a man with a very good Curriculum Vitae. On the one hand, he was a Roman citizen, the highest citizenship of that time; he was a Centurion and the chief of a company of 100 soldiers; he was from the top of the society and the representative

of the Roman army in Capernaum to guarantee order and submission under Caesar's authority. On the other hand, in spite of being a representative of the enemies and oppressors who had conquered Israel, he also had a good CV according to the Jewish leaders of Capernaum. They introduced him to Jesus saying: "This man... loves our nation and has built our synagogue." Furthermore, we can add that he was deeply concerned about the sickness of one of his servants, a slave, whom he valued highly. Because of all these, the Jewish leaders said to Jesus: "This man deserves to have you do" what he is pleading for: To heal his servant.

Can we come before God and plead Him for something because we deserve it? Because we are worthy? Can we come before God showing Him our CV and saying: *Look, Lord, what I have achieved and what I have done? You have to give me this and that...*

It is common to hear when a church leader or pastor is sick and suffering that we or someone else says: he does not deserve to suffer this... he was always such a good person...

II - The Centurion CV according to himself

The Centurion didn't care for all his Curriculum Vitae and for what he had done. When his servant was in need, and he wanted to help him, he approached Jesus. But he didn't feel himself worthy to approach Jesus personally. He was aware that as a Gentile he couldn't expect to be received by one of the Rabbis of the Jews. He was an unclean person, according to the Jewish tradition. But even so, he trusted that Jesus could help his servant and he sent some of the Elders of the Jews to Jesus, asking him to come and to heal his servant.

As Jesus was willing to go to his house and was already on his way, the Centurion sent some 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.”

A powerful man, with an excellent CV, but humble and with faith.

III – The Centurion’s CV according to Jesus

Jesus was not impressed with the Centurion’s CV presented by the Jewish leaders. But He became very well impressed with the CV that the Centurion himself presented to Him. Before God, it is not a matter of worthiness or of “deserving”. It is a matter of faith and humbleness! The Centurion acknowledged that Jesus had power to heal the sick servant and one word of the Master would be enough to restore life to the dying man. As the Centurion had power over his soldiers and they had to obey him in whatever he commanded them to do, so the Centurion believed that Jesus had power over sickness and even over death.

The reaction of Jesus is something unique in the New Testament: Jesus “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.” And the servant was healed at that very hour.

Jesus was in the habit of responding to human need, not to human worth. The worth or unworthy of a person in need had always been irrelevant. God’s actions do not depend on human worth. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. (Series C, p. 16).

Conclusion: Some thoughts in conclusion:

A) I read a story of the Middle Age that when a certain King passed away and was to be buried, the gravedigger asked from the deep of the grave: Who is coming to rest? And they answered him: King so and so is coming down. The gravedigger replied: There is no place

here for such a dignitary. Then the people answered: He had helped us so much and was beloved by all the people. The reply came again: There is no place here for good people. Then someone answered: A baptized sinner is looking for a place to rest his body until the resurrection of the body. Then the gravedigger said: Let the coffin come down.

B) The apostle Paul had a big CV. He made a list of his achievements and sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, and also in his letter to the Philippians. He said that he could boast about more than any other apostles or even over his enemies. But his conclusion is: “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him” (Philippians 3:8,9).

C) One of my professors had lots of titles and certificates hanging on the wall of his office. But when one student asked him: Which is the most important of these certificates? The professor stood up and took his Baptism Certificate, framed in a very old and simple frame, and said: *This is my most valued certificate: The day I became a child of God. I am what I am because of God’s grace revealed to me in Christ Jesus since my baptism.*

D) Some prayers in preparation to receive the Holy Communion begin with the words: *Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But say only one word and your servant will be healed.* Jesus is coming to us in His Body and Blood under bread and wine, and we receive him in repentance, humbleness and faith. We are not worthy, but He makes us worthy by His grace as He cleanses us and purifies us of all injustice. – The Lord be with you, and also with me. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 29 May 2016