**Respectful like the centurion**

***5****When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help.****6****“Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”*

***7****Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”*

***8****The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed.****9****For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”*

***10****When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith.****11****I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.****12****But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

***13****Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment. (Matthew 8:5-13)*

This account is also found in Luke 7:1-10 but without the content which is in verses 11 & 12 above.

**Is behaving respectfully towards others something which we find important?**

**Are there some people we feel more respect towards than others?**

Behaving respectfully towards others is surely something which would be expected of all Christians. As we recognise each other as being part of God’s creation we also, I hope, recognise each other’s value as human beings and as those created in the image of God. So what, we may ask, is so wonderful about the respectful way in which this centurion approaches Jesus?

Here was a man who was a member of the occupying forces, a Roman military officer who might have been expected to behave with disdain towards one of the locals. The centurion was most probably a member of the auxiliary forces under the command of Herod Antipas, which were non-Jewish and drawn largely from Lebanon and Syria. The difference in religion might have encouraged this centurion to avoid Jesus, a Jewish teacher, rather than to seek him out. In Luke’s account, the centurion actually sends some of his Jewish friends to make the approach to Jesus rather than going himself. The friends say to Jesus ‘This man deserves to have you do this, because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.’ (Luke 7:4-5). We therefore discover that this centurion is a friend to the Jewish people and somebody who was interested enough in their faith to build them a place of worship to gather in. The centurion had evidently heard enough about Jesus the travelling teacher to believe that Jesus was able to heal his servant. The centurion seems to genuinely care for the health of his servant as a person, he is not just regarding him as a useful piece of property whom it would be good to have preserved. All of this shows us that a character who may have seemed unlikely to be interested in Jesus does in fact have every reason to seek him out. The non-Jewish officer from the occupying forces came to a Jewish teacher who was already beginning to irritate some of the Jewish leaders and asked a favour.

**Does the approach of the centurion to Jesus help us to see how much of an impact Jesus was beginning to have in the area as he travelled around teaching and healing?**

**Does the centurion ‘deserve’ to have his servant healed as the friends in Luke’s gospel suggest?**

The centurion approached Jesus in hope rather than with a sense of what he deserved. He did not feel worthy enough to even have Jesus come under his roof. We could say that nobody deserves to be healed by Jesus, it is always a gift which is not earned although it may come in response to somebody’s faith. The centurion not only humbled himself to make a request on behalf of his servant, he also recognised Jesus’ position and sought to treat him with genuine respect. In the culture of the time the honour code was based on the idea of like mixing with like, people mixed with who they considered to be their equals or occasionally they tried to do a bit of social climbing and mixed with those of slightly higher status than themselves. If Jesus had gone into the house of a non-Jew that could have led to him being severely criticised and caused even more opposition than he was already getting. But even that did not come into the centurion’s response, he just did not think himself important enough to have Jesus enter his house. The centurion recognised Jesus’ power and authority, he paid Jesus the respect of not expecting him to put himself out to serve, just to speak and the matter would be dealt with. And Jesus was overwhelmed by the man’s faith. Jesus paid a lot of respect to the centurion when he said that he had found nobody in Israel with such great faith.

**I have suggested that everyone deserves respect and that healing is a gift of God. Are there ways in which we can pay a bit more respect to other people both locally and across the world?** **And does the act of being respectful towards someone else actually have some healing power in itself as it enables them to feel more valued?**

**Are there people you feel it hard to respect? If so why?**

**Do we approach God with the same sense of respect and unworthiness as the centurion approached Jesus? What do we feel is God’s response to us?**