

Service Overview

Speaker: David

Sermon Series: Having Faith

Message: Having Faith To Ask

Scripture Reference: Matthew 8: 1-13

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Service Welcome *Speaker: Worship Team*

Hey, we've got them together. Some things we feel are difficult, and other things are a cause for praise. And the Word of God says that it's good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praise to His name. So we're going to sing together, and I invite you to stand and join us.

And just into that, it's good to give thanks to the Lord to sing praise to Him. But why is it good? It's good because God deserves it, but it's also good because it's good for us. Have you noticed that? That when we sing praise the Lord, we actually decide, "Oh, let's have a time of thanksgiving." I don't know about you, but I've been in times where it's been difficult. You don't know what to do, you don't know where to go.

And it's just the Lord directs us to and leads us to say, "Let's spend a time of giving thanks." And it's amazing. Have you noticed that it lifts our hearts to God's perspective? It doesn't necessarily change things, but it gives us his perspective and invites him in. So, would you like to stand and sing these songs?

Worship Singing

Song: Great Things by Phil Wickham, Jonas Myrin, Jonathan Smith

Song: Behold The Lamb by Kristian Stanfill, Melodies Malone, Phil Wickham

Song: Holy Forever by Brian Johnson, Chris Tomlin, Jenn Johnson

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Jesus, we join with the angels today. We join with all of creation worshiping you, the reason, Lamb of God, the one who is worthy, the one who gained victory over death and over sin. Jesus, we thank you. We praise you, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and we thank you that you are our transcendent God, but you're also here among us personally.

And so we thank you for your presence with us today, and we invite you and welcome you. Just come and minister among us, be lifted up in our praises, be adored, be loved, and thank you that in turn you lavish your love on us. We praise you, God. Amen.

Introduction, Announcements & Upcoming Events *Speaker: Stephen & Kathy Bates*

Kathy: Well, I want to say a really warm welcome to everyone who's with us today. If you're new or visiting among us, it is so good to have you here. Welcome kids being in the service today as well, and welcome to those who are joining us online as well.

Kids, if you haven't discovered it yet, we have some activity sheets in the foyer. You're welcome to go and grab those now. You may notice that bin and ribbon are not with us this morning, and that is because they're on a young adult weekend away. So about 40 or so of our young adults are away

this weekend. So be praying for them as this day unfolds. They'll be having a final session this morning, so just be in prayer that God would be at work among them over this coming week.

Hand up if you've managed to get down to the art installation. All right, that's a good amount. Let me say, if you haven't yet or if you'd like to revisit, I just want to encourage you over this coming week to visit the art installation. It's going to be open until next Sunday. And so I think there's 2 beautiful reasons to sneak down there. Firstly, it is such a good space to just go down and meet with Jesus in that space for yourself. I think use it as one of your devotional times this week, and just to be in that place and to allow the art to refresh you and to allow Jesus to speak to you through what's down there as well.

The second reason I think to visit is to be able to invite someone, like a person of peace or a friend who doesn't yet know Jesus into that space with you. I had the opportunity to do that on Friday, and I had a really, really great conversation with the friend that I took. We just were able to walk around and just interact with various pieces, and we had such a good conversation about faith. So it's a really great space, I think, for that as well. So I encourage you to take hold of that. There's also some artworks that are for sale in the foyer, and there's also a few still in the basement. And all of the proceed, from the sale of the artwork are going toward our new ministry centre.

And, speaking of which, have you noticed that there is a new display board in the foyer? I really encourage you to take a look at that new information board about the new ministry centre you'll find on that display board. There's also a little brochure there with some more information. And there's also on there is a pledge card as well. And we invite you to take one of those pledge cards, and if you haven't already done this, to ask God, like, just genuinely put it before him, what would he have you pledge to give on a regular basis?

Or perhaps there's a one off gift. And we're just saying for now, let's just make this between now and July next year, what would the Lord have you give? And, you know, would you genuinely put that before him throughout the month of November? We're just going to ask everyone, right across our church, from every age, every life stage, to genuinely put that question before the Lord, "What can I pledge? Or what can I give towards seeing this new ministry centre and towards Jesus transforming lives, becoming a greater reality in our in our midst?"

Stephen: This new term is about to start, which is really exciting. As Kathy said, our young adults are way this weekend, and our youth and kids programs commence through this week as well. Also we're doing a new short course and that's starting this Thursday night (October 17). It's called "Getting a grip on God's Word". John* will be leading the course. People often say, "You know what? I don't really feel like I know how to read God's word, or I don't feel like I'm getting much out of God's Word." Sometimes what we need is just a little kick along in reading God's word. And, this may be exactly what you need. So it's a 6 week course, it'll be on Thursday evenings down in the

seminar room. It comes with written material as well that you can work with and take home. But it really encourages you how to listen to God's word, how to read it both personally but also publicly.

How do you study God's Word? How do you actually learn and go that little bit deeper into it? And also, you'll learn a little bit on memorising as well as meditation on God's Word. And so it'll cover all of those topics. I think it'll be really worthwhile. And like I said, if there's a little bit of dryness in your reading of God's Word, if you're not quite sure how to, then I think this would be a really good course for you to sign up for. It's a small cost just to cover materials and suppers. You can register online, you can talk to John*, or you can jot it on a blue card or response card and put it in the response box as well.

Prayer *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

I just want to pray as we step into this new term. Father, we thank you for the opportunity we have to worship together freely. Lord, we thank you for the community that we're able to gather in. We thank you for your blessing that has been upon us as a community, as a church, over many years.

Father, we do want to firstly just pray for those gatherings that are happening beyond these walls. We pray for our young adults this morning as they finish off their young adult weekend away. Lord, we pray that it be a richness in their time of worship and in your word this morning as well. We want to pray for Ben, as he leads the studies, Reuben as he leads them in worship. And, father, for each one of them, I pray that they would walk away from this weekend with a greater sense of knowledge of who they are in Christ, but also in their relationships and their sense of community with one another as well. Father, I pray for our young adults and this key decision making time in their lives, where the big decisions in life are being made around faith, about relationships, about career. And I pray, Lord, that you would give each of them wisdom and lead them in your paths over this weekend.

Father, we continue to pray to for our church plan at Parramatta. We pray for Parramatta City Church as they're preparing to start their service in a little while, that your blessing would be upon them as they meet, and we pray for them and for their leadership. And Lord, we pray that you would draw people to their community, Lord and in their opportunities they have to share faith, Lord, that others would come to know you.

Lord, we pray too, as we've mentioned, just as a church, the conversations, the deliberations, the discussions that we've been having for the last three years around the new ministry centre. And Lord, we just want to pray for your continued leading for us as a church, and particularly now as a consultancy process begins, and, Lord, just the question of funds becomes so vital for us. Lord, I pray that you would provide for us. Lord, give us generous hearts. Lord, thank you for all that you've given and provided to us. Lord, I pray that we would also be sowing into the generation to come in this place, and Lord, beyond what's happening here.

Father, we're just still so aware of the difficult things that are experienced within our own country, but Lord, especially overseas. Lord, we would pray for an end to the escalation of this conflict in the Middle East. Lord, we pray for a willingness, to find a way forward, and, Lord, in the place of hatred, Lord, maybe the best we can ask for is simply tolerance. But, Lord, we would ask for a peaceful coexistence between different peoples and different faiths. Father, there is no person on this earth who can bring a resolution to this. There is no wisdom on this earth that can bring a resolution. Father, we need your intervention. And, Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit would be at work, regardless of whether people, the players, have any knowledge or recognition of you. Lord, we pray that you would be at work in that context. And, Lord, we do pray for those who are seeking peace and working for peace. Give them wisdom as they do that.

Father, we thank you. We thank you for your love for us and your love for this world. Would you enable us to be your ambassadors, Christ? Ambassadors in this place, speaking words of truth and hope and love? Walking with integrity, always, and always being ready and willing to share the hope that we've found in Jesus Christ for your glory. Lord, we ask this. Amen.

Video Testimony *Speaker: Congregation Members, Kathy Bates*

Kathy: Last week we commenced a new series on 'Having Faith To', and if you're here, Steve and Rachel* spoke about 'Having Faith to Invite' and particularly looking at having faith to invite someone who doesn't yet know Jesus to explore who Jesus is. Maybe through a short testimony, maybe by reading the Bible, but just faith to invite, and also faith to invite them perhaps to something that we're doing together as a church.

So, we have the joy of just sharing a testimony with you this morning, a video testimony of one of our playtime mums who did have faith to invite, and this is the story of her and Cassie*.

--- Video testimony plays on screen ---

Kara*: My name is Kara, and I attend 8:45 church. I actually came to PBC through play time a couple of years ago, and that's how me and my family started attending 8:45 as well. This is my friend Cassie, and about a year and a half ago, when she had her son, I thought it would be really nice for her to come along to play time. And she's been coming along and she does the Bible discovery method with us as well. Cassie, how did we meet? How do we know each other?

Cassie*: Oh, what a story. So we met while I was teaching your eldest daughter at daycare. I've been a childcare educator for about 12 years. And I met teaching your daughter, and we had a lovely educator parent relationship, a very honest relationship. However, that did go when I went and got a new job, but we rediscovered each other and our paths crossed again when we started physio together. So I had already been doing physio and Kara decided to have a hobby for herself, and we both started doing it together. And that's how we became really good friends.

Kara: Yeah that's right, that was really nice. And then you had your son later that year. I was 23, and I remember coming to visit you at your old house and seeing your son. And I remember holding him, and he was falling asleep, and it was really nice time to reconnect. And we were chatting about, like, how hard it is like to have things to do, finding people or other mums in the same situation. And at that point, I was like, "I should invite Cassie to playtime." I remember messaging the leaders, "Please, I hope there's a space. I know it's very popular, but I think she's one of my people of peace." Like, you seemed really open to coming.

Cassie: I was so excited. I been looking high and low online for something to connect to me with other mums in the area, because I was coming out of the newborn bubble and I needed connection. And that's where Kara approached me. Kara approached me at the right time and talked to me about PBC play time, and I was like, "Oh, look, if I can get a position, that'd be fantastic. I would love to come." And so my son started at playtime when he was ten weeks old, I believe.

Kara: The other thing that we started that at that point at playtime, was that the leaders had introduced to me the Bible discovery method. So we'd gone through what we were going to do, and the leader had explained that she had on her heart that she wanted to start like a little Bible study after playtime, just something really short, but still something that was really could be meaningful and we could come alongside each other and hopefully have this group. And I was very keen and I was like to Cassie, "We're doing this little Bible study like, I don't know, you know, if you wanted to come. But, you know, it won't take long. I'm sure you'd enjoy it." What was like your experience with, the Bible, with church, with God before coming to PBC playtime and doing Bible study?

Cassie: It had been a lot through friends. So in, in primary school, I'd been through Protestant scripture. But I grew up in a household with parents who weren't religious at all, even though they had some religion in the background, but never brought it into a household. And, going through Protestant scripture, you get a little bit more interested about it going to church, locally, with friends.

I never really felt part of a group, and I loved the idea of going to church, but I felt like you had to have been 'born' into this. And it was really hard. I even tried going to Hillsong Church a few times because I loved the music and the energy, but it was so big for me and I felt a bit lost. I felt like a little bit of a tiny fish in a pond. And so it that didn't work for me then. It's just, "Am I going to find my niche?" And I didn't really think about it. And then, coming to play time and checking out the Bible discovery group, I went "It'll be great to find out a bit more about the Bible."

The children do story time with Bible verses, and they learn a bit more about the Bible, and I thought that'd be great if I could learn a little bit more about what my son is learning. So, I decided to join the Bible discovery group just to find out a bit more about God. And I love learning the Bible

with a community of really strong women and mums, who were there for each other and who helped each other to understand what it is in God's word.

Kara: And the awesome thing about the Bible discovery method is like the questions that the leader asks us, they really like accessible and approachable. Like, what does it show you about Jesus? What does this tell you about the people in that time? What does it tell you about yourself? Yeah, and I think that those just like those three questions, even for me, it's just really good to have something so simple, but still meaningful.

Cassie: Yeah. Of course. For someone learning about the Bible to know that there's never a wrong answer in how you interpret the word of God.

Kara: Yeah. Absolutely.

Cassie: Which makes me feel more confident about expressing myself in Bible discovery time.

Kara: Yeah. Good. Really good. So, if you were to, like, speak to someone and they were thinking about reading the Bible alongside with someone, what would you say? What would you say to them about that?

Cassie: 100%. You need a village. You need a community to do it with, to be able to help, because other people's interpretations really help you as well and help you open your eye. You may say one thing, but the Bible can tell you so many different things, and the way that someone interprets a story may just give you another point of view. So yeah, 100%, and to do it with other mums and people who are full of support and love and care, is exactly what we need in this day and age.

Kara: Absolutely. And it's just so true that God reveals a lot to us in that small amount of time. Like it's not long. We go for 45 minutes. But we all approach that that time as something that we need. We look forward to it. We all move things to try and be there. Like, there's a sacrifice for you, Cassie, as well. Like you've got work afterwards, and there's a sacrifice that you make, the effort to make that time, because it feels important.

Cassie: Yeah, we make that time. It's part of my week. We've been learning about John in the Bible and talking about spiritual hunger and thirst. And this is a prime example of a spiritual thirst. It's been quenched. Because with this, we're able to fill that spiritual cup that we need to be able to get through the rest of the week. And you get through the whole week, and by Friday you're quite done. And you come to Bible discover time and it's like, "Right, my cup's full again." I'm ready to take on another one.

Kara: Yeah. Absolutely. Yeah, I agree.

--- Video ends ---

Kathy: Aren't they a delight? And isn't it just lovely to hear that joy in Cassie? I don't know if Cassie is here today. But her and her family are now regularly part of our church, s well. It's just so lovely to hear that joy.

But I just want to say, for any who might be exploring who Jesus is, and is interested in the Bible discovery group, you don't have to have a child and they end up in play time to do Bible discovery. If you would like to join a group to explore who Jesus is through the Bible, you are more than welcome to. Let Steve or I know this morning, or at any time in the coming weeks, and we would love to organise that.

If you are at play time, however, do tap the leaders on the shoulder because it's a continually growing group. So yeah, we are going to sing our next song.

Worship Singing

Song: In Christ Alone by Keith Getty, Stuart Townend

Bible Reading: Matthew 8: 1-13 (NIV UK)

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. ²A man with leprosy^[a] came and knelt before him and said, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.'

³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy. ⁴Then Jesus said to him, 'See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.'

The faith of the centurion

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

⁷Jesus said to him, 'Shall I come and heal him?'

⁸The 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. ⁹For 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.'

¹⁰When 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. ¹¹I 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. ¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.' And his servant was healed at that moment.

Sermon: Having Faith to Ask *Speaker: Stephen Bates, David*

Stephen: Morning again. We continue our series this morning on 'Having Faith To'. I just want to introduce you to David. David has been part of our church for about four years now coming along to the evening service. So many of you may not have seen him, but hopefully many of you have, because he's here most Sundays, if not every Sunday, hanging around the back, because he's involved in our, Years 4-6 ministry on Sunday mornings.

But you've preached a number of times before, and I'm looking forward to it again. And thank you so much for being back. We appreciate you sharing God's Word with us this morning. Now, let me pray. Father, we do thank you for David and his wife for what they bring to the life of that church, and also in the broader community as well, through his wife's ministry at the school.

Father, we thank you for their friendship, for the way in which they have sown themselves into the life of this church. Thank you for the generosity of friendship and relationship and service to us. Lord, we just ask that as David speaks through your word, speaks of your word to us, that your Holy Spirit would take it and plant it deep within us. Lord, challenge us, encourage us, and build us up in our faith in you. We ask this in Christ's name. Amen. Thanks.

David: Everything you thought you knew is wrong. When Jesus starts teaching the people in Palestine way back when, his message is "Repent, turn your lives around. Because the kingdom of heaven has come near." But the kingdom that Jesus is bringing isn't what people expected. People wanted a warrior king to defeat and drive out the enemies. Jesus comes teaching and healing, saying, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Where people said, "You shall not murder," Jesus says, "I tell you, do not even harbor anger in your heart against someone." Where people said, "Do not commit adultery," Jesus says, "I say, anyone who even looks at someone lustfully has already sinned."

His kingdom is upside down. Where we honour and respect the strong and the forceful, Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, the gentle." Where we take pride in our ability to exact vengeance, Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful." Where we want to be like those who have a life of wealth and pleasure, Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn today, for they are the ones who will be lifted up by God." And when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority.

But Jesus doesn't just teach with authority. You see, I could put on a show today of teaching with authority like Jesus. I could say to you today, "You have heard that, but I say this," but it wouldn't be the same, because Jesus tells people about his kingdom, where the poor are lifted up and the proud are brought low, where the hungry are filled, and the people who have everything are found wanting. And then Jesus shows people what this upside down kingdom is like. And that's the part we're going to focus on today in the beginning of Matthew chapter 8.

Jesus travels back down from the remote mountainside where he's been teaching the people gathered together. He travels back down towards the towns where the people actually lived, and he has a crowd following him. But then as they walk along, he meets someone, someone who would not have been able to be there on the mountain. People suffering from leprosy were outcast from society. In those times, the disease was untreatable and as it progressed, people were left disfigured and they were shunned by their families and their neighbours. And this wasn't just the case of ignorant peasants who feared catching it from getting too close.

The laws in the Old Testament, they specified that someone with leprosy was ceremonially unclean. They weren't allowed to enter the temple. They weren't allowed to join with the other Israelites for worship. They had to live alone outside the camp outside the township, and anything anyone they came into contact with was to be treated as unclean. So this man with leprosy, he would not have been allowed to join the crowd listening to Jesus up on the mountain.

But evidently, while he's been begging, because begging is about the only way a leper can survive, while he's been begging, he's somehow been able to hear something about Jesus, this prophet who teaches with authority and heals with power. This man comes up to Jesus, and the crowd would have all stepped back as he approached, because the last thing anyone wants is to be contaminated by touching a leper.

He comes in and he kneels there before Jesus. "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Leprosy was a disease that was always referred to as uncleanness. So if you are blind, if you were crippled, if you had a fever, then you needed to be healed. But if you had leprosy, then you needed to be made clean. People often look at it as a picture of sin. When you reject God's place as the ruler over you, when you break his laws, then your whole life is made unclean. You are separated from God. You cannot come into his presence. It's incurable. There is nothing that can be humanly done to fix the problem.

You can't cleanse yourself. You can't unbreak what you have broken. The people back in Jesus' day viewed someone with leprosy as the walking dead. They thought that was someone living under God's curse. But this man comes and kneels before Jesus. "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." And that is the truth. Jesus has been teaching with authority. He's been speaking the words of God back earlier in chapter 4. Jesus was powerfully healing the sick wherever he went. If Jesus is willing, he can do it.

And look what he does then in verse 3. Everyone knew if you touch a leper, his disease makes you unclean. We know today if I stand next to someone who has Covid, I'm at risk of catching Covid myself. If a healthy person goes and stands next to someone with Covid, they don't make the person with Covid get better. Of course not.

Unless you bring Jesus into the picture. Because when Jesus touches this man, his power drives out the disease. His purity banishes the uncleanness. Jesus says to the man, "See that you don't tell anyone, but go show yourself to the priest. Offer the gift, as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

And that might sound a bit odd to us. Is Jesus trying to keep all this a secret? Well, if we're talking about the story 2000 years later, he didn't do a very good job keeping it a secret. And the healing has just happened in front of a crowd of people. So people are going to be talking about it. Now, Jesus doesn't explain this further for us. I think it's most likely Jesus wants to be able to teach the people around him, not run a traveling miracle show. He wants people to come to him who are seeking the truth, not just looking for miracles and healings. But more importantly, before he goes and tells everyone he knows, this man is to go to the priests who the law, the people to check his body and confirm that he's recovered. He was to offer the thanksgiving sacrifices to honour God for his healing. This will be obeying the law.

Remember, Jesus didn't come to get rid of God's law. He came to fulfill it. And it will also be a testimony to the priests. It will be an announcement. It'll be a warning to them that these rumours they're hearing of a teacher and a healer in far off Galilee are something they need to take seriously. You know, no one in Israel has ever been healed of leprosy until now. The rabbis, the teachers of Israel, they'd studied the Old Testament scriptures. They looked at their history from the centuries before. They had concluded that leprosy could not be cured. Not until the Messiah, God's chosen king, came. And look and see what's happening now.

The next person we read about Jesus meeting is someone a little bit different. Where that man suffering from leprosy had been born into Israel, he was born into God's chosen people, but then was cast out. For this second man, he's a foreigner. He's a soldier. In many ways, he's the last person you'd expect to approach a Jewish teacher. Today, we might understand someone who used to be among God's people, but has spent time away on the outside and then decides to return, whether through being invited back or through repenting.

But this centurion, he's more like someone who has never been inside of a church. Maybe someone whose family that he grew up with is of a different faith, is perhaps the last person you'd ever expect to see inquiring about Jesus. But here he is in verse 6. "Lord, my servant lies at home paralysed, suffering terribly." People who study this suggest that the word 'servant' here probably means a 'slave boy'. Someone who's been growing up under the centurion's roof, a servant to his family.

Now, centurions weren't the absolute top of the command structure. They generally would have been soldiers who'd been promoted through the ranks, while the top roles, the people who commanded whole legions, they were given to the sons of the nobility.

But it's fair to say this guy would have had a fair bit of practical power in country Judea. If he wants a doctor for his servant, then the best available doctor will come running. But what can you do when the doctor can't solve the problem? He comes to Jesus and says, "Lord, my servant lies at home paralysed, suffering terribly." Jesus offers to come and heal him. And by this point, I think everyone around would have been certain that Jesus has the ability to heal the sick. But the centurion says, "No, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof."

Many Jewish people back in that day would have refused to go into the house of a Gentile. It's another case, but they wouldn't want to be contaminated by coming near someone who was unclean. And even though Jesus has showed that he doesn't need to worry about being defiled here, it's the foreigner, a man who probably doesn't have a well thought out theology or a great understanding of ceremonial laws. A man who maybe doesn't even know that the Jewish people are waiting for God's Messiah to come. It's this foreigner who says, "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof, but just say the word and my servant will be healed." He goes on in verse nine, "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."

Why do people obey the centurion when he gives orders? It's not just because he's probably a tough guy and he knows how to use a sword. It's because when he speaks, Rome speaks. His words come with the power and the authority of the empire he represents. But he recognises right now that he's in the presence of someone with a different level of power and authority. Because when Jesus speaks, God speaks. Jesus isn't just another rabbi quoting the wisdom of others or theorising about the best way to apply the law. When Jesus speaks, God speaks. When Jesus commands that sickness to go, that is what will happen.

The centurion doesn't say, "I'm a person with authority. People do what I tell them. So I'll tell you, Jesus, what I want you to do." He recognises that Jesus has authority and power that is different to his that is greater than his. I know some of us here are people with authority. We are used to telling people to go and come and do this and do that. And even if we don't call the shots in a workplace, we're used to paying people who will make our coffee, who will clean our house, who will deliver packages to our door. But that's not how we can treat the one who is our Lord and our master.

Even if we give money to the church, we can't command Jesus to shower blessing upon us. We can't order him to heal, to protect us, to make our life perfect. Instead, we need to join with that soldier to come before Jesus to say, "You are my Lord, my master, you are greater, mightier than I am. I don't deserve the honour of you even setting foot in my house. But I will trust that you are good, that you are kind too. Will you show your strength and kindness to me today?"

"Just say the word. Just say the word and it will be done." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. And he said to the crowd with him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith." So far as we know, this man had no background or experience of following the one true

God. He wouldn't know that God had promised to send his chosen one, a prophet who would declare his message to the people. A king who would establish an everlasting kingdom, who would bring the blessings promised to Abraham to the whole world. The people of Israel, they knew all these things. They memorised the scriptures. They knew the signs to watch for, the signs that would show them when God's chosen one would come. And yet it was this foreigner who looked at Jesus and saw someone from God, who saw someone with power and with goodness, someone worth putting your trust in.

I wonder what all those people gathered there around Jesus thought of this when Jesus reached out and touched an unclean man. Were they thrilled that he dared to do it? Or were they appalled that he touched the untouchable? When Jesus agreed to help a foreigner, did they rejoice that God's blessings were being offered to the nations? Or did they wait impatiently for Jesus to turn back to his real people?

When we see someone who has been cast out from God's people, or someone on the outer of our society, coming to Jesus, do we applaud God's kindness to them? Or are we a bit embarrassed to have people like that in our church? When we see people on a Sunday who don't look like they belong here, either they're too poor or they're too rich, they're badly dressed, or they look like they care too much about their appearance, or they're too smart, or the too uneducated. In short, people not like us. Are we excited that God reaches out to them too? Or do we wish that our pastors would focus more on satisfying our needs?

It's just as well that it's God who chooses who the people who come into his kingdom, not me. Look at what Jesus has to say to us in verse 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. The end of days when God establishes his new heaven and new earth, when his people are gathered together to celebrate, it will be a great gathering of people from all races, all classes, all ages, even Roman soldiers, (even Australians). But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The people you would expect to be there, the literal descendants of Abraham, those who can trace their ancestry all the way back to the patriarchs of Israel, they might be missing. Why is that?

This centurion saw Jesus and put his trust in him, but many of the people of Israel looked at Jesus, and they decided he wasn't what they wanted. They wanted a messiah who would make Israel great again, who would defeat their enemies and rule over them. They wanted a messiah who would give them a life of comfort and success, and they weren't going to put their trust in someone who came promising to turn those expectations upside down.

But we don't have a menu when that we can choose from. When it comes to Jesus, whether we like it or not, God only sent one rescuer to us, and so we can't say, "You trust the Messiah who says the last will be first and the first will be last. I'll trust the one who says he will bless my comfortable

lifestyle." We can't say, "You can have faith in the Jesus who forgives the greatest of sinners, but I'll have faith in the Jesus who respects and rewards my respectable heritage and my religious tradition." There's only one choice if you trust in the real Jesus, the one we see in the Bible, the one who chose to die in your place to pay for everything you've ever done wrong in your life.

Then there will be a place for you at that great banquet. Whoever you are, wherever you've come from, whatever you've done. But if you put your trust elsewhere, whether you trust in your own actions, or whether you trust in a Jesus you've invented for yourself, then the real Jesus says, "There will be no place for you." How can I have faith like that? Sincere. And how can I have faith that amazes Jesus? How can I have faith that makes me one of his people?

Well, it's not about how much faith you have. It's about what you have faith in. If my faith, if my trust is in my good life and the things I've done to save me, then no matter how confident I am, no matter how strong that faith is, it's faith in the wrong place. It won't do me any good. Jesus said, "Many will say to me on that day of judgment, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons, and in your name perform many miracles? Did we not attend church? Did we not tithe? Did we not lead small groups?" I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers."

If my faith, if my trust is in the real Jesus who gave his life to pay for me, then I know my future is held secure. I can be sure he will bring me home with him in the end. How much faith do you need? It's like those two people we saw meet Jesus today. You need just enough faith to ask him. "Lord, if you are willing, you can save me. Lord, if you give the command, I will be healed." If you haven't ever approached Jesus for him to save you, to forgive you, to invite you in with his people, to prepare you a seat at his banquet, then you just need to ask him. If you don't know how to do that, then there's people gathered down the front here, between here in the tree at the front of the church, at the end of every service. They're there to speak with you, to pray with you. I would love to help you, if you are in need of healing in any part of your life.

And how much faith do you need? Just enough to come and ask, "Lord, if you are willing, you can heal me. You can make me clean." I can't tell you precisely what God's will is for you. Sometimes God's will is for us to persevere through difficulty, to serve him even when his answer to our request is no. But if you want to come before our Lord today, if you have faith to ask him to reach out and touch you, to heal you, to cleanse you, then there will be people gathered here who would love to stand together with you as you do that.

But there are some people today who don't think that this message is really for them. Maybe you are more like the people in the crowd. You're watching Jesus accept and welcome in the outsiders. You accept Jesus as your Lord. Maybe you've been following him for a long time, but now you find yourself watching other people kneel before him rather than doing it yourself.

Well, maybe today is the day to change that. If you have things that you've given up asking God for, if you are weary, if you're weighed down by this life, if you are discouraged, then won't you have the faith to ask him today? You don't have to be a special person to be chosen by God because of Jesus.

The doors are thrown wide open for anyone who wants to come in. Put your trust in him. Put your faith in him. Jesus has the authority and the power to reach out to you, to touch you today, to change your life. All you need is faith enough to ask him. Let's come before him now.

Post-Sermon Prayer *Speaker:*

Our Lord, our master. We recognise that you speak with authority. We trust that you act in power. If you are willing, you can make me clean. If you just say the word, our sicknesses will be healed. We come to you today and bring our needs, our concerns, our cares to you. Place our lives, place our past and place our future into your hands. All glory to you. Amen.

Worship Singing

Song: God With Us by Bryan Torwalt, Katie Torwalt

Post-Worship Prayer *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

So, father, would you forgive us of our self-sufficiency and our need to control? And, Lord, give us faith, faith to ask. How much faith do we need? I love that, Lord. Just the smallest amount. And so, father, I do want to pray that as we go into this week that we would be dependent upon you, that the first response to things that go wrong, or things that we need, would be to take it to you in prayer, and that we would exercise this faith that we have to ask you, acknowledging you as our healer, as our provider, and as our Savior.

So, Lord, give us the faith to ask that you would be Lord in our lives. The faith to ask for healing, the faith to ask for strength, the faith to ask for patience. The faith to hear your voice through your word and by your Holy Spirit. Father, we thank you for your Word, the way it does speak to us. May we live it out, and in doing so bring you glory. Amen.

Conclusion *Speaker: Stephen Bates*

God bless you all. Thank you for being here in the room. Thank you for those who have joined us online as well. As David said, there are people who would love to pray. So if you would love someone to pray, that you would ask God of something, we would love to do that. If you would love to learn about the Bible discovery method, speak to myself or Kathy. She'll be here up the front and I'll be out chasing people out there. Yeah. We'd love to continue the conversation.

Pray for one another, enjoy morning tea, and we'll continue next week. Bless you all.

Online Outro *Speaker: Kathy Bates*

Hey, thank you for joining us online today. We pray that you have been blessed and encouraged. And if there is something from today that you would like us to pray into with you, don't hesitate to let us know.

If we haven't met you, we'd love to hear from you. And you also welcome to come and join us in person as well. To know more about our church, please go to our church website and you can also find more details about who we are through our newsletter. And you can subscribe to that through our website as well.

God bless you and may you have a great week.

**Names have been changed to protect privacy.*