

Homily – June 7, 2026

Take heart, siblings in Christ. Your faith has made you well. Today we get back in Matthew. We've been spending a lot of time in John and in other Gospels, but finally we get back in Matthew for the summer. And we've just, in Matthew, we've just left Jesus on the mount. And actually, in January, I preached one of the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and here I am back. And you all haven't gone anywhere farther in Matthew. God has a plan, interesting enough. So, we get back in this chapter 8 and chapter 9, And we see Jesus showing the people what it means when he says, "Thy kingdom come". Do you realize every time we pray the Lord's Prayer; we ask for God's kingdom to come? For God's grace, for God's mercy, for God's love, for God's healing to come. that this earth might look a little bit more like the kingdom of God will look.

And our gospel lesson today presents two different stories, two miracle stories woven into one text. The centurion comes to Jesus because he is so desperate. Do you realize what he risks to go to this renegade prophet that the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to get rid of and wanted to silence, and yet he was so desperate, he went and said, please, heal my daughter. I'm guessing most of you here are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and you probably would do the same thing for the healing of someone you love. And then while Jesus is on his way, you know, Jesus answered the call of the centurion. He could have said, no, I don't hang out with y'all. But instead, he got on the road to go to the house to honor the request of the centurion. The centurion who wasn't one of the in guys. He was one of the people on the edge.

And on his way, he encountered this woman. This woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. Can you imagine what that feels like? To have blood coming out of your body for 12 years and to go to every place you could find for healing, and nothing happened. And in the first century, if you were bleeding, you were considered unclean, so you were not allowed to be in community. You were set aside. She not only was sick, she was also isolated and had no community to help her, to bring her chicken soup, to just be with her. And she encounters Jesus. She doesn't even think she's worthy of a face-to-face congregation. All she does is think, "if I can just touch the hem of his robe, I will be healed". And Jesus makes the kingdom of God come near for that woman and says, take heart, daughter. Your faith has made you whole.

When we first look at these texts, we think, "ah, I know why they were healed. It's because of their faith, that extraordinary faith that they had". But it's not that. It's the power of Jesus that healed them. They came to the one who had the power for healing and opened their hands to receive whatever Jesus would provide for them. And they received.

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I served in Hayes, Kansas, which is northwest Kansas, very close to the border of Colorado. And I was very good friends with a hospital chaplain. And he called me one day. He was so upset. He was in the room of a dying man. And the family was gathered. And the family had their pastor there. And while they were all there, the man passed. And the pastor of the church that this family went to said, “You know, if we only had had enough faith, he would have lived”.

Please know, that is not Lutheran theology. It is not about our faith. It is about what God can do if we ask and allow God to do God's work. Faith is never about works earned. Faith is not a spiritual achievement. Faith doesn't force God's hand, and faith is just, again, us putting our hands out, saying, God, help us. God provides. Luther says that faith is like a ring that has a jewel. And the jewel is what counts, not the band. The band holds the jewel and receives that jewel. And for Luther, that's what faith is like, the band that receives the gifts of God.

You know, I don't know about you, but that's good news. Because sometimes, even though my title is pastor, sometimes I have a weak faith. Anybody else here willing to admit that?

You know, it's hard. It's hard to believe. Sometimes, because you look at things and go, “oh my gosh, what a mess. What's going to happen next”? And yet we see today that Jesus provides, not because of our faith, but because of who our God really is. A God of mercy and a God of grace and a God of love. I saw something somewhere that said, a weak faith in a strong Savior still saves. A trembling hand that reaches for Jesus still receives the same Lord as one who is the strongest believer.

The woman approached Jesus very, very shyly, and she received. The ruler's faith is tested even more. By the time Jesus arrives, his daughter is dead. The mourners have already gathered. They're even laughing at Jesus that he's trying to help this girl. It's hopeless. And Jesus enters the house and brings the girl to life again. Because, my friends, Jesus is about resurrection. Jesus is about new life. Jesus breaks into our life, into the parts that are dead, that are broken, and brings new life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our faith will make us well because of our Lord and Savior. When our faith is weak, Christ is still faithful. When our hearts are troubled, Christ is present. And when sickness comes, Christ remains our healer. And when death comes, Christ is the resurrection and the life.

You know, we're going to have to remember that God is in charge. And we're going to have to open our faith to this journey that God is going to take us on in these next months. I promise you, even when this journey looks a little bit dark, maybe confusing, maybe why the heck did we sign on for this? Christ is here. Christ will walk with us, and Christ will take us to God's preferred and promised future. I guarantee you that. because Christ is our Lord and Savior. And because he lives, we also live. Amen.