

Sermon Summary
2nd after Pentecost
2nd June 2013

- Luke's gospel, with its powerful quotation from Isaiah to start Jesus' public ministry is often presented as a gospel for the poor.
- NT scholars have often, sometimes exclusively, emphasised the role of the poor in Jesus' teaching and the history of the early church.
- However, a passage like this morning's (Luke 7:1-10) shows that an exclusive claim does not hold up.
- The centurion is a man of wealth and means. He holds considerable local authority. He is not one of the poor.
- This should be an inspiration for us.
- Despite how we sometimes may see ourselves- and a recent SMH contained an article about how the urban classes see themselves as poor because they cannot readily afford all the trappings of an aspirational lifestyle where luxuries have been re-identified as necessities- we, on a global scale remain among the rich and the privileged.
- So when Jesus talks of the centurion, he is, on a global scale, talking to the likes of us.
- The rich, the NT reminds us, find it hard to live a life of faith. Bonhoeffer identified this as the "God of the gaps". The rich control their own destiny, and have no need of God until a major problem arises with which they cannot cope. Then, they turn to God to fill the gap.
- The centurion does not do this. He knows, despite his privileges, his own weakness and limitations.
- The rich may become self-absorbed. We need to ask whether debates about asylum seekers and immigration are really driven by issues of justice and hospitality or by a desire to preserve our own privileges and lifestyle by the exclusion of those in desperate need.
- The centurion is not- he is driven by care for a slave.
- It is worth noting Jesus' reaction: even he is "astonished".
- Our prayer should be that, Jesus be as astonished by our response to him as he was by that centurion's.

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