

# Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

## February 6, 2025

### Home Study: Luke 7:1-10

#### INTRODUCTION

Are you familiar with the word “benefactor?” It comes from two Latin words that translate literally “good doer.” In other words, a benefactor is one who does good. The Gospel author Luke is the only one to use this word in the New Testament: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.” [22:25]

As one who writes for a mostly Gentile audience, Luke takes a Gentile concept and uses it to commend Jesus to them. They knew that their excellent leaders were called “benefactors” when they did good things for their subjects and Luke portrays Jesus as one who does good for those who trust him.

In his Sermon on the Plain earlier, Jesus had urged his followers to “love your enemies, and do good...” [6:35]. Now, in today’s lesson Jesus will show through his actions that he himself is a benefactor by doing good for one whom some might see as an enemy.

#### TODAY’S READING

How is Jesus shown to be a benefactor? Who receives Jesus’ help? What does Jesus commend in the one who receives his help? Consider these questions as you read today’s lesson, Luke 7:1-10.

In this section, Jesus and the centurion do not actually meet one another. Instead, two delegations come to Jesus from the centurion. The first is local Jewish leaders who commend the centurion to Jesus for all the good the centurion has been doing in their community. (He even provided the synagogue for their study of God’s Word.)

*Does this surprise you? What do you normally expect from Roman military officers? What do you normally expect from Jewish leaders?*

The second delegation consisted of friends of the centurion. They come to acknowledge that Jesus does not even have to come into the centurion’s home. The centurion is showing that he is sensitive to the Jewish dogma that declares a Jew unclean if they enter a Gentile’s home. Instead, he requests that Jesus just speak the word. He trusts that word to have the power to heal in the same way that his military commands have the power to move others to act.

*What example would you give for the power of words to accomplish what they say?*

Jesus commends the centurion with great praise: “not even in Israel have I found such faith.” The centurion thus becomes a model of great faith.

*What intrigues you about his faith? What might Luke be saying about Jesus and his followers by commending him?*

Though Jesus has no contact with the centurion’s servant, and he issues no authoritative word, his power and the good that he does comes through anyway. The condition of the servant was described as “at the point of death,” yet the second delegation returned to find the servant “well.” Jesus is greater than the benefactors of the Gentiles. He is the Son of the Great Benefactor, the Lord God, and this is another incident that reveals him thus.

In his second Biblical work, the Book of Acts, Luke will declare that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” [Acts 10:38]

*What other acts of doing good and healing have you already seen from Jesus at the one-quarter mark of Luke’s Gospel. As we go forward, pay attention when Luke tells you about the good that Jesus is doing. Are you seeing Jesus in a different light as a benefactor for you and the whole world?*

*Since the same Spirit that was given to Jesus has been given to me in baptism, where am I being moved to go about doing good? What is something you could do today to do good for someone else? How are you displaying the trust that you have in Jesus? Whom could you commend for the faith and faithfulness that they display?*

## PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for doing good in my life, especially for helping me to see and understand that you are the great benefactor. Thank you for the many people that you have given me who have displayed faith in you. Teach me how to do good for others in my own life and to display the faith you have given me. Amen.