

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I have to say something shocking today: Jesus was not a founder of a new religion. This is a surprising thesis, isn't it? I suppose he did something else – despite of many ideas about him.

During the history of mankind in every ages and periods there came a lot of talented religious leaders, prophets to who people believed, listened to and followed them eagerly. And again in a different cultural circle a new prophet has risen sent by God, and this has happened for ages and ages.

According to my conviction most of them whose teachings has survived until nowadays have been inspired by the same God, whose Spirit inspired them to lead their people. They were human beings, so they probably sometimes made mistakes in leading their people, but I think their efforts are really honourable, when they practice their religion by fasting and praying and by loving and caretaking their human fellows on their own way.

In The Gospel of Luke we have read about a roman soldier, who officially represent roman authority among the subdued Jewish nation. But Jewish people still respect him, his lifestyle, his behavior is respectful and human: even his enemies recognize his humanity: "He even built us a synagogue" they say. This soldier has a fear for the life of his servant. His request to Jesus is humble, he knows military discipline, the rules of subservience, and he also recognizes in Jesus a higher authority. He has no demands, he does not break the entrance door to Jesus demanding a miracle, neither gives a command to a subservient Jewish preacher, but he humbly asks for a favour. The favour he asks from Jesus is not even for himself, but for his servant. This centurion is a model of effective Christian service. Though he was a man in authority over 100 soldiers, he became a servant to his own servant by calling Jesus to heal him. As such, he is a picture of serving the Lord Jesus by reaching out to those in need, who may be lowly and despised by others. He was the channel through which Christ's power flowed to this dying boy. Our centurion seems to possess three qualifications that every servant of Jesus Christ must seek to develop in his or her life: An exalted view of Jesus, a lowly view of himself, and a caring view of others. Are we ready to this challenge?

Have a look at Jesus: he welcomes the request of a stranger, a member of a conqueror nation, and he offers him the fruit of his true faith, the recovery of his servant. And he shows to the Jewish people all around this attitude as an example. The Son of God reveals the identity of the one true God, our caretaking Father, creator of the whole universe. Only twice in the gospels does Christ commend a person for great faith—the Syrophenician woman, and this centurion we meet in our text. Both are Gentiles; one is a woman, the other a man. It is as if the Lord is saying, “The way of faith is open to people of all nationalities, male or female.” The faith that pleases God is not an exclusive thing reserved for the religious crowd. Any and all can lay hold of God by faith.

I like to recall Jesus’ words, written down in the Mountain speech: “The heavenly Father makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous”. The early Church realised this truth: „For God shows no partiality.”. If somebody turns off from this Good News, he is not the follower of our Lord Jesus Christ. Saint Paul even declares in this warning letter to the Galatians we have just read, that who is deceptive about the Good News, that has no place in the Christian community, that person is even to be condemned.

King Salomon was really wise, when he prayed for everybody in the church asking for help from the Lord found peace and might get support from Him. In the first book of King we find this word by word, that a stranger who is not a member of Jewish community but has an open heart to pray for the One and true God, the prayer of a person like this, might be welcomed. Salomon clearly recognized that even though the Temple is in Jerusalem it belongs to the Jewish nation, “God shows no partiality”. We cannot think that we can keep God’s love singular power for ourselves and keep other, who belong to other cultures and nationalities out of it. He is the Father of all created human beings. Jesus came to represent him to us to lead everybody to salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ did not found a new religion but rather outdid all previous religious ideas.

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