

## Evensong readings:-

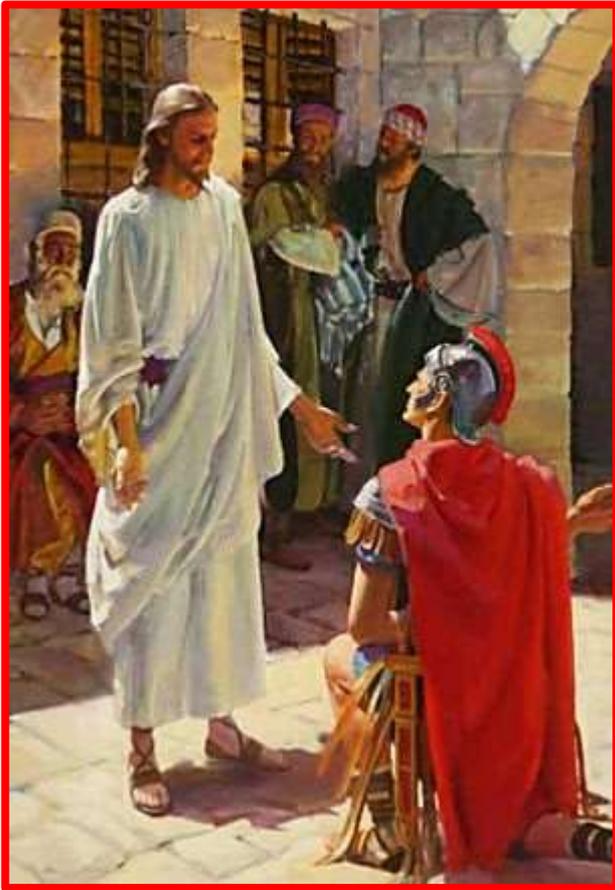
Isaiah ch.60, vv9-end

Hebrews ch.6 v17- ch.7, v10

Gospel: Matthew ch.8, vv5-13

by

Didymus



Matthew's Gospel reading comes after the Sermon on the Mount, as Jesus descended into Capernaum. The Sermon itself is thought to be an aggregation of many of Jesus' sayings, but on his journey, Jesus was asked to heal a man of leprosy. Jesus was concerned that the man should not speak to anyone about the healing.

When he entered Capernaum, he was approached by the Centurion, who asked him to heal his servant. The story is short and well-known. To understand the full significance of this event, one has to imagine oneself there, in Capernaum in Galilee. The Jewish people, the colours of their clothes, the market stalls and the animals, all in the heat, the Roman soldiers patrolling, and the general hubbub of a lakeside town.

Jesus and his disciples must have been fairly well known in Capernaum. As they entered the town, some of the disciples might have noticed the Centurion, and alerted Jesus. The Romans were the occupying power, cruel and ruthless, and the Jews would have kept away from them, hating them and avoiding trouble. A Centurion was an army officer of importance, who carried a staff of office, often used to coerce or punish people.

So for the man to approach Jesus might have caused a moment's apprehension, but his manner would surely dispelled any fears. What was spoken must have stopped Jesus in his tracks, quite literally. Here was a man of authority, a man to be feared, pleading for Jesus to heal his loyal and valued servant who was suffering terribly. One suspects that for a moment, Jesus was speechless. He knew only too well how his people were treated by the Roman army, and yet here was a senior Roman commander asking that, despite all that he was and could do, Jesus would heal his man.

Jesus contrasted the faith of the Centurion with the refusal of many Jews to accept him, and how that situation would develop in the future. **Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that moment.**

I have concentrated on this short story since it stands out among the miracles because of the encounter between Jesus and an enemy who had found faith.

It is this story that gives us the words of humility before receiving Holy Communion - **Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.**

Last Sunday was also Plough Sunday, one of the four occasions when farming community and the yearly production of food and drink were prayed for. In days past, thanks were given to God, and prayers were said over a plough for the coming year, the crops and farming produce. In those days ploughs were single bladed, and a cleaned up plough was often



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brought into church. Today's five furrow reversible plough would tax most church entrances. I seem to remember an old plough at St Kew years ago. There is an equally sound case of course for praying for the fishing industry and its fishermen, especially at the present time with changes and challenges to the fishing industry.

*A number of us have now received our first CV vaccine, and speaking personally, the whole process is being organised well. For anyone worried about the vaccination, it is almost painless. Please be assured that everything is kindly and sympathetically organised, and all who have been vaccinated are seated for a while until a doctor is satisfied that they can go. (I have been a needlephobe since childhood)*

I am sure that we all remember the medical and emergency professions in our prayers, but also remember those who have volunteered to assist in the vaccination effort, by driving, directing, informing or just assisting. Also those who continue to support others less fortunate with meals, food, and deliveries. Life would be harder and very much poorer without them.

**AMEN.**