**MSCC 17th August 2025**

**Never the twain shall meet**

**Reading: Matthew 8:5-13**

When I look at this picture I think 'Never the twain shall meet'. What's the meaning of the phrase 'Never the twain shall meet'? It is used to suggest that ***two things are too different to exist alongside each other,*** ***being poles apart***.

That could be said of Jesus and the centurion. What we have is a meeting of two men poles apart in their lives and missions and in their views of the world.

One was…

* A foreigner,
* A pagan,
* An officer in the army of an invading nation, hostile to the nation of Israel and its people. He is on a mission as a soldier to keep the Jews subjugated and under the control of Rome. The centurion had come to do the will of Caeser Augustus and ***while he was subject to Caeser he had the full authority of the Roman empire.***
* He was willing, if necessary to lay down his life for Caeser and the Roman empire.

The other was

* A Jewish Rabbi, but no ordinary Rabbi, no ordinary person. His coming had been foretold hundreds of years earlier in the Jewish law, the Psalms and the Prophets.
* His birth, when it came, was miraculous.
* This man, Jesus, was coming to bring life in its abundance.
* He was coming to do his fathers will. The spirit of the Lord was upon him, and he was anointed to ***‘preach good news to the poor, proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, and proclaim the year of the Lord favour’*** and because he was subject to his Father,
* ***He came with the full authority of the Kingdom of God***.
* He was willing, and did, lay down his life for God’s kingdom and for the sins of the world

That’s what I want to talk about today, the importance of Authority, but what brings about such an unlikely meeting between these two very different men?

This portion of scripture tells us that it was the illness of the centurion’s servant. This man’s servant, maybe he was a Jew, was lying at home paralysed and in terrible suffering. The centurion obviously cared about the servant and wanted him healed, and for him Jesus was the one who could do it.

While they were both very different one thing they had in common was, ***they understood authority***, ***where it came from and how to use it***.

The centurion saw a quality in the ministry of Jesus that he recognised ***i.e. Power comes with authority***

* He saw that when Jesus spoke there was a greater power operating through him than could be accounted for by mere human influence.
* He saw beyond Jesus to the power of God. This was not difficult for him to understand, for he was in a similar position with regards to the power of Rome.

When the centurion spoke to soldiers under his command, they knew that the whole authority of the Roman Empire was behind him. So, when he said to Jesus ***but speak the word only and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority having soldiers under me****,* he acknowledged the authority behind Jesus.

Jesus responded with astonishment: ***‘I say unto you I've not found so great faith, no not in Israel’***. Jesus had not at that time found anyone who had received an understanding of his authority so simply and clearly.

The centurion had seen someone who was subject to a greater authority and because Jesus was in submission to the authority of his Father, he gained all the power and stature of the Father, which enabled him to heal and do all the other things he did. Jesus himself spoke of this in John 5:19 when he said, ***‘I tell you the truth the son can do nothing by himself, he can only do what he sees the father doing, because whatever the Father does the son also does.***

Jesus had authority in his ministry. Because he was in complete submission to his father. The writer to the Hebrews sums it up like this. ***During the days of Jesus life on earth. He offered up prayers and petitions. With loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death. And he was heard because of his reverent submission.***

Only when you are under the authority of God can you exercise the authority of His Kingdom. As believers we also have been granted authority to act on Jesus’ behalf, it’s not something we take on ourselves, it comes from God and involves us making use of it and exercising it as we seek to serve him. Our authority has three important components

1. **Our Authority is rooted in God**

He is the source of any authority we have to bring healing and freedom to others, and all the other things we do as Christians, praying for people, declaring people forgiven when they turn to Christ in faith, preaching the gospel, administering communion etc.

We draw on our God who is both powerful and deeply concerned for his world. **Our Authority is rooted in God…**

* **He is the creator of all things, and all people**, and people are the favourite part of his creation. He made us in his image, breathed his own life into us, even when we disobeyed and fell, and still, he seeks us.
* **He is the sustainer of the universe**, including humanity. It is he who gives life and protects creation against the work of his enemy Satan.
* **He is the one who relates to his creatures**. He is not far away from us and unconcerned. Even after the fall He sought relationship with Adam and with all mankind and he walks and talks with anyone who will spend time with him. He has shown himself to be concerned and compassionate towards us even though we stray from the path. That love and compassion is seen in the cross and the price Jesus paid to redeem us from the works of the enemy, which gave us forgiveness for our rebellion and wanderings. God who is all powerful is not only the creator and sustainer but has the power to fix what has been damaged and free whoever has been imprisoned.
1. **Our Authority is authorised by Jesus**

In the great commission in Matt 28:18,20 Jesus says***,” All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me*** and then he commanded them ***to go and make disciples”*** He also said in John 20:21 “***As the father has sent me, so I am sending you”.***  He also said that those who believe in him will do what he had been doing and will do even greater things because he was going to the father

In going back to his Father Jesus authorised his followers, **and us**, to continue working in the authority he had given to bring freedom to those the father loves. So, he sends us into the world to do the same things, and we are authorised by the king of kings to carry on his ministry in the world today. That’s awesome and daunting.

1. **Our authority is maintained by intimacy with Jesus**

Just as Jesus authority was maintained through his intimacy with his father, so is ours. Jesus fed his relationship by spending time with the father and doing what the father told him to do and that is what we need to do also.

The Holy Spirit supplies the power for us Just as he did for Jesus and from that intimacy comes authority to use that power. This intimacy is not a mysterious thing, I don’t think it was for Jesus, it’s about being in God’s presence.

So, in the meeting of these two unlikely men, the Centurion is left impressed at the power of Jesus to heal, and Jesus is amazed that a foreigner had more faith than his own people, and we know that without faith it is impossible to please God but with faith, even as small as a mustard seed, we can move mountains. But for both, it was about understanding how authority works.