

Lectionary C May 29, 2016 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday After Pentecost  
Grace and Peace Lutheran Church Evansville, Indiana  
Pastor Roberta Meyer

1 Kings 8:22-23, 41-43  
Psalm 96:1-9  
Galatians 1:1-12  
Luke 7:1-10

### **What Amazes Jesus?**

My three oldest grandsons delight me in many ways. They are funny and lovable. They never say good bye to me without a hug and an “I Love You, Grandma.” They also infuriate me at times, with their typical teenage and almost teenage sibling bickering. Jonathan, the oldest, incessantly holds his “oldest brother power” over the other two. And then Joshua joins in with Jonathan and Zakk gets it from every angle. They are never-ending in their rough-housing and joking around with each other.

Then they do things that are amazing. For instance, Josh’s birthday was in May and he also had his 8<sup>th</sup> grade recognition which meant he received a goodly sum of money as gifts this month. What I expected was that Josh would take that money straight to Game Stop. He is the video game junky of the family.

But Josh amazed his mom and me. He took Zakk, his younger brother who he would never admit that he liked in the least, to the store and bought him healthy snacks and food for lunch, because he knew the doctor just started Zakk on a new healthy diet. He didn’t expect his mother to pay him back. He just willingly spent his money on this younger brother who he fights with all the time.

Why did this action of kindness from Josh toward his brother amaze us? After all this is what we want to happen. We want our children to love each other and be generous with each other. But when it happens we are shocked and amazed. We know this love for each other is our goal, but we also know this kind of love takes a lifetime. It happens with maturity. Sometimes, at my age, I still have not achieved this kind of unselfish caring for others. I have to admit that especially when I am driving I am not too forgiving or generous with drivers who try to squeeze in line when the traffic is backed up. I am learning and am getting better, but I really have to think about it. It doesn’t come naturally.

So, my point...If I am amazed when my grandchildren do things I hope they will learn to do someday, what amazes Jesus? I think it is the same kind of thing. In our Gospel story today, We learn that somehow a Roman soldier hears about Jesus. He sent Jewish leaders to ask Jesus to come heal a slave, *“a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death.”* They told Jesus, *“He is worthy of having you do this for him, for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us.”*

Jesus went, but before Jesus got there, this soldier sent friends to tell Jesus not to come. The message was, *“Master, you don’t have to go to all this trouble. I’m not that good a person, you*

*know. I'd be embarrassed for you to come to my house, even embarrassed to come to you in person. Just give the order and my servant will get well."*

*"When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith."*

Why is Jesus amazed? Isn't this the kind of thing Jesus wants from his children? —That they have complete faith in who he is and what he does? But the thing is, this centurion was a Roman, not a Jew. For almost three years this is the kind of faith Jesus has been hoping to see in his closest disciples—but they kept missing the mark, doubting, questioning, not trusting Jesus to keep them safe. And here is a Roman soldier whose faith amazes Jesus.

And Jesus marveled that in this Centurion he saw a glimpse of what Jesus had come to bring. Peace and love among all the nations and people of the earth. He saw enemies loving each other.

That is what amazes Jesus. Pure faith. Faith in Jesus to come through even when others doubt. Faith that looks to Jesus' power, not human limitations or boundaries.

Let me tell you a story of this kind of faith. As you know the Connect Team went to Indianapolis for our second training session. At the beginning of that meeting we had a sharing time when all the churches shared what they had done since our last meeting.

There was a church, about the same size as Grace and Peace. This church happened to be located beside a funeral home. One day the funeral director came to the church with a question. He had a funeral of a person with no church home. This person had family from out of town and no local church connections. Could they use their church facilities for a dinner after the funeral?

The response from this small congregation was amazing. Their answer was yes. And besides that their congregation would take care of everything themselves. They would prepare and serve the meal to this family.

And besides that, they told the funeral director that they wanted to open their church and their hearts to other families who were grieving. They now prepare and serve meals to bereaved families after funerals as their mission. They are not concerned with who the people are, or what their religious connections are and they aren't there trying to get these people to come to their church. They would welcome them, but getting more members is not their motivation. They merely want to help people in need. Not only that; they are trusting God to give them what they need to serve in this way. That is the kind of faith that amazes Jesus.

Faith that reaches outside our comfort zones and loves people who are different than we are, that is what amazes Jesus. Jesus did this all the time. And Jesus shocked and disturbed his followers with this radical love. So, when in even a small way God's children show their faith in Jesus by crossing boundaries and loving others unconditionally Jesus is thrilled.

In this time in which we are living when the political rhetoric of the day is so charged with fear of those who are different – from a different country, professing a different faith, living in a different neighborhood, looking different from us, having different needs or hopes, Jesus is calling us to remember that to God, there are no “other” people. All God sees are God’s children, every last one of us.

So what do you say? Let’s keep doing what we are doing. Let’s keep looking at ways we can reach out to God’s children, whether it be working in our community garden at the Mission of Grace, or embracing the needs of our LGBT friends—no task is too big for those who have faith in Jesus. Isn’t that amazing? Amen