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You Are Dust

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, we just again, we thank you for who you are. We thank you for the many gifts that you give to us. And Lord, we just are amazed at the gift of your word. We're just so thankful for it. We're so thankful for the fact that we can turn to your word in such difficult and strange times and know that we are rooted, that we have the rock, that we have your Holy Spirit. And Lord, once again we're talking about the kingdom of God and so we pray that your Holy Spirit would accompany us. We want to grow in our ability to be kingdom citizens. So we pray that your Spirit would accompany us, that you'd enable us to hear, see and make of permanent value what we hear this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as I said ,we are looking again at the kingdom of God and we've been talking about the need for kingdom citizens to replace what their senses alone are telling them with what God alone will give them in his word. *Romans 12 says: Do not conform to the*

pattern of this world, but be transformed by renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is -- his good, pleasing and perfect will. And in the very next verse, God begins to detail just how he wants us to accomplish this. He says in verse 3: For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. Paul warns us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to because it's something we all have a tendency to do. We tend to think about our efforts to soberly judge ourselves in kind of lofty terms centering around conquering pride, engendering humility, learning how to humble ourselves but it really only comes down to embracing the notion that we're all just a bunch of nobodies. I mean, you might think that the primary ingredient of an inferiority complex is thinking you're nobody but that's not really so. See, nobody doesn't think that he's inferior or superior because he doesn't think it comes down to just two choices. And nobody understands that there's another definition that the scripture gives us about ourselves that's neither flattering nor fanciful but it's accurate, and we forget it at our peril.

This is what God told Adam in *Genesis 3:19*. He said: "*By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the*

ground, for out of it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." You're dust, God says. That's a tough call for the self-esteem crowd. As a Christian I have no problem whatsoever with self-esteem, I mean, I am after all a child of God. I'm a crown of creation, the only creature created in the *imago Dei*, in the very image of God. I'm a new creature in Christ. I'm a living temple of God's Holy Spirit, a co-heir to eternal life, living and reigning with Christ. That's the legacy that I own. It's the legacy that I look forward to and that's the source of my self-esteem. Where self-esteem makes no sense is with the multi neo orthodox atheists who proclaim it the loudest. I'm talking about the Richard Dawkinses, the Sam HARRISES, the late Christopher Hitchens, all of whom insist that there is no God but they're also very big on self-esteem. If we're absolute accidents of time and chance produced by random mutation and billions and billions of years alone, then tell me what is there to esteem? I mean you're an accident. I mean you could have just as easily been a chicken or a watermelon or a virus, but instead for up to a hundred years you get to be a person and then of course you die and you rot, and you go on to be completely and utterly forgotten. But while you're here, esteem yourself. Esteem yourself because you matter. To whom and for what?

Frankly I'd much rather consider myself dust. You know it's hard

to have a lot of esteem for dust, I mean dust is the stuff that gets clothes dirty, it's the stuff that you vacuum out of your rugs. The wind blows and the dust is utterly dispersed. But that's just ordinary dust, and we are not ordinary dust. You see what makes all the difference in the world is the fact that we are loved dust. Our self-esteem doesn't come from self, it comes from God. *Psalm 103* which we just read some of this morning says this: *As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like the grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field; for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more. But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him, and his righteousness to children's children, to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.* See, my self-esteem comes from one place and one place only, and that's God's esteem for me. I mean our self-esteem is rooted in one fact so simple even a child can sing it. "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Well the problem is that we forget. We forget that we're just animated piles of dust. We forget that the wind blows over us and we're gone. We forget that it is God alone who gives us significance. And it's amazing how the scripture so often teaches us and re-teaches us the very same lessons over and over again and the

lesson is this: Do not forget who you are.

This morning we're going to look at two different groups of people. We're going to look at some folks who forgot and some folks who didn't. We're going to look at them to see what we can learn from them. Now the ones who forgot who they were, they were all kings, they were priests, they were politicians, they were the wealthy, they were the powerful. The ones who remember, the ones who knew who they were were almost to a person outsiders. They were folks without resources, without power. Now those who forgot, it includes believers and non-believers. These were kings like King Nebuchadnezzar, King Saul and King Uzziah. They were religious leaders like the Pharisee of Luke 14, and there's also the wealthy, believers like Job, who for a while forgot who he was.

So first we want to look at Nebuchadnezzar, he's our first one who forgot. Let me just read to you the story of Nebuchadnezzar as recorded in *Daniel 4*. It says: *All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, and the king answered and said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence for the glory of my majesty?" While the words were still in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom*

has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will." Immediately the word was fulfilled against Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagle's feathers, and his nails were like bird's claws. At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation. You see, Nebuchadnezzar forgot, so God humbled him, but after seven years he remembered.

King Saul was another one who failed to remember. Saul was the very first king of Israel and at his anointing he was so frightened he hid in a baggage room. He had to be dragged out by his handlers. He wanted to become such an incredibly powerful king but in time he began to forget who he was. If you remember the prophet Samuel, he winds up confronting Saul telling him in *1 Samuel 15*:
"When you were little in your own eyes, were you not head of the tribes of Israel? And did not the LORD anoint you king over

Israel?" You see over time Saul forgot that. Samuel wound up telling him *"because you have rejected the word of the LORD he also has rejected you from being king."* See, Saul forgot that he was dust, and because of that God removed him. I mean Saul's life ended with suicide on a battlefield.

Next we have Uzziah, one of the greatest kings that Israel ever had. Wonderful king. But he too forgot who he was and so he paid a terrible price, and again 2 Chronicles tells us about it. This is 2 Chronicles 26. Speaking of King Uzziah, it says: *But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD -- valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God."* Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they

thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land. Uzziah forgot that even kings are dust. The king exalted himself and God humbled him terribly.

Next we have the Pharisee of Luke 18. This is a guy who enters the synagogue with the tax collector thanking God that he's not like these other men. He thinks they're dust and he's not. This is Luke 18. Jesus says: *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'* I tell you this man went down to his house *justified, rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* Again this is Jesus teaching and this is the case where God clearly states the principle regarding understanding that we are dust. He says the exalted are humbled, and the humble are exalted. And the

Pharisee forgot who he was, maybe he never even knew enough about himself to forget in the first place, but the result was the same.

Job. Job was a man of great wealth and power whose tragic circumstances drove him to forget temporarily who he was. I mean after Job's life falls apart, he insists repeatedly on a face-to-face confrontation with God to plead his case. Eventually he gets one. This is what he said in *Job 42*: "*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*" So Job suddenly remembers, once again he remembers that he is dust. He remembered who he was because he had forgotten. And that's just a sampling of five men. We have Nebuchadnezzar and Saul and Uzziah, the pharisee and Job. And there's one thing all these men have in common, they all had power, they all had resources. Those are things that tend to make it easy to forget that we're just dust.

Now we want to look at the other side of the coin. Now we want to consider the one that the scripture holds up to us for the opposite reason. These are folks who remembered who they were. These are folks who knew that they were just dust. The first thing that strikes you about this group of people that we're going to look at, we're going to look at three of them, none of them have names. They're not known at all by who they are but instead by what they

did when they were in a crisis. And there's three that we're going to look at this morning. There's the woman with the issue of blood, there's the woman with the demon-possessed child, and there's a centurion with a sick servant. And in each case circumstances force these people to act out their faith without ever forgetting who they were.

Now the woman with the issue of blood in Luke 8 is a case in point. This is *Luke 8:43*, it says: *And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians, she could not be healed by anyone. She came up behind him -- that's Jesus -- and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased. And Jesus said, "Who was it that touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and are pressing in on you!" But Jesus said, "Someone touched me, for I perceive that power has gone out from me."* Jesus is surrounded by this mob, by this huge crowd. There's a woman who's been bleeding for twelve years and is therefore considered to be unclean. She's a social outcast. She approaches Jesus, she surreptitiously touches him, something that's absolutely forbidden. Jesus whips around and he says, "Who touched me?" Peter's incredulous. I mean he can't imagine how in the world Jesus would be aware of anyone touching him because everybody's touching him. The woman is clearly caught out. And

she's caught out by Jesus. Verse 47 says: *And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."*

This is a woman who knows precisely who she is. She has no problem at all acknowledging that she is dust as she falls trembling at his feet, and instantly she's healed.

Next we have a woman with a demon-possessed daughter in *Matthew 15*. It says: *And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." Then Jesus answered her, "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly. Well this is yet another case of the humbled being exalted. But in this*

case it's Jesus himself who's actually doing the humbling. I mean we don't go here that often because we really don't know how to handle Jesus' response to her. I mean she comes to Jesus in great need and at first he ignores her and then he insults her in verse 26: *And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."* But right from the start, you see this woman demonstrates that she gets it. I mean she says to Jesus, "O Lord," and she describes him as son of David, those are Messianic terms. But Jesus completely ignores her. He even refers to her as a dog. She then shows she knows precisely who she is. She says, *"Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."* And Jesus is moved by a faith marked by such humility. You say, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. This is God himself. Jesus is perfect, Jesus is loving, he's kind, and yet here he appears nasty and rude and insulting. I mean is this any way for God to act? Well, sometimes circumstances require you to be rude.

Many years ago there was an accident right in front of our house. A car had smashed into the guardrail and there were people in the car who were unconscious, among them a little girl in the back seat. Elisa, who's probably just trying to crawl under the pew right now, she was 16 years old at the time, and she and I ran up to the car. And Elisa looks at me and she says, "Dad, we got to

get her out of the car!" And I looked at her, I was concerned because the car was all crumpled and there was gas leaking and it was smoking, and I was concerned that I would do great damage to the girl 'cause I'd have to pull her out of the window. I was afraid that she might have had a broken back, a broken neck and I would do far more damage or something like that. So as I'm looking there, I said, "I don't know, I don't know." At that point Elisa just blew up at me. She said in a very rude and inappropriate way, she said, "Dad, are you kidding me? Get her out of this car!" Well, it kind of jolted me into reality and I reached in and grabbed the girl and I pulled her out of the window. And sure enough, within a minute that car was in flames. Now Elisa actually was rude. I could also say she was mildly insulting. But given the circumstances, given the situation, her rudeness was absolutely appropriate because the situation was desperate. And desperate circumstances require desperate responses. And I can say the same for Jesus. You see, Jesus knew perfectly who this woman was and he knew exactly how desperate she was. And he knows precisely what words she needs to hear to save herself and her daughter. I mean, you got to understand, she's a Canaanite. This is a people so evil, so rebellious that they were cursed as a people. Jesus tells her first and foremost that he was only sent to the lost sheep of Israel. And what does she do? She humbles herself anew. *Bowing down she says, "Lord, help me."* Again Jesus is teaching us. This

is what God is showing us. It's a principle that saved this woman and her daughter. She's dust and she knows it. *Psalm 51* says: *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.* This woman is completely powerless. She's an absolute outsider. And yet she humbles herself before God and because of that, he lifts her up and he heals her daughter.

As believers in Christ in a collapsing culture it is very easy for us to trade in our understanding that we are dust for an arrogance that loves to compare us with the worst of what we see is on television to come out thinking like Nebuchadnezzar or Uzziah or the Pharisee, that we're anything but dust. God is faithful. And here's the lesson that we need to learn from all of this. The critical lesson is this: If we don't do our own humbling, God's going to do it for us. There's been times in my life where I actually thought how fortunate God was to have me on his team. God loved me enough to solve that problem by breaking me of that. And I can tell you each time it was painful but it was necessary. Uzziah was a great king of Israel but he started to become increasingly arrogant to the point where he actually demanded the right to worship God in his own way instead of God's way. I mean his leprosy was a severe judgment, but again it was absolutely necessary because God loved Uzziah. He humbled him. I mean just

to put this into perspective, Uzziah's been in heaven for thousands and thousands of years now and when you get to heaven, when I get to heaven, you can go up to Uzziah and say, "Hey, was it worth it, your punishment?" I think he'll agree. It was hard but it was good.

Our third person, again, someone with no name, he's a centurion in the Roman army but he's not like the other two women at all. There's a big difference between the Roman centurion and the other two women. You see the Roman centurion is in fact a person of power, but he comes to Jesus in true humility begging for the healing of a servant. Speaking of Jesus *Matthew 8* says: *When he had entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him. "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."* Jesus is absolutely astounded, and the reason why he's astounded is because Jesus has finally found a person of faith who is also a

person of power, but he still remembers who he is. That's astounding. He knows that for all of his authority and all of his power when it comes down to what really matters, he's just like the rest of us, he's just dust. And there's a pattern here. See, Jesus prays and he blessed the faith of the two women but he wasn't astounded by it, considering their circumstances. The centurion was different. You see, Christianity always points itself toward the outsider, toward the powerless, toward the victim. Just remember what Jesus said in the beatitudes. He says: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven and blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."* And you know why God says these folks are blessed? Well, they're blessed because life itself does the humbling for them. Power people like the Roman centurion are different. They actually have to humble themselves, because being dust doesn't come easily to everyone. Jesus summed up his teaching in *Luke 14* about this. He said: *Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to*

you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Now have you ever wondered how someone could make such a profound social blunder as this? Where would someone get the gall to assume that they deserve the highest place of honor at a banquet or at least the high place of honor as a banquet? Where did he get that gall from? Well, the answer is all of us get that gall in little tiny pieces over time. We forget that we're just dust. I mean how did Nebuchadnezzar make the mistake that cost him his kingdom, knowing he was warned in advance, for heaven sake. How did Saul move from someone so shy and frightened to someone so bitter and jealous? Well, the answer is the same way that Uzziah and the Pharisee and Job. There wasn't a leap. It was a series of tiny, imperceptible little steps, steps that all of us take all of the time without realizing it. I know this 'cause I've been there and I've done that. You see, none of us starts out expecting the seat of honor at the banquet. We just work our way to that place incrementally in tiny little steps, in tiny little ways we start forgetting who we are. The people in scripture who still remembered that they were dust were people who were outsiders, they

were powerless. Those who forgot, they were the insiders, they were the powerful. They had the luxury -- and I put that in quotes -- the luxury of presumption. If you're a woman with an issue of blood or a demon-possessed daughter, you've got no presumption. You got no reason to presume anything. But what if you're like the centurion? I mean what if life hasn't crushed you? What was astonishing about the centurion was that he had some real power. He was an insider and he still knew who he was. Scripture says Jesus marveled at his faith. And so we ask, where did this Roman soldier get that faith from? Well, he got it from the same place that we get it. He got it from Jesus. Jesus says the closer we draw to him, the more fruitful we will become. In *John 15* he says: *"I'm the vine, you're the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* I mean I think most of us are familiar with that fruit that he's talking about, it's the fruit of the Spirit that's catalogued in *Galatians 5:22*. It says: *But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

I want to focus on two of those fruits, that would be meekness and gentleness, because that's what the centurion saw. He said to Jesus, "I am a man under power." This is a man who understood

authority, this is a man who understood power. Meekness actually means power under control. It's a refusal to demand the severity that righteousness sometimes demands and no one had the right to more severely judge than Jesus. He was God incarnate. He had lived out his life flawlessly and the irony is that we who are dust itself treated him who was the only flawless man to ever walk the face of the earth as if he was the dirt. He was tried, convicted, and executed in our place as our substitute but that's just who he was, our substitute.

The one thing that Jesus never was was a victim. You know much of the popular understanding of the cross paints Jesus as a victim of the Jews, of the Romans, Pontius Pilate, of an angry mob. But as you know that's not even remotely so. Jesus was the essence of power but it was power under control and that's what meekness itself is. He was quite willing to be treated as dirt though he was in every way a king whose power and might could have been terrifyingly revealed should he have chosen to reveal it. And one incident points this out. It's in Matthew 26. You're very familiar with that, I'm sure. Just before his arrest Jesus is in the garden with the disciples and there's a rising up of the soldiers and Peter takes out a sword and he cuts off the servant's ear and Jesus says in *Matthew 26*: "*Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do*

you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?" And again, I've spoken about this before, 72,000 angels. There's twelve legions, there's 6,000 in a legion, 72,000 angels. Like I said many times, we talked about the power of these angels. There's usually two words, if you go through scripture and you look at these confrontations that people have had with angels, you find usually two phrases, two phrases of two words that the Bible describes and any meaning that takes place between angels and people. The two statements are first of all the angel, you have the angel saying, "Fear not" or on the other hand up the angels say, "Get up." And there's a reason for that. The point is any connection between angels and human beings results in absolute terror in the human being. And you know there's a good reason for that terror. *2 Kings 19:35* gives the account of the slaughter of the Assyrian camp. In one night 180,000 Assyrian warriors were slain and they weren't slain by angels, they were slain by one angel.

2 Samuel 24:15 describes God punishing Israel. It says in three days 70,000 people died, again at the hand of one angel. Verse 17 says: *And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough;*

now stay your hand." In Exodus 12 we have the angel of death, again one angel destroying the firstborn of all of Egypt. In Revelation 9:15 there's four angels who are released to kill one-third of all of mankind. Using today's standard that's about two billion people slaughtered by four angels. So forget all about aliens, forget all about predator if you're looking for genuinely terrifying creatures. And understand, these are creatures that serve at Jesus' pleasure. But Jesus was meekness personified. Jesus had his power completely under control.

As Jesus was being spit on and mocked and stripped and flogged and executed, 72,000 of those creatures were watching and waiting for one glance, one nod from Jesus, just one. For countless centuries they had worshiped the very one that we were torturing. And only one power was holding them back. That power belonged to Jesus. You talk about meekness? You talk about power under control? Look no further than Jesus. With all of that power just waiting to be released, he let us nail him to a cross so that he could ransom us, so that he could present his perfectly lived life as a substitute for our life of sin so that we could stand before God with his righteousness in our account, so that we could stand before a holy God. You know how the centurion knew meekness, how he actually knew that he was a nobody whose power came from his Lord? He knew meekness because he knew Jesus. He had studied him enough to say,

Lord, I am not worthy for you to come under my roof. Again, spoken like a person who truly understood he was dust. But then he also said, *"But just say the word, and my servant will be healed."* The centurion had taken to heart Jesus' words in *Matthew 11*. Jesus says: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* I mean Jesus was astounded, he was astounded at how well this Roman soldier had learned from him when he came to know who he was and who his Lord was. He remembered what Nebuchadnezzar and Saul and Uzziah and the Pharisee, what they had all forgotten. They had all forgotten how to humble themselves and God had to do it for them.

And again to recap, here's how they all forgot. They all started out by taking God's grace and God's gift for granted. I do that all the time. Next they started assuming it was all their own merit that brought down their blessings instead of God's provision. Again, I, we, we all do that as well. Then they began to see their circumstances as something they were entitled to by virtue of their skill and hard work. We do that as well. It took the blessings of food and clothing and shelter and health as givens and they constantly sought for more, for better, for bigger, because they felt they deserved it. And it's something that all of us do consciously or unconsciously. It's the normal pattern for fallen

human beings to forget to see ourselves as dust until, until we find ourselves called out and humbled by God, shamed and looking for a seat at the banquet. And it's all because we forgot one crucial fact. We forgot we're dust. We forget that God says: *I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.* Well the centurion didn't forget because he abided in the Christ that he saw. He took Christ's yoke and he clearly learned from him.

So the question that I want to leave you with this morning is who are we learning from? I mean the woman with the issue of blood and the woman with the demon-possessed daughter, they knew they were dust, but they knew that because life had brutally taught them. Jesus showed them that they were loved dust. Jesus said: *"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted,"* and that's exactly what we've seen. Nebuchadnezzar and the others all exalted themselves and were humbled. The woman with the issue of blood, the woman with the demon-possessed daughter and the centurion all humbled themselves and were and are even now today exalted. The centurion simply took Christ at his word, that he was truly gentle and meek, that he could trust Christ's yoke and learn what meekness is. And you know, Jesus is making the same offer to us today. There's a

dark side of that. Dark side of that is if we do not learn from him, there are a thousand other instructors just waiting to teach us. They're on TV, they're on radio, they're in movies, they're in the news, they talk to us over fences, at work, at school, because they are us. And if ever there was a time for demonstrating the gentleness and humility of Christ, it's now. You see, wherever we rub shoulders with our fellow men and women, someone is always teaching and someone is always learning. But it's not usually Jesus Christ who's doing the teaching. And what we're constantly learning, consciously and unconsciously, is anything but meekness. And so we so easily forget that we're just dust. You don't have to forget. And Jesus is the key. He says: *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."* Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for who you are, I thank you for the fact that we will never this side of heaven even begin to comprehend your glory, your wonder, your mercy. But more than anything, Lord, this morning I think of your meekness, your humility. We are the ones who are dust and yet we treated you like dirt. I just thank you, Lord, that you loved us enough to sacrifice your life for us and that you tell us that we are dust but loved dust. I praise you and thank you for that. And I pray you can give us the ability to

*share that with others who don't know that. And I pray this in
Jesus' name. Amen.*