



Weekly Devotionals: The Centurion's Perspective | April 2, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Week 3 of our Easter devotionals! Each week you'll be prompted to read about a character from the events leading up to Jesus' death, engage in a few questions, and then given a prayer prompt.

This week, you'll be reading about The Centurion's encounter with Jesus.

A PORTION OF AN INTERVIEW WITH THE CENTURION

What was it like to be a Roman centurion?

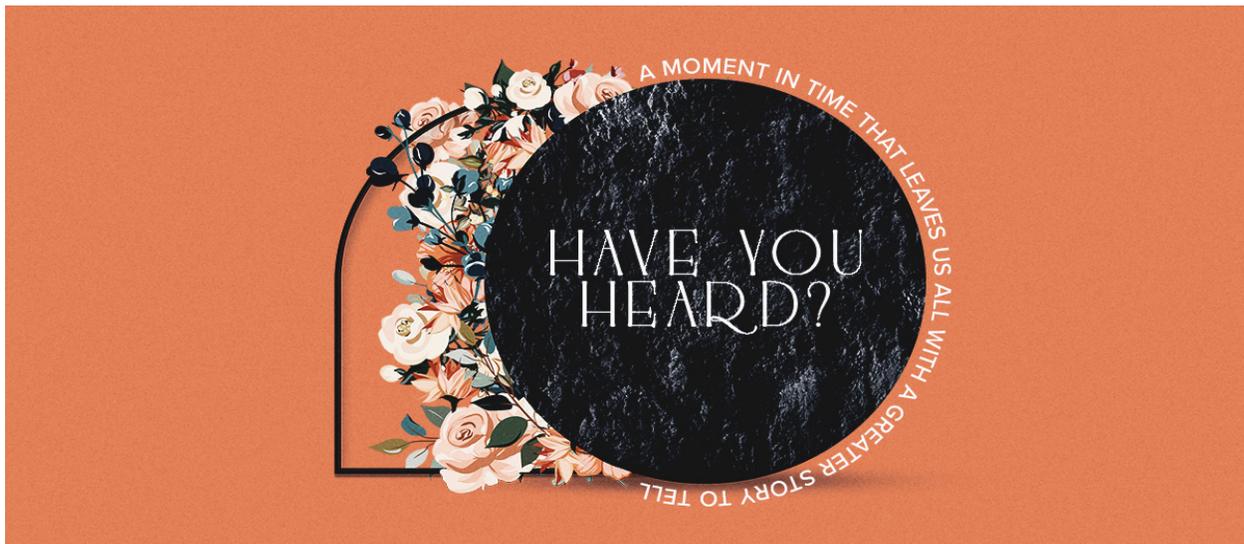
Being a soldier was my life. I never knew any different. I lived with my unit; we did everything together: eating, sleeping, fighting. It was all I ever knew. From the time I was a kid, my life was pledged in service to my king and my god, Caesar.

I noticed a sense of shame as the centurion said this.

When I became a centurion, I was honored, but it wasn't all that it's cracked up to be. My group ended up in Jerusalem, a backward, antique city full of people who followed backward, antique customs. It wasn't just that we were hated, I was used to that—ants often hate the boot that crushes them. Actually, it was the part of the job that I kind of enjoyed. These people had an arrogance to their hatred, like they were somehow more special than us. More special than Rome? Huh! How's that working for them?

Obviously, it didn't seem to be working very well! Tell me how you came to be the supervisor of executions.

I can't even remember how long ago my cohort was assigned to the execution squad, but it was long enough that I had lost count of the number of crosses I had stood up. Hundreds, I'm sure. Long enough that I no longer heard the guttural cry that escapes a body when a spike is driven



into it, or the shriek of pain and the pleading for life as someone's being lashed. To say I was calloused doesn't even scratch the surface of how numb I was.

So, let's talk about the execution of Jesus. What happened during this crucifixion? How was it that a calloused, hardened, professional soldier, who had overseen the death of hundreds, had such a change of heart?

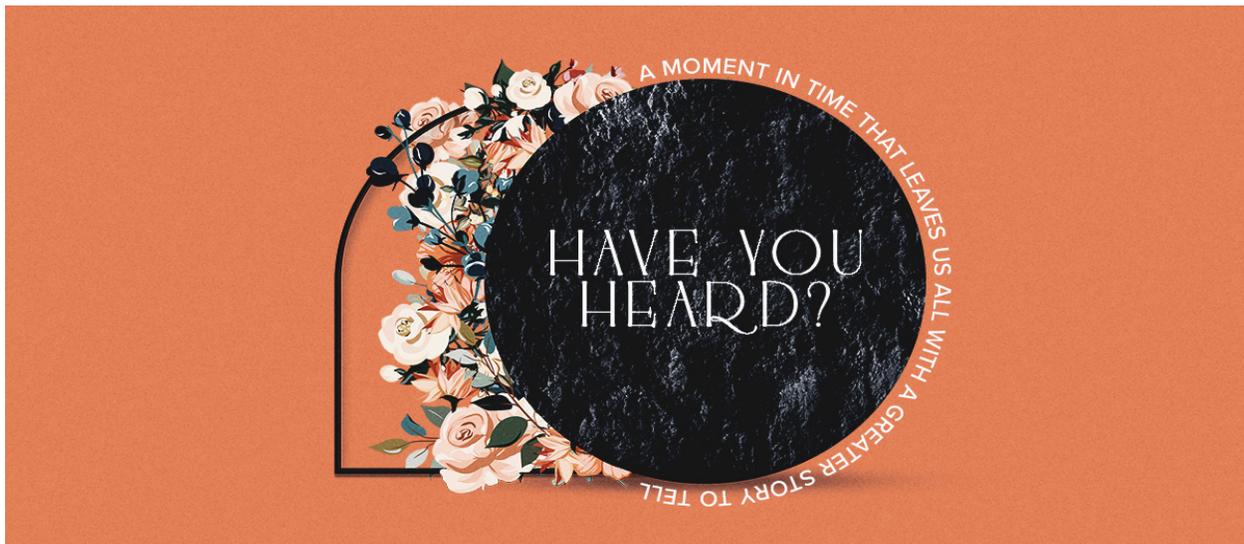
I've asked myself the same question. I think it was his restraint that I first noticed. He was silent—no pleading for his life or bargaining or begging.

The centurion stared of into space as he spoke, like he was re-enacting the day, searching for a clue as to what happened.

Jesus of Nazareth—a name we had heard often over the past few years—walked to the Praetorium without a struggle. It was almost like...I can't figure this out...he was *leading us*. It was lost on my men, of course, who whipped him, mocked him, and jammed a "crown" of thorns on his head, but I didn't miss it. I knew then that something was different.

You noticed his restraint on his way to crucifixion. Was that all you noticed?

Ha! You haven't heard about what happened? Yes, his silence opened my eyes a little, but that was nothing compared to what came next. We marched him up to the hill; he was so weak, we had to enlist someone to help carry it. Once he was on the cross, he said very little. Two of the things he said really caught me attention: "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing," and, "It is finished." You remember how I said he seemed like he was on a mission? What kind of person says that unless they think they're accomplishing something? What can be accomplished on a cross? But then things got really strange: the sky went black. Pitch black. In the middle of the day. And then the earth started to shake violently, like the whole city would collapse. And it all happened when he said, "It is finished." I was terrified, not because of the dark or the earthquake, but because of the power I could feel hovering on that hill.



Tell me more about that power. What did it cause in you?

What did it cause in me? It broke me! Everything I had known and valued in my life was turned upside down that day!

Tears were now streaming down his cheeks.

Look, I used to worship all kinds of gods. I worshiped my king, Caesar, as the son of god. But no god I've ever worshiped has actually been able to change heaven and earth. So when the ground quaked and the sky grew black as night, I knew all the rumors were true. I had gotten it all wrong, we all got it wrong. This was the true Son of God. And I confessed that, in a guttural cry that escaped my own body, as he died.

SCRIPTURE

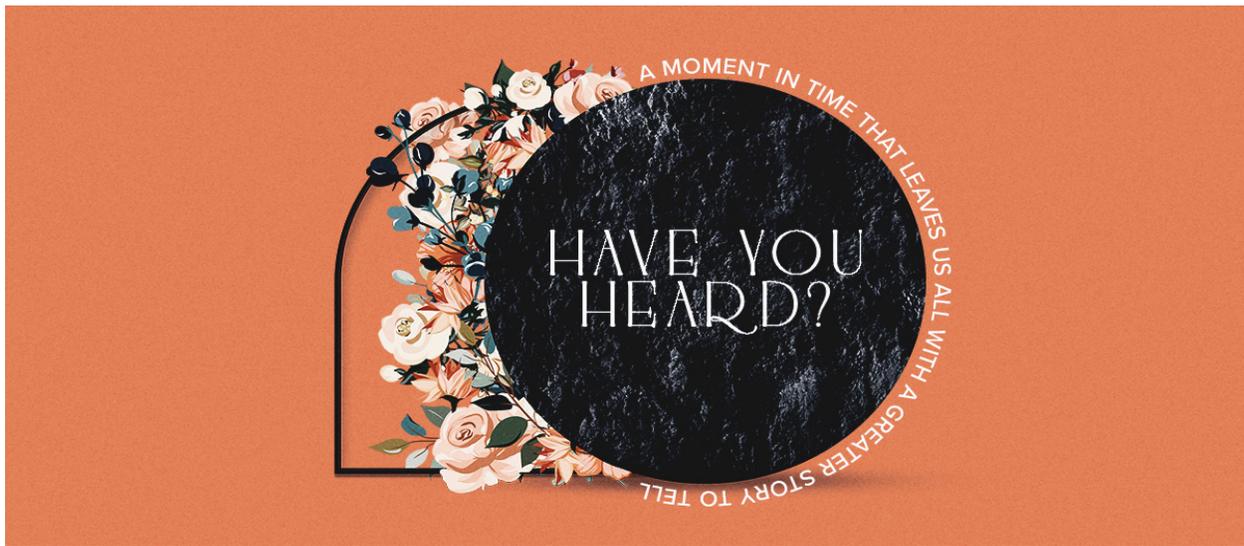
Read **Matthew 27:24-54** and **Mark 15:16-39**.

QUESTIONS

Welcome to the story of The Centurion, a soldier for the Roman army. We don't know his name or his history. All we know about him is his profession and this one line from Scripture. What could have caused such a change in him? How could he say this about Jesus? What was it about Jesus that elicited such a powerful response?

As you ponder this story, prayerfully reflect on the following questions:

- What specific things in the above Scriptures did the soldiers do to Jesus? List out as many as you can.
- Since Caesar was called the “Son of God,” that phrase is not just a statement of Jesus’ relationship to God the Father, it’s an idea that connotes ruling and reigning, loyalty and allegiance – like how a soldier might relate to a king. With that in mind, how would you



describe who Jesus is to you? Is he your King? Are you his loyal soldier? What would that relationship change in your life?

- What does Jesus choosing the cross tell you about the kind of King he is?
- If you were to take the King/soldier relationship with Jesus 100% seriously, what changes would that evoke in your life? Or, in other words, what does this relationship compel you to do differently in your life?

PRAYER

“Dear Jesus, SURELY, you are the Son of God! You reign over the entire cosmos. And you have my full allegiance. I am yours. Take my life and lead me. I will follow! Help me to love and honor and glorify you with all my heart! I love you and pray these things in your name. Amen.”

EXTRA

As you go about your week, take some time to read and reflect on **Psalm 2, Acts 2:14-36, and Romans 1:1-6**. Sit with God in these passages. Allow the Scriptures to speak to you. Ask yourself, “Lord, what do you want to show me in this text today – about myself, about you, about Jesus’ kingship?” Then, listen and jot down any thoughts or reflections. After each day has wrapped up, finish in prayer.