

Peter and the Gentiles
Acts #14 | 9:32-10:48
November 15, 2020

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- Part one of two - Acts 10 and 11 | It's time for the Gentiles to join!
- Some really cool insights from Rabbi Matt

PRAYER

Introduction

Sometimes, you have an experience in life that takes some time to make sense of

- Good: having our first child | Bad: getting in a car accident
- Peter and the Apostles (all the disciples!) are about to go through something so wild, that they are going to need some time to grasp it: the redemption of the nations
 - Disinheritance (Gen. 11), selection of Israel (Deut. 32), blessings to all (Gen. 12)
 - It's finally happening!! What in the world??!

Big idea: *Faith seeking understanding.* – Anselm of Canterbury

Back to Peter | 9:32-43

- A very “pastoral” section - we need to get reacquainted with Pastor Peter
- Two healings of two people - one inactive and one highly active

³²As Peter was traveling from place to place, he also came down to the saints who lived in Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and make your bed,” and immediately he got up. ³⁵So all who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord. ³⁶In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which is translated Dorcas). She was always doing good works and acts of charity. ³⁷About that time she became sick and died. After washing her, they placed her in a room upstairs. ³⁸Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples heard that Peter was there and sent two men to him who urged him, “Don’t delay in coming with us.” ³⁹Peter got up and went with them. When he arrived, they led him to the room upstairs. And all the widows approached him, weeping and showing him the robes and clothes that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down, prayed, and turning toward the body said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. ⁴¹He gave her his hand and helped her stand up. He called the saints and widows and presented her alive. ⁴²This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with Simon, a leather tanner.

- Tabitha - a sweet and simple highlight of one of thousands of unsung saints

Things to Note

Tanner - ceremonially unclean, since they handled dead animals

Joppa - interesting setting for a story about Gentiles...

Meet Cornelius | Acts 10:1-2

¹ There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment. ² He was a devout man and feared God along with his whole household. He did many charitable deeds for the Jewish people and always prayed to God.

- Gentile, Roman, CENTURION
- God-fearer – admired and respected Jews, followed their God, but **did not fully convert**

Cornelius' Vision | Acts 10:3-8

³ About three in the afternoon he distinctly saw in a vision an angel of God who came in and said to him, "Cornelius." ⁴ Staring at him in awe, he said, "What is it, Lord?" The angel told him, "Your prayers and your acts of charity have ascended as a memorial offering before God. ⁵ Now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, who is also named Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." ⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, he called two of his household servants and a devout soldier, who was one of those who attended him. ⁸ After explaining everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Peter's Vision | Acts 10:9-16

⁹ The next day, as they were traveling and nearing the city, Peter went up to pray on the roof about noon. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted to eat, but while they were preparing something, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and an object that resembled a large sheet coming down, being lowered by its four corners to the earth. ¹² In it were all the four-footed animals and reptiles of the earth, and the birds of the sky. ¹³ A voice said to him, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ "No, Lord!" Peter said. "For I have never eaten anything impure and ritually unclean." ¹⁵ Again, a second time, the voice said to him, "What God has made clean, do not call impure." ¹⁶ This happened three times, and suddenly the object was taken up into heaven.

Clean and Unclean (Pure and Impure)

Ritual purity ≠ moral purity

1. Moral purity has to do with choice | Ritual impurity = association with death
 - a. Corpses, leprosy, bodily discharge | *mortality*
2. God is the source of life, you can't enter in if there is evidence of death on you
3. Jewish food laws are part of ritual purity
 - a. NOT legalism – God-given training (set apart, more next week)
 - b. NOT discarded for Jews – this is about something else...

Understanding the Vision | Acts 10:17-23

¹⁷ While Peter was **deeply perplexed** about what the vision he had seen might mean, right away the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions to Simon's house, stood at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon, who was also named Peter, was lodging there. ¹⁹ While Peter was thinking about the vision, the Spirit told him, "Three men are here looking for you. ²⁰ Get up, go downstairs, and go with them with no doubts at all, because I have sent them." ²¹ Then Peter went down to the men and said, "Here I am, the one you're looking for. What is the reason you're here?" ²² They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who has a good

reputation with the whole Jewish nation, was divinely directed by a holy angel to call you to his house and to hear a message from you.”²³ Peter then invited them in and gave them lodging. The next day he got up and set out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went with him.

The Jonah Connection | QUICK SUMMARY

1. The city of Joppa
2. Sent to Gentiles
3. “Arise and go”
4. Initial hesitancy
5. Three-ness
6. Gentiles believe

Matthew 16 ¹³When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵“But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷Jesus responded, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven. ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

- I think that Luke intentionally draws out these connections in his writing to **legitimize** this radical new inclusion of the Gentiles
- If God is willing to save Gentiles through the terrible sermon of a reluctant prophet, how much more through an articulate sermon through the lips of a passionate, Spirit-filled prophet?!

Seeking Clarity | Acts 10:24-33

²⁴The following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and worshiped him. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up and said, “Stand up. I myself am also a man.”

- Cornelius’ is a devout man, but lacking some understanding

²⁷While talking with him, he went in and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸Peter said to them, “You know it’s forbidden for a Jewish man to associate with or visit a foreigner, but God has shown me that I must not call any person impure or unclean.

- There is no law in the Torah that forbids such a thing. This is a man-made law.
- **THE POINT OF THE VISION:** people. Peter kept eating kosher (Galatians)

²⁹That’s why I came without any objection when I was sent for. So may I ask why you sent for me?”

³⁰Cornelius replied, “Four days ago at this hour, at three in the afternoon, I was praying in my house. Just then a man in dazzling clothing stood before me ³¹and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your acts of charity have been remembered in God’s sight. ³²Therefore send someone to Joppa and invite Simon here, who is also named Peter. He is lodging in Simon the tanner’s house by the sea.’ ³³So I immediately sent for you, and it was good of you to come. So now we are all in the presence of God to hear everything you have been commanded by the Lord.”

The Gospel | Acts 10:34-43

³⁴Peter began to speak: “Now I truly understand that God doesn’t show favoritism, ³⁵ but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶He sent the message to the Israelites, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷You know the events that took place throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John preached: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how he went about doing good and healing all who were under the tyranny of the devil, because God was with him. ³⁹We ourselves are witnesses of everything he did in both the Judean country and in Jerusalem, and yet they killed him by hanging him on a tree. ⁴⁰God raised up this man on the third day and caused him to be seen, ⁴¹not by all the people, but by us whom God appointed as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

- Again, the importance of a meal. Jesus ate and drank with his disciples. Food is important.

⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”

Responding to the Gospel | Acts 10:44-48

⁴⁴While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. ⁴⁵The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶For they heard them speaking in tongues and declaring the greatness of God. Then Peter responded, ⁴⁷“Can anyone withhold water and prevent these people from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay for a few days.

Conclusion

Faith seeking understanding. — Anselm of Canterbury

- We don’t face decisions that are as significant as Peter and the Apostles
- In our inflection points, we have a choice. Will we be like Peter and Cornelius, quick to obey, even as they wrestle through understanding what God is doing?

Faith vs. Understanding = False Dichotomy (Blind faith vs. pure pragmatism)

- True faith, and true understanding will never be at odds, both come from God
- False faith | “God told me” to do something sinful. This is whim, desire, urges.
- False understanding | No prayer, no risk, no faith. This is pure pragmatism.

Faith Seeking Understanding

- Which “side” do you lean toward? | Know yourself, and push toward the other side.
- Prayer + reflection + community + Bible + practicals
- How can we be like Cornelius and Peter, quick to obey, even if the details are fuzzy?