

To the Gentiles Also - Acts 10:1-11:18
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Our story this week from Acts 10-11 is one of the most earth moving, paradigm shifting passages in all of Scripture. For 2000 years, the path to knowing God came through a single people, the Jews, and a via adherence to their rituals, laws, and customs. In Genesis 12 God revealed Himself to a man named Abraham and made a myriad of promises that included a great nation from his descendants. He eventually had a son, and the story of the Bible shows us how this one son eventually became a nation of people whose God was the LORD. Yet, the covenant God made with Abraham also included the promise that God would bless him to be a blessing to all, and that eventually all of the nations on earth would be blessed because of God's relationship with Abraham and his descendants. In fact, the call to Israel in the Old Testament was that they were to be a light to the Gentiles (people who were not Jews). Sadly, over the years Israel began believing their own hype, believing that they were loved because they were special in and of themselves, and at the same time learned to despise anyone who was not a Jew. Of course, Gentiles could become a Jew, but they must renounce their customs, go through the rite of circumcision (that's not fun), and embrace all of the Jewish laws and customs, those given by God, and those made by man afterward. So, it was just accepted custom that Gentiles were scum and to be avoided at all cost. In fact, one of the man-made laws was that it was against God's will to enter the home of a Gentile or eat with them.

Yet, God's purpose did not change. It was always the plan of God to send Jesus from the Jews, yet His redemptive plan is for all peoples, all nations, all languages, and all tribes. This had to start somewhere, or in other words, at some point in time an Apostle who was also a Jew would need to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. What is interesting in Acts is that two chapters previous God had already saved the man who would eventually become the Apostle to the Gentiles (Paul from Galatians 1:11-12). Yet, our story this week tells the miraculous moment, including two divine visions, resulting in the Gospel proclaimed and the conversion of the first Gentile believers in Jesus. And their conversion came with the visible evidence of the filling of the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues and worship of Jesus without their being circumcised or embracing the Jewish laws. In fact, the story actually pushed in the opposite direction as Peter's vision led him to realize that the Old Testament dietary laws were now non-binding. He was to go with the Gentile people sent to find him, freely enter the house of Cornelius, eat whatever was set before him (even bacon), and fellowship with these people without distinction. The Spirit opened Peter's eyes to the reality that God does not show partiality and neither should he. He is told that no food is unclean or common, but more important, there are no people who are unclean and common. No such thing as a mere mortal, an ordinary person. These Gentiles too were image bearers of God and people for whom Jesus died. They matter to God and therefore must matter to His people. The outcome is that the whole household of Cornelius is converted to Christ, filled with the Spirit, and baptized. The first of millions, even billions of Gentiles are saved by the Jewish Redeemer because a Jewish witness brought them the Gospel in obedience to the command of his Savior.

So, two applications of this story for us. First, for those of us who are Gentile believers (my guess this is pretty much most of us), this story reveals God's love and purpose for us. This is our Pentecost, the day we were included in the people of God, grafted into the vine (Romans 11), the moment the wall of separation between the Jew and Gentile was destroyed in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-17). We should rejoice greatly in this text because it was here that we too were included in the grand story of redemption. But second, we need to see the Holy Spirit's work of opening Peter's eyes to the reality that there are no common or unclean people. He spent his whole life believing that Gentiles were dogs to be avoided, so God had

to reorient his whole perspective, shake his prejudices, and change his heart toward others. We live in a massively divided culture, and we often have values that have been deeply ingrained in us to see people through the lenses of these cultural divisions rather than through the eyes of God. So, I close with an amazing quote from C. S. Lewis and a call to all of us, we need this second conversion in the story, the one experienced by Peter toward those from other culture, political parties, belief systems, or races.

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations - these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. This does not mean that we are to be perpetually solemn. We must play. But our merriment must be of that kind (and it is, in fact, the merriest kind) which exists between people who have, from the outset, taken each other seriously - no flippancy, no superiority, no presumption."

C. S. Lewis, *the Weight of Glory*

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Weds | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1 Kings 6 | 1 Kings 7 | 1 Kings 8 | 1 Kings 9 | 1 Kings 10 | 1 Kings 11 | 1 Kings 12 |

Reading from this past week: Acts 10:1-11:18

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 12:1-24

Family Worship

Song - Give Me Jesus
<https://youtu.be/Gz-QfFOBI7Q>

Gospel Project

Unit: King David

Story: David fought Goliath

Big Picture Question: What is grace?

Answer: Grace is when God gives us something good even when we do not deserve it.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17

New City Catechism

Question #28: What happens after death to those not united to Christ by faith?

Answer: They will be cast out from the presence of God, into hell, to be justly punished, forever.

Verse: John 3:16-18, 36

Scripture

Acts 10:1-11:18

- Why is this story such a significant moment in the story of God's redemption?
- What prejudices and attitudes do we see in Peter in this story that God had to change so he could be a witness to the Gentiles? What prejudices do you tend to have that causes you to see people through cultural lenses?
- Why does the church need to fight against being divided along the same lines we find in the culture?

Prayer

*Continue to pray for our Ecuador mission team this week.

*Pray for the Windswept Farms neighborhood

*Thank God that He has included all peoples in His glorious plan of redemption.