

Everyone

Acts 10:1 - 11:18; June 10, 2018

Review:

- The general theme that we've been focusing on since the beginning of the year as we've studied through the Book of Acts is that of "Overflowing." In fact, as a church, our vision this year is "The fullness of God in you overflowing through you."
- For the past few weeks we've applied that "Overflowing" focus to the very streets that we live on. We want to be filled with the Spirit in order to overflow in love for our actual neighbors and point them Jesus. One of the tools we've been encouraging everyone to use is a Block Map of your neighborhood. You'll find these attached to your worship guide again today. Keep filling those out, looking for opportunities to learn your neighbor's names along with simple information about them.
- I've been super encouraged by as a number of you have shared with me about interactions with your neighbors over the past few weeks and plans that you've made to engage them this summer. I love it. Keep it up. Keep the stories coming to us as well. We want to hear how God is at work through you on your streets.
- Here are some truths that we've seen:
 - God is sovereign over our streets. We aren't there on accident and neither are our neighbors.
 - Last week, we looked at the conversion of Saul and concluded that if God can save Paul, he can save *anyone* on our streets.
- Today, we're going to wrap up our neighborhood focus and we're going to see how God can save *everyone* on our streets.

The Point: God can save everyone on your street!

Context:

- Let's look back to where we ended last week. **Read Acts 9:31.**
- After this, Luke transitions back to Peter. Peter had been preaching the gospel outside of Jerusalem, in the coastal plain of Judea, and performs two miracles.
 - In 9:32-35, he's in Lydda and heals a lame man named Aeneas (uh-NEE-uhs).
 - In 9:36-43, he's is beckoned to Joppa and restores life back to Dorcas who had died. **Read Acts 9:42-43.**
- We're going to pick up in chapter 10. This chapter is one of the most important units in Acts as the gospel goes out directly to a Gentile for the first time and after this we will see it spread in all directions.

Read and Explain the Text:

Read 10:1-2: An Introduction to Cornelius

- First of all, we learn the setting for this encounter is Caesarea (show map), a city on the coast about 31 miles north of Joppa.
- The text tells us that Cornelius was a "centurion" of the "Italian Cohort." This means that

- he was a commander of 100 men and would've been social prominent and wealthy.
- Luke gives us some further descriptors of his spiritual background. He says he was:
 - *A devout man*
 - His devotion is tangibly displayed in his generosity in giving and continual praying.
 - *Feared God*
 - He had been exposed to the God of Israel and responded positively to it but had not embraced "in any detailed way the elements of Jewish legal practice" (Bock).
 - *Gave alms generously*
 - *Prayed continually to God*
- Let me pose a question: was Cornelius already saved? Had he already been born again and given new life? As we continue through the text, keep pondering this question.

Read 10:3-8: Cornelius has a vision

- This vision occurred at ninth hour, 3pm in the afternoon.
- The mention of his prayers and giving of alms ascending as a "memorial" before God is interesting. This mention of "memorial" is the only occurrence of this term in the NT. In the OT, it had connotations of "sacrificial" language (Lev. 2: 2, 9, 16) indicating that someone or something had been remembered by God.
- As in the previous chapter with Saul, God is clearly at work moving his mission forward. He is orchestrating a providential interaction with Simon Peter.

Read 10:9-16: Peter has a vision

- The text says that Peter went up on the housetop. This would've been an easy feat since houses in Judea typically had flat roofs accessible by ladders or stairs.
- It was the sixth hour, 12pm, and Peter was about to spend time with God in prayer while others prepared some food for him, but God had different plans.
- Peter falls into a "trance." This is similar to a vision.
- What Peter *sees*:
 - He sees a great sheet descending down from heaven.
 - In this sheet were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds.
 - As later will be confirmed, the reference to "all kinds of animals" meant that his vision included both clean and unclean animals.
 - Why is this important? Well, in the Mosaic covenant, God gave commands to Israel in Leviticus 11 and told them that they were forbidden from eating unclean animals. God's purpose is explain in Lev. 11:4-47:

"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. You shall not defile yourselves with any swarming thing that crawls on the ground. For I am the LORD who brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy." This is the law about beast and bird and every living creature that moves through the waters and every creature that swarms on the ground, to make a distinction between the

unclean and the clean and between the living creature that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten.” (Leviticus 11:44-47 ESV)

- What Peter *hears*:
 - “Rise, Peter, kill and eat.”
 - The language used for “kill” is similar to language used for not just killing and eating but “sacrificing” (cf. Acts 14:13, 18; 1 Cor. 10:20). If this is true, this would’ve made Peter’s act a religious act.
- How Peter *responds*:
 - “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.”
 - Give the above background, you can understand his hesitancy.
- What Peter *hears*:
 - “What God has made clean, do not call common.”
 - There’s more to what’s going on than just what kind of food Peter can eat. Think about it, one of the main reasons that Jews spent very little time with Gentiles was because Gentiles were “unclean” and the Jews, rightly, were concerned to be “clean” before God.
 - God was ushering in the arrival of a new way of interacting with and engaging with the Gentiles. With the coming of Jesus, these laws in the mosaic covenant had been done away with. There was nothing that was to get in the way of Jews fellowshiping the the Gentiles and the gospel spreading to them (cf. Rom. 14:14; 1 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 Cor. 10:19).

“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” (Colossians 2:16-17 ESV)

- This happened three times
 - The repetition of this happening three times reinforces the fact that God is speaking and is to be believed (so Bock).

Read 10:17-23a: Peter meets with Cornelius’ servants

- Peter’s mind is blown. The text says he was “inwardly perplexed.”
- In the mean time, God had brought Cornelius’ servants to Joppa and now the Spirit alerts Peter about what is happening. The Spirit says, “Rise and go down and accompany them *without hesitation*, for I have sent them.”
- Cornelius’ servants tell Peter about the vision that Cornelius had and that the reason for Peter’s involvement is that God wants Cornelius to “hear what you have to say.”

Read 10:23b-33: Peter and Cornelius meet - setting the stage

- Cornelius has gathered a crowd and they are ready to “hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord” (10:33).
- Peter makes explicit the uniqueness of this encounter along with the newness of what

God is doing (see 10:28).

Read 10:34-43: Peter shares Jesus with Cornelius' household

- 34-36 lay out two major themes that Peter had become convinced of:
 - God shows no partiality.
 - “In every nation...”
 - I’m going to explain this verse a little more in second because at first glance it seems to convey that Jesus isn’t necessary for salvation.
 - Jesus is Lord of all
- In 37-43 Peter preaches the gospel, beginning with the baptism of John, continuing on to the anointing of the Spirit on Jesus and then walking through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection.
 - It’s not coincidental that it says Jesus was put to death hanging on a “tree.”
 - What really makes us unclean?
 - Look at Mark 7:14-23

"Hear me, all of you, and understand: There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him....Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?" (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:14-23 ESV)

- We are defiled, unclean and cursed because we are sinners.
- The reference to Jesus dying on a “tree” echoes back to Deut. 21:23 where it says that anyone hung on a tree is cursed. This is why Paul in Galatians argues:

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us-- for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Galatians 3:13 ESV)

- Was Cornelius already saved? Can someone be accepted by God apart from faith in Jesus? No.
 - The reason Cornelius needed to hear from Peter was because he needed to hear the gospel, that he was a sinner but Jesus was a savior for his sins and he could receive forgiveness (10:43) if he believed.
 - Further confirmation of this is found in 11:13-14.
 - Read 11:1-4
 - Read 11:13-14
 - Bock explains it this way: “The point is not that Cornelius earned righteousness as his due (Rom. 4:5) but that his responsiveness leads God to send Peter to reveal

more of God's way to him, as the rest of the speech points the way to what Cornelius now must do" (Bock).

Read 10:44-48: Cornelius' entire household is saved

- The Holy Spirit falls on Cornelius and all who heard the word and they were all baptized with water. There are a number of significant observations to be highlighted here:
 - The description of what happened here is so close to what happened in Pentecost in Acts 2 (speaking in tongues, extolling God) that many have rightly called this the "Pentecost of the Gentile world" (so Bock).
 - These new Gentile believers didn't first obey any mosaic law before receiving the Spirit (some thought that the Gentiles would first have to become Jews).
 - Peter didn't even lay hands on them to receive the Spirit. This was God's initiative and the Spirit "falling on them" confirmed that all of this was God's work.

As we think about God's mission as it relates to our neighbors, here are four truths that I want to leave you with:

1. No-one is good enough to be accepted by God apart from Jesus.

2. Jesus was cursed so that everyone might be saved.

- Jesus has broken down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles.
- There are no barriers (racial, socio-economic, you name it) that should hinder us from pursuing people on our street.

3. God desires to save many "Cornelius" in every nation.

- Read 11:17-18
- Instead of "standing in God's way," let's be a part of his plan to see the nations come to faith in Jesus and experience eternal life.
- Reference back to 10:34-35. I believe that there are many "Cornelius" on our streets and if we are willing and available, God will lead us to them and them to us.
- The problem is that we don't know who these people are. So how do we find out? We share. Rico Tice in his book *Honest Evangelism* says that there is a "painline" that you have to cross in evangelism. You have to move from just being quiet and comfortable to sharing and having people reject the message. He says this, "I want to be honest: if you tell non-Christians about Jesus, it will be painful." He continues, "Until you cross the mainline, you don't know what response you will meet with. Sometimes you will get hit, just as Paul did. Sometimes you will find hunger...for all the hostility there is to Christ, there is also a hunger for him in the hearts of those we live among...Hostility and hunger: that's what you'll find as you tell others about Jesus...You have to rest the hostility to discover the hunger."

4. Many of these nations live on our streets.

- Here's an example from Soccer Nights
 - White: 44.7%

- Asian: 20.6%
- African American: 11.3%
- Multi-racial: 10.5%
- Hispanic or Latino: 6.6%
- Other races: 5.8%
- Native American: .4%
- This is one of the primary reasons that God led Tanner and I to Boston. Numerous nations have come to us. We have an opportunity that very few cities in the world have. With great opportunity comes great responsibility.

The Point: God can save everyone on your street!

Conclusion:

- Keep adding info to your neighborhood block map, keep learning who your neighbors are and strive to move to level 3 in your relationship. Let's pray for God's grace to so work in our lives that we're willing to risk the hostility with our neighbors to discover the hunger.