

Sunday October 16, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

The writer to the Hebrews says *"Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*

Let's Pray. *Father, we want to come to you this morning to say thankyou and to honour you. You are my God, and I will praise you! You are my God, and I will exalt You! Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. We are often so busy that we forget to take the time to sit quietly and remember your love and faithfulness. We forget to say thank you for all the good things you provide in our lives, and yet you continue to love, support and bless us. We cry out that "life's not fair" but forget that you have been through it all before, and that you will give us the strength that we need. Help us to rejoice that you are near, that you walk with us, that we grow and learn and that your love is constant.*

We want to thank you for life, for food that you provide, and for the love of family and friends. Thank you for the beauty of creation, for the joy that it gives us, for the wonder of the sea and sky and for the expanse of space that draws us beyond the definitions of our selves. Thank you for the blessings that you shower over us, despite our foolish ways and sinful pride. Forgive us when we forget and ignore you. Thankyou Father for your unconditional and everlasting love. Help us to grow more and more to be like you. Guide & teach us in all that we say & do & help us to listen with open hearts today as we come before you. Amen

Song – Hymn of the Ages <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBBSQDRInQ4>

1. All history shall bow before Your throne
Time and space on bended knee shall come
Though kingdoms pass away, Your majesty remains
How great You are, how great must be Your song
2. The Alpha and Omega without end
The everlasting makes this wretch His friend
The angels stand in awe, this beggar heart responds
How great You are, how great must be Your song

Chorus: You're the hymn of the ages
The hope of all the world
You carried our redemption on Your shoulders
You're the anthem of salvation
Jesus, Lord of Lords
Your legacy will echo through the ages

3. Oh, for a countless choir in my lungs
 To sing Your praises with a thousand tongues
 The purpose in my days, is ever to proclaim
 How great You are, and how great must be Your song

Chorus

Bridge: We raise the never-ending song
 The greatest song we've ever known
 The song of angels, the hymn of ages
 Holy is the Lord (Repeat bridge)

Chorus

Bible Reading – Acts 10:1-23 (NIV)

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment.² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.⁵ Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter.⁶ He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants.⁸ He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa.⁹ About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate.¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you.²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."²¹ Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"²² The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say."²³ Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

Announcements

Focus for October – Training. "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:8) We all know the value of physical training – walks, gyms, playing sport. But Paul says that spiritual training is even more important. During October we are providing a bit of a gifts bootcamp to help us all think through how we might better serve each other.

Ministry Training. During the coming weeks we are having a different emphasis each week

- Tues 18th/Wed 19th October Complementarianism – the Biblical roles of men & women
- Tues 25th/Wed 26th October Training II
- Tues 1st/Wed 2nd November Obedience: How Mission is everyone's responsibility (Parsons)

Upcoming Events

- Sun 30/10 Parson Visit us for this week.
- Sat 5/11 Gala Concert
- Sat 19/11 Men's Breakfast (7-9am)
- Sat 19/11 NSW State Moderator Visits Swansea Church for morning tea
- Sat 26/11 Gingerbread House Night
- Sat 10/12 Gather Round Christmas Celebration

Resource. At Resource 2022 (Wed 16th – Thurs 17th Nov) Kit will be helping us be better teachers of the Old Testament specifically in respect of Ezekiel. On each of the two mornings of Resource (formerly called HGM Bible Teacher's workshop) Kit will do two teaching sessions, and on each afternoon there will be a hands-on workshop format helping us dig into the nitty-gritty of communicating to others the difficult book of Ezekiel. More details go to hgm.org.au

Christmas boxes (Operation Christmas Child. Samaritans Purse). Just a couple more weeks for us to complete our Christmas boxes. If you have any questions please speak to Kathryn O.

Mission Team. There will be a mission team meeting via zoom, TODAY from 3:30-4:15pm. All welcome. The zoom link is..

Vanuatu. Our church is planning on running a short-term mission to Vanuatu early next year. The dates are expected to be 4th – 18th January. Our aim will be to help the local with a physical project that allows them to minister more effectively to their community as well as doing some teaching, training and kids/youth work. If you are interested in knowing more details please see Stephen. Numbers will need to be finalised by the end of November.

Gala Concert – Sat 5 Nov. We are putting a call out to performers from our churches – Sally Wright would love to talk to you! Please make contact with her at sallybigtrip19@gmail.com or on 0406 937 634

Kids Spot: This term in kids church, we are continuing the series we started last term in the book of Acts. This week we look at the early church in Acts 2:36-47 and that it was people who loved Jesus and who loved to be with and serve His people. Challenge for the week: Discuss ways each of your children can love and serve others at our church. Be specific and help them to put ideas into practice.

Prayer Points for 16th October 2022

Psalms 34:2 "My soul shall make its boast in the Lord, the humble shall hear it and be glad"

Pray for Morocco: Pray for widespread distribution of evangelistic materials among the many unreached people groups. Pray for those troubled by increasing tensions between Islamists and moderates to be open to the Good News. Pray for fellowship and freedom from fear for isolated believers.

Pray for our government leaders: Pray they will be wise and discerning, and surrounded by helpful advisers.

Pray for Parsons: Please pray that Steven and Sandra Parsons, CMS/ TEAM Japan, will be clear and express well what God, in the partnership missions, has done in Tokyo at each of the Lake Macquarie and Sydney meetings, to glorify Him. Praise to God for the people who cover for the Japan ministries while the Parsons are on home assignment. Pray that each of these people will be very conscious of God's presence as they fulfil the mission responsibilities while continuing with their own ministries, and that they will make wise decisions as different challenges come their way. Vacation "We're amazed at the way God has provided for our vacation this month. Praise Him with us for this provision. Please pray that we'll find good quality rest during this time of disconnection that will allow us to be better able to serve Him during our home assignment".

Bible Reading – Acts 10:23-11:18

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." ²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went

inside and found a large gathering of people.²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean."²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me³¹ and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor.'³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.'³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.³⁷ You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.³⁹ "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross,⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles.⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said,⁴⁷ "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have."⁴⁸ So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

11 The apostles and the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."⁴ Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story:⁵ "I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw something like a large sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was.⁶ I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles and birds.⁷ Then I heard a voice telling me, 'Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.'⁸ "I replied, 'Surely not, Lord! Nothing impure or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'⁹ "The voice spoke from heaven a second time, 'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'¹⁰ This happened three times, and then it was all pulled up to heaven again.¹¹ "Right then three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea stopped at the house where I was staying.¹² The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house.¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel appear in his house and say, 'Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter.¹⁴ He will bring you a message through which you and all your household will be saved.'¹⁵ "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.'¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?"¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Song –And can it be <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQeIGbKqiW8>

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|---|--|
| 1. And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Savior's blood? | 4. Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night; |
|---|--|

Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Refrain:

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

2. 'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

3. He left His Father's throne above—
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For, O my God, it found out me!

5. No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th' eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Sermon – No Favourites... (Stephen T)

We all have a favourites don't we? So when a box of Cadbury Favourites comes our way, we look at the selection in front of us: daily milk, crunchie, flake, boost, picnic, cherry ripe, old gold, Turkish delight and dream and we choose our favourite. When we are at a restaurant we haven't been to before, we might go through a menu and then still choose our favourite dish. And when we come to Church there is a lot of people, we know but secretly we hope to sit with or talk to our favourites at morning tea.

Well God has no favourites. He doesn't choose the Jew over the Gentile. The rich over the poor. The male over the female. The free over the slave. The old over the young. He has no favourites. None whatsoever. He created them all. He put his image in each one. He gave them all this wonderful world. He sent them his prophets. He even sent them his son who died on the cross to forgive them their sins. God wants the whole world to know what He is like and what He has done for them. Because God has no favourites.

And neither should we. For we are to be like God in this regard. You and I should have no favourites. We shouldn't prefer Christians to non-Christians. Presbyterians to Catholics. White to Black. Middle class to working class. Australians to Africans. We are to be like God & have no favourites. No discrimination. No partiality but to get to this place will require not just a conversion to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ but a conversion to a commitment to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And to get there we might need a paradigm shift.

Slide 2

What's a paradigm shift? Its a total change in perspective on something. An about turn in the way you've looked at life? There's a book by Joel Baker called PARADIGMS; The Business of Discovering your future. It's about the importance of recognising the need to change paradigms. To switch to a new perspective & to illustrate the point he tells a story.

There's a businessman with a holiday house in the country. Along a long and winding road and every weekend he drives there in his stately Mercedes. It's a long road, but he knows it well, every bend, every

tree because he's driven it so often. And so as he drives there for his Easter weekend, he gets the shock of his life when around the bend up ahead of him comes a Porsche, sliding sideways all over the road. The driver struggling to get control. Fishtails to the left and to the right. And the businessman is thinking that this is going to be the end of me. Because the Porsche seems to be heading right for him on the wrong side of the road.

As he hits the brakes the driver of the Porsche veers back to the right side of the road in just the nick of time. It's a convertible. He sees the driver is a beautiful woman & as she sweeps past, she yells at him at the top of her voice, she yells "PIG! PIG!" Now that's not fair, he says to himself. Of all the nerve. Here she is all over the road, she has nearly wiped me out & she's got the hide to call me a PIG? At which moment he sweeps around the bend that he knows so well and smashes full speed into the PIG that's standing in the middle of the road.

Now there's an example of someone who needed a paradigm shift. Who needed to see things in a whole different way. And didn't. Who had all the information he needed. But had pieced it together completely the wrong way. And in Acts 10 & 11 we see that Peter needs this change of perspective. Cornelius needs that change of perspective, and finally the Church needs that change of perspective. Let's see what I mean.

Slide 3

1. Peter's Conversion. (Acts 10:1-23)

Last week we were in Acts chapter 9 and we saw the dramatic conversion of Saul, the one who would become Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. But at this point in the history of the Church there are no Gentiles, not even one. Ten years have passed since that dramatic day of Pentecost. Before that Jesus had ascended to heaven & had told the disciples to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. But so far, they had only got to the Jews and the Samaritans. So, God starts his work on Peter.

In chapter 9, he sends him into Gentile territory. And he comes across Aeneas, a paralytic Jew who had been bedridden for 8 years and Peter says to him, "Jesus Christ heals you." And Jesus does heal him. He picks up his mat and walks. A mighty miracle, recounted in just 4 verses. And it is followed by an even greater miracle, the raising of Dorcas from the dead. Peter utilising the power of the Lord Jesus actually brings someone back to life. And the incident is described in another 5 verses.

But he will then go on to describe the gospel coming to the Gentiles in 66 verses. For this is an even greater miracle. The gospel is breaking the boundaries of Judaism, and will now go to the ends of the earth, to the Gentiles. God is now revealing His redemptive purpose in full glorious light. We read...

⁹ "About noon ... Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry & wanted something to eat & while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened & something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

God is breaking a Jewish taboo. Actually, two Jewish taboos. The first one is all to do with food. Before Peter is a sheet filled with kosher and non-kosher food. Food that he is willing to eat like lamb, chicken, quail as well as loads of food that he has never eaten in his life pig, lobster & owl. For Peter this is an unholy smorgasbord. This diet though, meant that the Jew conducted themselves differently from the Gentile and is why they never ate with Gentiles.

Slide 4

Peter sees the selection and says No way, Jose. I am not going to eat anything unclean. ¹⁵ "The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁶ This happened three

times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.” Now when on earth Jesus had declared that all foods were now clean and could be eaten by God’s followers. But it was a big bridge to cross and no-one had done it up until now. Even after Peter hears a voice from heaven three times, he still isn’t willing to cross that bridge!

Peter is pretty fixed about this isn’t he? Three times, he has the same conversation with God. You would think he would learn the lesson the first time or maybe even second time. But no God has to send this vision three times! How stubborn is Peter! And how rude as well. As one preacher has said, “When talking to God you can say *No* and you can say *Lord*, but you can’t say *No, Lord* for if he truly is your Lord, you will say yes to anything he commands you to do.” But here Peter is saying *No* to his Lord, three times!

Slide 5

But this vision is not just about food its also about people. ¹⁷“*While Peter was wondering about **the meaning of the vision**, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was & stopped at the gate.* ¹⁸*They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.* ¹⁹*While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you.* ²⁰*So get up & go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them...* ²³*Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.”*

God is helping Peter to make one small step for man, but a giant leap for mankind. He is in Gentile territory and he has seen God do miraculous things. God has spoken to him in a vision in the land of the Gentiles. Now he invites Gentiles into the house to stay. And in two days he himself will go into the house of a Gentile to preach and stay. So, in the very town, Joppa, that Jonah took a boat to escape his call to preach to the Gentiles, Peter embraces his call to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Slide 6

“The next day Peter started out with them & some of the believers from Joppa went along. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives & close friends... Peter went inside & found a large gathering of people ²⁸ He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”

The coin has dropped for the head of the Church Peter. Before this incident Peter thought the Jews were clean but the Gentiles were unclean. Now he realises that both Jew and Gentile are unclean. And they both need the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to make them clean. To obtain forgiveness for their sins. All people are on the same playing field in the search for God. For God has no favourites.

This is a real paradigm shift. Judaism has never really been a missionary religion and up until this point neither has Christianity. It has only been interested in one race, the Jews. But this signified not a turn from the Jews but instead a turn to include the Gentiles. That’s it – Peter has been converted! God truly saves by grace. The Jew and the Gentile. So Peter was converted to the fact that the good news of Jesus is actually for everyone. Yet at the same time that God was converting Peter he was also bring about

Slide 7

2. The conversion of Cornelius (verses 24-48)

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. ² He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. ³ One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”⁴ Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God.”

Now if Paul had been a wild animal, murderously persecuting the Church, Cornelius is the exact opposite. Good and godly. Well respected. A Roman Centurion. A man who prays. Who was generous to those in need. And who believed in God and so did his family. But it was not enough. He knew he needed something else. And God knew it as well, so miraculously God sent him an angel who told him to send for Peter. Which he does.

Now as an aside if someone like Cornelius isn't saved, then there will be lots and lots of good, decent people who are also not saved. People in your family. People in our neighbourhood. People throughout the world who currently don't trust in Jesus are in exactly the same situation as a good man like Cornelius. Which is why God choreographs everything perfectly for Cornelius and sends him Peter.

Slide 8

²⁵ "As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself." ²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean."

Slide 9

In the words of John Stott, "Peter refused to be treated by Cornelius as if he was a god and he refused to treat Cornelius as if he was a dog." What a great quote!

Slide 10

Cornelius asks Peter to speak, for the people in the house are all ears, they are ready "to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." ³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right."

Peter tells Cornelius that God doesn't have favourites. He doesn't have a bias toward the Jew or Gentile, the rich or poor, the slave or free, the man or woman. He accepts from every nation, (you get that, every nation) the one who fears him and does what is right. But what is the basis that people from every nation find such a wonderful Saviour? It is through Jesus.

Slide 11

And so Peter tells the Gentiles a very similar message to the one he preached on the day of Pentecost. It's about Jesus' life; it's about Jesus' ministry; it's about Jesus' death on the cross; it's about Jesus' resurrection. It's about Jesus coming in judgment at the end of the age. It's all about Jesus. He's preaching Jesus Christ. He's saying to Cornelius and he's saying to these Gentiles that the way of salvation and the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God, and pardon with a just God, is to be found in Jesus Christ, and in Jesus only.

God is the God of the nations. And God wants to bring salvation to the nations. And if he hadn't done enough to prove it, he now sends down the Holy Spirit. Peter hadn't even given his appeal. There hadn't even been one verse of Just as I am played. And the Holy Spirit interrupts the preaching and the whole household become Christians. For they speak in tongues and praise God. And so, Peter does the obvious thing, he baptises them.

In the same way that the Holy Spirit came on the Jews at Pentecost and the Samaritans when Peter & John placed their hands on them, so now the Holy Spirit comes to the Gentiles. For there is no difference. No favoritism. No distinction between the Jew and Gentile. God has crashed down the biggest barrier of race and nationality.

Slide 12

From now on there's no turning back from this point forward. The gospel is breaking the boundaries of Judaism, breaking the boundaries not just of Samaria and Judea, but is now going to the ends of the earth,

to the Gentiles. And Cornelius is a representative of the Gentiles. The Gentiles are now coming in, flocking in, to the kingdom of God. The distinction between Jew and Gentile is no more. The middle wall of partition has been broken down. There is no distinction between clean and unclean any more. God's gospel is on the march.

Friends that's the power of the gospel, it can save a Jew like Saul and a Gentile like Cornelius. It can save a scholar like Saul and a soldier like Cornelius. A bigot like Saul and a seeker like Cornelius. As Paul will later write in the book of Romans, "It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, for the Jew first and then for the Gentile." And at the heart of this gospel is conversion. Repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And God's Holy spirit had brought about that sort of a conversion in Cornelius. He now believed in the Lord Jesus. And the Spirit had also brought about a conversion of Peter, he now believed that the good news of Jesus is for all people. Now all that was needed was

Slide 13

3. The conversion of the Church. (Acts 11:1-18)

11 *"The apostles & the believers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."*

Yes, its good news, the Gentiles have believed the word of God. The nations are beginning to flock into the kingdom. Let's rejoice in this Rubicon being crossed. Yes? No! For this news split the believers. For some of them were worried that Peter had eaten in the house of a Gentile and horror of horrors he might have even eaten pork sandwiches. Change is difficult. Cultural changes, religious changes are especially difficult. None of these guys would have ever eaten food that was not kosher. None of them would have ever been into a Gentile's house before. They would need proof, real proof that God was at work in the Gentiles, so Peter walks them through, step by step & gives them the proof they need.

Slide 14

Peter, tells them that God spoke to him directly in a vision. Now in those days none of the believers had the New Testament as we have it today. So God sent Peter his word in another form. But then he backed up his word with providence. God was moving the chess pieces around the board in such a way as the vision Peter got & the voice he heard worked in with Cornelius' vision and the fact that he sent those soldiers to bring peter to his place.

And, then all could see the work of the Holy Spirit was also at play. The opening of their hearts, the coming down on them in power, the speaking in tongues and the cries of praise. It was obvious that the Holy Spirit was at work. And Peter says this was confirmed by the words of Jesus. "I remembered what the Lord had said John baptised with water but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." So this wasn't Peer idea, it was God's plan. And so really it doesn't matter what the Church thinks, God has spoken. And this sort of behaviour is both acceptable and necessary!

Slide 15

The Church is converted but would need a number of further conversion experiences into the future to truly believe that the gospel of Jesus is for everyone. For example when Mahatma Gandhi was in England, he was deeply touched by reading the gospels and seriously considered becoming a Christian. For the bible seemed to offer a real solution to the caste system of India because it showed a God who didn't show any favouritism.

So, one Sunday he went to Church to ask the minister about salvation but when he entered the building the ushers refused to give him a seat and suggested he worship with his own people. He left and never came back. "If Christians have caste differences also, I might as well remain a Hindu." He explained. He later wrote "I like the New Testament. I like your Christianity, but I do not like your Christians."

Slide 16

Friends maybe the Church still needs to be converted? Maybe you and I need to believe not just in Jesus but that the gospel of the Lord Jesus is for all people. Which means we need to make sure that the gospel goes to all the world. Not just to the Aussie. Not just to our suburb. Not just to our family but to every nation under the sun. Jesus doesn't belong to the us, Jesus belongs to the world. And the world belongs to Jesus. But there are plenty of people in the world who have never heard of Jesus. And there are plenty of countries that desperately need missionaries. And there are plenty of languages where the bible has yet to be translated into. Why should we have it so good here? Why should we have buildings and bibles and Church services when so many don't have what we have. God has no favourites. But we seem to favour ourselves. Our community. Our nation.

And what's worse we often have prejudices against people with a different coloured skin to ourselves or a different religion or denomination. Maybe even a different view on sexuality. Or a different economic background. But that shouldn't be so. God has made all people in the image of God. And God wants us to preach the gospel to all people and to model the gospel to all people – to the Muslim, to the Jew, to the indigenous Australian, to the couple living together, to the gay couple, to the homeless, the marginalised. God shows no favourites and neither should you and I. And neither should this Church. So if we are to reflect God's heart we need to have no favourites either. And make sure that all people, here or overseas has access to the gospel of the Lord Jesus. The one who will save them.

Slide 17

Let me end with these words from Scottish preacher Alexander Whyte *"It would change your whole heart and life this very night if you would take Peter and Cornelius home with you and lay them both to heart. If you take a four cornered napkin when you get home and a pen and ink and write the names of the nations and the churches and the denominations and the ministers and the public men and the private citizens and the neighbours and the fellow worshippers – all the people that you dislike and despise and do not and cannot and will not love. Heap all their names into your unclean napkin & then look up and say "Not so Lord I neither can speak well nor think well nor hope well of these people. I cannot do it and I will not try." If you acted out and spoke out all the evil things that are in your heart in some such way as that, you would thus get such a sight of yourselves that you would never forget it."*

Slide 18

Friends that's our challenge. God shows no favourites. Neither should we. For every one of us needs Jesus.

Song – No other name [No Other Name \(Acoustic Song Leading Video\) // Emu Music - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. There is no other name
In heaven can be found
Through whom we are redeemed
Through whom your grace abounds
No other name can save
But Jesus Christ our Lord</p> <p>Chorus: My joy in sorrow's tears
My strength to cast out fears
No other name but Jesus, Jesus
My hope in darkest night
My broken soul's delight
No other name but Jesus, Jesus</p> | <p>2. There is no victory
But Jesus crucified
No other cure for sin
But that our Saviour died
No other hope we have
But that he rose again</p> <p>3. No other throne endures
No other song remains
But 'Worthy is the Lamb
Who was for sinners slain'
When every knee shall bow
And tongue confess you are Lord, You are Lord</p> |
|--|---|

Benediction. *So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?"*¹⁸ *When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life."*