

1/17/16

Acts 10:24-48

Real Gospel

²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends.²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. ²⁸ And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

³⁰ And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” ⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy

Spirit just as we have?”⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

(Pastor Prays)

Today is Sanctity of Life Sunday and tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day and, as believers, we should view the two as being related.

It is estimated that since 1973 when abortion was legalized (Roe v Wade), that more than 50 million little boys and little girls' lives were ended in their mothers' wombs, and as Gospel-centered people, we believe that all of life is sacred, which is really what is at the core of what Martin Luther King stood for —the sacredness— the sanctity of all human life.

These ideas on human dignity are not born in a vacuum. They emerge from pages of the Bible and pulsate with Gospel clarity, calling us to view people —all people— born and unborn, black and white, as precious in the eyes of God. It's that view (that life is precious) that undergirds our Gospel motivation and it's that view that permeates this passage.

We are back in the book of Acts, Chapter 10, and we will finish the story of Cornelius (a Gentile) and Peter (a Jew). God has spoken to Cornelius and pointed him toward a man named Peter. Peter, meanwhile, has seen a vision that prepared his heart to break down the barriers of racism and classism and view the power of the Gospel of Jesus as poured out for all people. Our obligation as 21st Century Christians is to join Peter in this life-giving Gospel Quest. Today we turn our attention to the message Peter puts before Cornelius and he we find that...

The Gospel of God Saves Lives and All Lives Matter

The Gospel Brings Good News In Bad Times

And we could use some good news. Let me show you where I get that.

Standing before Cornelius and his family and household, Peter begins to speak to Gentiles and he does so with great force. In fact, look how Luke describes it in v. 34: *So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,*

*That's a way of saying the message had great weight. It's the same way Matthew describes the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-2: *Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:**

Brothers and sisters, it's what we are called to do in the world of depravity and depression. It's time we open our mouths, not to shout condemnation and chaos but to speak the words of Grace and Truth. That hope has come and Christ is Lord.

So we open our mouths for the unborn. We open our mouths to offer hope to those who have had abortions. We open our mouths to pray for the doctors who perform abortions.

We open our mouths to speak words of Love and Grace, the Gospel of Jesus to people who are of a different skin color. If you are white, it means embracing people who are brown and if you are brown, it means you giving the Gospel to those who are white.

The Gospel is good news in bad times. It's what Peter says in v. 36, that his message is good news. Good news that tells us that, though our sins are like scarlet, they can be as white as snow. And although you have been outside the faith and felt outside the fold, maybe like you didn't belong, God has come to sinners and done so with goodness. In Christ, you can know him.

You live in bad news. Will you forsake the bad news and turn from your sin and turn to Christ? The Gospel brings good news in bad times.

The Gospel Bring Peace to Pain

Let me show you this in v. 36: *As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),*

And notice the unusual way Peter introduces the Gospel message. Did you hear the phrase "Good news of peace through Jesus Christ"? Peter knows what we know to be true: this is, that the human existence is one of turmoil, pain and chaos. You don't have to look far to see it. A lot of you feel it in your own home. It's why we come up with phrases like "Life is hard, but God is good." Because it is true.

We come into the world crying, and we leave the world gasping, and in between we live our lives out of breath.

At our North Campus, Melody Harrell fought a heroic Christian battle with cancer but now has left us and her husband and small child. Why do you think Jesus says come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden? It's because we *are* weary and heavy laden. We are strapped financially and pressured with the stress of work and home life. We grind our teeth or eat incessantly or exercise wildly or turn to some darker way of handling the pressure.

But the Gospel of Jesus Christ is bringing peace into your pain.
I see what Isaiah prophesized in Isaiah 53:4-5:

*Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;*

*upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.*

That's why every Sunday I can invite you to bring your broken and hectic life to Christ, because He not only brings peace to the pain...

He Brings Confidence to Chaos

There is a little phrase in parentheses in v.36 "He is Lord of All" and with that declaration, Peter brings the Gospel crashing through the barriers of race and nationality, of classes and cliques and declares Christ for the common man and every man.

And if he is indeed Lord of All, that demands a change in your view of life in micro and macro terms . If he is Lord of All, then we've got to change how we view the personal workings of our own issues and the larger developments on the world stage.

North Korea, Iran, ISIS – He is Lord over all. Trump, Cruz, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, the socialist – He is Lord over all. The struggle you have at work, the distance growing between you and your spouse, the sin you can't seem to get victory over. Students – the class you struggle in or the loneliness you feel. Whatever chaos is found, He brings confidence to your heart and life, letting you know that Philippians 4:13 is true if you quote and believe it in context. Paul is writing about how he lives through whatever struggles come his way.

Philippians 4:12-13 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

It is the power of God in the Gospel of Jesus that brings confidence to your chaos. From the brokenness of sexual sin, the frustration of work and life, to the struggle to make sense out of uninvited pain. I want you to know that Jesus Christ is Lord of all and, as Peter preaches in the rest of his message, he tells us that Jesus became a curse so that sinners who believe wouldn't be cursed by God.

God raised him as the firstborn from the dead so that anyone who believes has strength in this life and a hope in life eternal with Christ. This morning my invitation to you is to stop fighting, running and trying. Come to the cross. Turn from your old life and turn to Christ.