

BIG IDEA: The good news is for everyone/all peoples.**1) INTRO**

- We all have a history that shapes and forms who we are today
 - Bee sting, food, name
- Peter has a history that shaped and formed who he was too
 - He grew up an orthodox Jew – who strictly followed the laws of God
 - He sought not to be associated w/ unclean people
 - He was a faithful Jew
 - But, God breaks through his history to help him be a faithful Christ-follower
 - God orchestrates these events in our text today
 - God orchestrates our lives so we’ll be faithful Christ-followers too...all of us...all peoples
 - Mission statement
- BIG IDEA

2) CORNELIUS’ VISION (vv1-8)

- We meet Cornelius
- He’s in Caesarea Maritimi (“by the sea”)
 - Caes was the Roman administrative center of Judea
 - It as the headquarters of the Roman forces
- He’s a Roman centurion
 - A commander in Roman army of ~100 men
 - Centurions were backbone of Roman army
 - Were some of the most respected & elite social class
- He was a devout man who feared God
 - We see God’s work of salvation beginning here
 - That God redeems and saves sinners like Corn...just like us
 - Even though he was Roman and grew up in pagan environment, he clearly rejected idols to worship God
 - He came to acknowledge Yahweh as the true & living God
 - He was a Gentile God-fearer, and partly a Jewish convert

- They didn’t follow laws like circumcision or diet laws
- He sought to please God rather than his culture & their approval of false gods
- He had a heart for God & wanted to please him
 - He gave offerings to help Jews in need
 - He continually prayed to the one, true God
 - He was a pious centurion – an anomaly in a secular culture

- God gives him a vision
 - At 3pm – a traditional time for prayer along w/ early morning & sunset/evening
 - An angel of God came to him and he’s terrified – stare terror
 - As always seems to happen in Scripture
 - Angel tells him that God’s noticed/heard/received/accepted his worship
 - Angel tells him to send men to get Peter in Joppa and bring him back to Caesarea
 - Joppa is 30 mi (48 km) south of Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea – just south of Tel Aviv
 - Cornelius obeys God

3) PETER’S VISION (vv9-23a)

- On the housetop/rooftop
 - As Corn’s men are making it to Joppa, Peter heads up to the housetop of Simon the Tanner’s home
 - According to the OT law in Lev 11, Simon would be considered unclean
 - He makes his way up there at noon to pray
 - The flat housetop would have been a bit of a private space away from the busy-ness of downstairs
 - While praying, Peter becomes hungry and God gives him a vision
 - A great sheet w/ four corners comes down and on it is a buffet
 - A buffet of all kinds of animals to eat – cows, sheep, doves... but also forbidden food to Jews like pigs, reptiles, buzzards

- There were specific foods that Jews weren't to eat to keep Israel separate from their idolatrous neighbors
 - To set them apart (Lev 11)
- A voice says to Peter to go ahead and eat
- Peter objects – there are unclean animals
 - Peter's a faithful Jew who's followed the Jewish dietary laws
 - He's not eaten what is impure or defiled
 - Which shows that he's separate from the pagans around him
- The voice then tells Peter to not call what God has made as common...or ritually unclean
- This vision happens a total of 3x to Peter
- Corn's men come
 - While Peter's confused/trying to figure it out, Corn's men come to the house looking for Peter
 - In that moment, the Spirit tells Peter that there are men there to see him, and he's to go to "them w/out hesitation"
 - Lit. without distinction/differentiation/judgment
 - So, Peter obeys God and goes downstairs to the men
 - The men tell Peter why they're there – sent by Corn according to his vision
 - Peter invites these Gentiles in
 - Into a home of one who's already a tanner, who deals with dead animal skins
- DA Carson – "Peter is already understanding the vision since Jews wouldn't normally stay under the same roof and an 'unclean' Gentile"
 - Peter's understanding that this vision he's just had isn't about getting rid of the food laws – his vision's not about food
 - His vision shows that God unites all people together in his church – clean animals represent Jews, unclean animals represent Gentiles
 - We're all part of God's family/his church b/c of the work of JC on the cross to save and redeem

4) PETER AT CORNELIUS' HOUSE (vv23b-33)

- Peter obeys God the next day he goes right away the 30 miles to Caesarea
 - He brings along other brothers to witness God's work and to confirm God's surprising work here
- When Peter enters the house, Corn falls down and worships at his feet, but Peter doesn't let him
 - Corn has a lot of people there – Gentiles & Jews
- Then in v28, Peter explains how his vision connects – as he's in this room w/ many Gentiles
 - v28 – "God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean – impure or defiled"
 - The separation/barrier between Jew ("clean") and Gentile ("unclean") is broken down
 - We are all created in the image of God – we're all his image-bearers, called to reflect him like a mirror/point to him/glorify him/worship him
 - This is huge for Peter to say this out loud
 - Ethnic division between Jews & Gentiles often led to violence
- But God...he broke through that barrier in going to the cross
 - Jesus came to save and redeem Jews and Gentiles...all people
 - Romans 1:16
 - Jesus came to save ->
 - Jews, Romans, Europeans, Asians, Africans, Australians, North Americans, South Americans
 - Farmers, loggers, fishermen, bakers, dentists, doctors, teachers, receptionists, waiters/waitresses, cooks, laborers, contractors, mechanics, students
 - Fathers, mothers, grandparents, husbands, wives, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins
 - Extroverts, introverts, funny people, serious people, rich, poor, tall, short
 - Do we believe this?
 - I love the beautiful mixture that we are as a church – our different backgrounds, ethnicities, occupations, interests, likes/dislikes

- We're all united by the Gospel of JC – God's love for us...for all peoples
- Praise God that he's saved us and we get to worship together weekly and walk through live living for JC together

- The Gospel is for us...and for everyone God brings across our paths
 - We won't see any barriers

5) APP & CLOSING

- God shows Peter in our text that Jews were not to consider Gentiles as "unclean" or "profane" any longer
- Kent Hughes – "the four corners of the sheet in the vision correspond to the four points of the compass – north, south, east, and west. The sheets contents indicate the swarming millions that populate the earth...do we see those around us as potential heirs of grace?"
 - Do we allow barriers to get in the way of our sharing the good news with all...all peoples?
 - Education, dress, speech, smell...name
- Peter was deeply embedded in his Jewish upbringing, but God opened his eyes and heart
 - May he do that to us as well – knowing that we're all desperate, needy people for our good & great Savior, JC
- HA Ironside was born in Toronto in 1876. He pastored Moody Church in Chicago from 1929-1948. He said that when his father died this passage was running through his head and he kept repeating, "A great sheet and wild beasts...and...and..." He repeated this phrase over and over getting stuck at the same place until a friend bent over and whispered, "John, it says, 'creeping things.'" "Oh yes," he said, "that is how I got in. Just a poor, good-for-nothing creeping thing., but I got in."
 - When we're aware of our natural sinful state and the natural sinful state of each person that walks the earth, we can't help but have the same heart attitude – grateful that God saved us
 - We'll be grateful for God's mercy and grace
 - We'll live God-fearing/worshipful lives
 - We'll see that we're all on the same level playing field – desperate for God