**God Does Not Show Favoritism**

**The Word**

Read together Acts 10

**The Big Idea**

God worked miraculously to overcome the deep-seated assumptions and prejudices in Peter’s heart and to reveal that he is a God who shows no favoritism but accepts people from all categories of life who fear him.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. What about the story of Peter and Cornelius most stood out to you and why?

2. How would you respond to a Christian who says: “As long as everyone has a group to belong to in the church, I don’t think it’s that important that church friendships break through the categories of race, age, socio-economic status, etc.”

3. Share a time when God orchestrated a boundary-breaking friendship with someone from a very different category of humanity. How did that come about, and what did you learn through that experience?

4. As discussed on Sunday, one of the ways we live a “settled” live is by settling in with people just like us and avoiding or even despising those outside our categories. As you consider your own life in this regard, is there anything you feel called to acknowledge? Any specific ways you want to grow this year?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

 A. Acts 10 is more about the conversion of Peter than Cornelius

1. Peter had very deep-seated and long-standing assumptions and prejudices about certain people

2. Consider how many miraculous events God had to bring about to convert Peter to a new way of thinking

 a. The double confirmation (Cornelius’ vision and Peter’s dream)

 b. The dream occurring 3 times

c. The Spirit coming on the Gentiles before Peter is finished

B. There’s something so natural to the human heart to construct categories, boundaries, and fences between people groups

1. Settled vs. sent: We often “settle in” with people who are like us (culture, race, socio-economic, age, political sensibility, etc.)

2. How many of us have a close friend of a very different race, culture, age, socio-economic level?

C. The heart of this passage is v. 34: God shows no favoritism

II. Cornelius (v. 1-8)

A. As a category of person, he is very unacceptable to Peter

 1. A Gentile

 2. A centurion who represents the oppressive Roman occupation

B. As a unique person, God is clearly at work in him

 2. God fearing, generous giver, faithful prayer

C. In the gospels, God is often granting rich faith to people in all the wrong categories

III. Peter

A. As a category of person, he is very acceptable to God

1. Jewish

2. A close follower of the Messiah

B. But he has deep-seated assumptions that are not pleasing to God

 C. Consider Israel’s history

1. God always had a heart for all the nations, but after Babel, rather than purse all the nations at once, he chose one man (Abraham), and invited him into a journey of being blessed in order to bring blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3)

2. At Sinai, God gave this same calling to Israel to be his holy nation and treasured possession but also his kingdom of priests who would mediate his blessing to the nations (Exodus 19:5-6)

3. Many of the Mosaic Laws (Circumcision, Sabbath, Food Laws) were designed to set Israel apart and protect them from intermingling with the other nations while they were still vulnerable to other gods.

4. But rather than embrace their greater identity as priests to the nations, Israel just embraced the identity of chosen people, and looked with disdain on Gentiles.

5. The story of Jonah (also starting at Joppa) represents that darker strain in Israel that judged the nations and didn’t want their salvation.

 D. Peter’s dream

 1. This dream would be disturbing, repulsive, and offensive to him

2. The dream is about food (v. 15), but the meaning of the dream is about people (v. 28). In truth, the disgust and disdain Peter had for unclean foods reflected his disgust and disdain for unclean people.

3. We all have certain types of people that we feel disgust and disdain for

IV. There is a beautiful progression in the relationship between Peter and Cornelius

 A. They have a clunky start (v. 23-28)

B. Peter learns of Cornelius’ vision and comes to see the hand of God in it (v. 30-35)

C. Peter preaches the gospel of Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and coming judgment and the Spirit comes on the Gentiles before he finishes!

D. Peter baptizes them

E. Peter stays with them for several days and experiences true fellowship

V. Conclusion

 A. God is seeking worshipers from every possible category of humanity

1. How will people in the wrong categories know about God unless someone tells them?

2. Who are the barrier-breakers in the church willing to cross categories and see people in light of what God is up to?

 B. Our Response

 1. We may need to confess and repent of the barriers we’ve constructed

2. We can pray that God would open our eyes to the Corneliuses around us.