

Acts 10:34–48

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[0 : 00] Okay. Okay. Chapter 10, verses 34 through 48, same page. So Peter opened his mouth and said, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all, You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed, 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. 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, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 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.

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. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

[1 : 22] While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 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, for they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God.

Then Peter declared, Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days. This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. Good morning.

Good morning. And welcome to Holy Trinity Church. I'm so glad that you're here with us today. Many great and influential works, whether they be works of literature or of the cinema, have come to us as a trilogy, a three-part story.

The recent one that has hit the landscape in this country, of course, would be something like Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, which was written decades ago in book form, but then later landed at a very common level in the theaters.

[2 : 57] Some might point to the Godfather and all of its bloody glory. One of my own favorites is a trilogy historical fiction on the life of Cicero by Robert Harris, where volume one gives you Imperium, and it's followed with volume two, Conspirata, and then finally lands with Alexander and Dictator.

This middle message today comes in a trilogy of three on the Acts narrative of Cornelius. The trilogy really covers three chapters, 10 and 11, but you find yourself here in the middle volume. One of the interesting things about it is we have looked last week at the conversion of Peter to the mission of Jesus, and in that same narrative we now move to the conversion of Cornelius to the message of Jesus.

Come back again next week, and we will get to that chapter 11, and we'll consider the windup of these three that are held together, namely the conversion of the Jerusalem church to the mindset of Jesus.

[4 : 40] But if you know anything about trilogies, you're always wondering which one is the best of the three, which one is the worst, which one do I need to see, and is there one that I can skip?

I want to make a word on why this middle volume in the trilogy, verses 34 to 48, are worthy of your attention, worthy of watching, worthy of your reading.

One of the sticking points in deciding whether or not you should become a Christian or follow Jesus, just as we saw this morning and heard from Danielle, reflectively walking through her experience and that consideration, deals with the exclusivity of the message.

Cornelius is converted to the exclusivity of the message on Jesus. We have to admit it, it's good to consider anything that would present itself along those lines.

Because an exclusive message can limit access only by the elite. Think of it this way.

[6 : 02] If you have an idea that is singularly out of the box, by nature you will wonder if it is out of reach. And if it is out of reach of anyone, then the one who's holding it is out of touch.

Think of it this way, as an open question. Is the finality or the fixed nature of the message of Jesus only for a select few?

Does its uniqueness limit its ubiquity, its ability to travel anywhere, anytime, to anyone? Put differently, does this word about Jesus limit its availability to all?

Well, let's take a look. We can see that the message of Jesus is presented right here, volume 2, verses 34 through 48.

I want you to notice a couple of things about Jesus and the exclusivity of the message. Number one, notice that he was anointed by God.

[7 : 24] That's going to be the first movement of the message. He had a unique and individual anointing. It's right there, as you're following along, in verse 38, how God anointed Jesus.

But then, you're going to see the message move in verse 42, as they proclaim it, they're going to say, he is the one appointed by God.

Now, this is the exclusive claim of the Christian message, that in some unique way, he was anointed by God in ways that are unlike any other person.

And according to the apostles' preaching, he was appointed by God to do things and to offer things that would come to you through no other person.

And then, of course, we're going to see verses 44 to the end, this threefold, these manifestations of applications that are brought about by God as that word goes out.

[8 : 46] So let's take a look. The exclusive message of Jesus to which Cornelius is converted is fundamentally that he was uniquely anointed by God.

And I'm going to say in two ways. He was anointed by God to bring in God's kingdom. And he was anointed by God to become God's only reigning king.

You can see it there. Verse 36, As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he's Lord of all.

You yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism that John proclaimed, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil for God was with him.

And he was with him in a very unique way to be anointed by God with the Spirit and with power.

And notice the nature of the power, the displacement the advancement of evil in the world, the overthrow of debilitating disease in the world, the excise, as it were, of any demonic influence that actually ruled people who were trying to walk their way through the world.

[10 : 17] In other words, that with Jesus, a kingdom, a rule from another place all of a sudden walked its way into the world and he was anointed in a unique way.

And indeed, it was a way that was particularly meant in the text, the word that was sent to Israel.

Look again, verse 36, preaching the good news of peace through Jesus.

Well, what's the nature of this good news? If you think back to Luke, the writer, he opened his first volume, the Gospel of Luke, in chapter 1 with a phrase about the kind of peace that God was bringing into the world through the birth of Jesus.

It says in Zechariah's prophetic word in Luke chapter 1 and in verse 79 that the one would come to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet in the way of peace.

That peace was going to be entering into the world so that if you've ever attended churches over the holiday season of Advent, you are familiar then with what happens in chapter 2 where the angels appear in the sky and they announce glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.

[11 : 51] among those with whom he is well pleased. So Luke from the very beginning of his writing has talked about a peace that would be entering into the world through this one Jesus.

The very back end of Luke's first volume in chapter 24 after the resurrection he looks at his followers and says my peace peace has now come to you.

Peace be to you. And the nature of that peace is they are to go and proclaim forgiveness salvation. So get it right because you've heard it testified through the experience of a woman in our church here this morning.

When you and I think of peace we automatically think in horizontal lines between one another as if that will hold us together. But what she learned and what the message of Jesus proclaims is that there is a fundamental faith distinction that goes vertically that what you and I need whether you realize it or not is peace with God.

And that was the promise that Isaiah in chapter 52 announced would come to Israel blessed are the feet of the one who brings good news and that one was going to bring peace.

[13:15] Or in the birth of his name given those names wonderful counselor everlasting father prince of peace. So the promise to Israel was that in a world gone wrong he would through one of their own break in with his own rule displace all things that had gone haywire and restore proper relations with God.

That is the message of Jesus. He was anointed to bring in God's kingdom. And notice it's a message that was attested to by apostolic witness.

You can see it right there in verse 39 and we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

That's the exclusive claim of the Christian faith. That only Jesus held the unique anointing to bring peace in the world in our relationship with God by his power to displace all the things that held this world captive as a consequence of sin.

But not only that he was also anointed by God to become God's eternal king. Not just to bring in God's kingdom kingdom, but to himself be the king who ruled over that eternal kingdom.

[15:03] You can see that right there in verses 39 and 40. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear.

In other words, he was resurrected from the dead, meaning death had no power over him or anyone that he would choose to bring into God's presence along with him.

So this is the exclusive claim. You want to know God? In the words of Billy Graham's first published book, you want peace with God?

Well, the Christian message is then you need to be introduced to who Jesus is. because only Jesus displaced the powers that were too strong for us.

Only Jesus himself demonstrates a power over a death on behalf of us. Only Jesus is raised into the presence of very God, God of God, and able to bring you and me with him.

[16:15] That's the exclusive claim of the Christian faith. And notice, just as that kingdom work that he did was attested to by apostolic witness, so too that resurrection work is likewise attested to by the apostles.

Take a look. Verse 40 and 41. God raised him and made him appear not to all the people, but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses who drank with him after he rose from the dead.

So, there it is, anointed by God to bring in God's kingdom, which was attested to by witnesses. Anointed by God to be God's everlasting king.

Likewise, attested to by select witnesses. And therefore, these witnesses move out to proclaim it. Look at what happens in verses 42 to 47.

The anointed by God begins to move that they were commanded to preach Jesus as the one appointed by God. There it is. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify.

[17:39] That's the same word as witness here. He commanded us, having been witnesses to bear witness that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and dead.

To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. I just want to say a couple of things on this. That is a great summary of the message of the entire Bible.

If you're wondering what is the message of the Bible, here it is. Verse 42, the apostles, or you could actually say what you and I hold today as the epistolic record, namely the New Testament.

The New Testament proclaims, bears witness, that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be what? Take a look. It's surprising to be the judge of the living and the dead.

Well, I suppose that would be the implication. If he was the only human being who lived righteously and therefore had no hold of death and now was raised from dead, certainly he goes to the front of the class among all of humanity.

[18 : 58] And only he is able to go before God and represent anyone else in the presence of God as judge. So here's the funny thing.

The New Testament message proclaims that in Jesus you come to understand that God now has a king on the throne who is going to judge every man, woman, and child who's ever lived. Now you and I think the New Testament proclaims what? Jesus is the lover of my soul. That God is the God of love.

And we have quibbles and problems with the prophetic Old Testament word because God seems so harsh back there. But take a look. Look at the irony here in verse 43. Stunning to me really.

To him, that is to Jesus, all the prophets bear witness, think in terms of the Old Testament record, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.

[20 : 03] That's the surprise of the whole scriptures. believers. The apostles bear witness that in Jesus, God has appointed a judge over the world.

The prophets bear witness that God is a God of love and willing to overlook centuries of sin until he brings his own promises to fruition.

Have you ever thought of the Bible in that term? Those terms? the Old Testament with that long history declares the patience, the kindness, the steadfast love of God, is willing to overlook an offense, think even in terms of Egypt.

I know that they're met with the plagues and the judgment of God when Israel is finally released, but we have to actually acknowledge that when you're reading the Old Testament, that comes on the backside of over four centuries of God waiting upon them to maybe live a little differently.

So the Old Testament record is continually a record that God is overlooking sins, God is patient with sins, God is willing to wait until we have a Savior for sins, but once that Savior comes, he is appointed to be judge over the living and the dead.

[21 : 32] Now notice what it says there. Imagine Peter has been actually proclaiming this message in the presence of Cornelius, who's a Roman, not a Jew, and notice that last phrase, how hopeful it must have been to his family, to him, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Everyone. I mean, that's the point in the message that was the most hopeful moment. The listeners began to understand that through what God did in and through Jesus exclusively could actually be gotten hold of universally.

that the message of Jesus as your salvation was available to all.

That forgiveness of sins, it says right there, my Bible says, that everyone who believes in him, everyone, let me put it differently, anyone, anyone, everyone who believed in Jesus and his death as a substitute for their sins, can be forgiven by God, can have peace with God.

I don't know any better news in the world that when the Bible is read properly, it presents you with an exclusive Savior that is fulfilling promises that have taken centuries to unfold, that in and through him and him alone, the whole world might walk back into a relationship with God.

[23 : 28] Now, when that happened, in the message, when the anointing of Jesus and the appointing of Jesus was understood by those listening to the message of Jesus, take a look of the threefold applications that fall upon the people in midst of the word of Jesus.

Verse 44, first of all, you're going to see that the Holy Spirit is now available to anyone. While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and they began, it says, to speak in tongues and extol God.

and indeed Peter will connect that to the gift of the Holy Spirit that had been poured out on Jews only at Pentecost, now being poured out on Gentiles.

How do I explain this? What happened in the midst of the preaching is that when the people heard that they could be forgiven of their sins through Jesus, they welled up with hope, and faith, and before they could even pronounce a word, the Spirit of that kingdom is rushing down in and upon in them, in the midst of them, and enabling them from their pew, from their pew, from their seats, to begin speaking words in languages that they had never learned, words of praise that extolled the living God.

We know that's what happened in Acts chapter 2. These are not angelic tongues that no one understood. These are human languages that are proclaiming praise to God, although they never sat in a grammar class on it to begin with.

[25 : 37] And this happens only representatively in Acts. It doesn't happen when anyone becomes a Christian. It seems to happen in these moments where massive barriers to the universality of the message were crossed.

So it happened at Pentecost in Jerusalem. It happened again when Peter comes up to Samaria, Judea and Samaria. It now happens when the first outsider actually believes.

And it will only happen one other time in Acts all the way back to John the Baptist's original disciples in chapter 19. It doesn't happen in every moment along the way.

This particular gift of immediate unlearned praise to God in a language I'd never actually studied. It didn't happen in the sense when we read of all the different times in this book even to this point.

It didn't happen with the Ethiopian eunuch. It didn't happen with Saul. It didn't happen two weeks ago with Aeneas. It didn't happen with Dorcas. But it happens when the Spirit of God broke into the promises to Israel at Pentecost.

[26 : 54] It happened when the Spirit for the first time crossed over the barrier to Judea and Samaria. It happened when the first Gentile is converted. And it happens at the end of Acts when the original disciples of John the Baptist all of a sudden get caught up to this whole global phenomena of life that can be had in Jesus Christ.

I don't know what it would have been like to be in Cornelius' home. But imagine listeners learning about Jesus for the first time, wetting that message of anointing and appointing to a heart of faith, life, and immediately finding life new, and representatively through their voice already showing this thing is going global.

This thing is going everywhere. All nations, all tongues, all people groups. What a down payment on what we have even today.

So the Holy Spirit arrives, that's the first thing that actually happens, that anyone can actually have a relationship with God.

I want to tell you that is the most beautiful thing about the name of Jesus. Through Jesus, you can know God no matter what your nation, tribe, tongue, or people.

[28 : 22] The exclusive message has universal implications. You might know the chorus. What a beautiful name it is.

What a beautiful name it is. What a beautiful name it is. The name of Jesus. What a powerful name it is.

What a powerful name it is. The name of Jesus Christ, my King. that's what began to swell up in languages that were representative of the promise going to the ends of the earth.

If you don't know God, and you want to know if you should become a Christian, I would at least offer this to you this morning, that by becoming one, you're not coming to an exclusive message that is out of reach and therefore out of touch.

You are coming to a message that is meant for all, and according to the scriptures will be experienced by some from all the earth.

[29 : 49] I pray this morning that that would be your heart's desire, and that you would come to him by faith. The arrival of the spirit, the second manifestation, and I'm almost done, was the amazement among the Jewish Christians.

Notice verse 45, the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed. We heard last week that there were six in number. Six Christians, when they saw other people become Christians, could hardly believe it.

That is so true to my own experience. The Christian community is continually amazed when other adults become Christians.

They couldn't believe it. You've got to be kidding me. But of course, this is what God intends. Peter himself follows on their amazement.

At Pentecost, it was the outsiders who were amazed. Peter says, why are you all so amazed? He declares the gospel. Here, it's the Jewish Christians who are amazed, which tells you that once you become a follower of Christ, at some level, at some time, you begin to wonder whether that actually has the power to change somebody else's life.

[31 : 13] But it does. And the arrival of the Spirit is joined with the amazement in the church. And then finally there, the sign of acceptance as a first step of following him is given to all.

Peter says, can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. and they asked him to remain for some days.

The exclusive word on Jesus, it's available to anyone. May it foster amazement in everyone. And if you today grab hold of that, accept it for yourself, then the sign of baptism, well, that's the first step in following him.

A trilogy. Sometimes volume two gets lost in the mix. But I don't think so for Cornelius. Yes, Peter was converted.

[32 : 37] to the universality of the mission. Yes, Cornelius was converted to the exclusivity of the message.

Come back next week and you'll see this difficult truth that the Christian community at large will continually need to be called back and away from their superiority on the mind of Jesus.

Let me pray. Our Heavenly Father, I ask that through this word ordinarily or delivered in an ordinary way would be attended by the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit.

And that even as I have spoken today, these words would have run like arrows into the mind and heart and soul of many here who would be willing to proclaim your praise knowing that they can have peace.

So that which is available to anyone, O Lord, I pray would be applied to someone, many someones here.

[34 : 07] And that you will enable those who have already known you to begin telling anyone about the someone who can save anyone.

We give ourselves to that in Jesus' name. Amen.