

Touchy Topics: Racism

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[0 : 00] At Caesarea, there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort. A devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God.

About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, Cornelius. And he stared at him in terror and said, What is it, Lord? And he said to him, Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him.

And having related everything to him, he sent them to Joppa. The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

And he became hungry and wanted something to eat. But while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance. And he saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

[1 : 24] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice came to him again a second time. What God has made clean, do not call common. This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Now, while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate and called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was lodging there.

And while Peter was pondering the vision, the spirit said to him, Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them.

And Peter went down to the men and said, I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming? And they said, Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who was well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.

[2 : 48] So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him.

And on the following day, they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him.

But Peter lifted him up, saying, Stand up, I too am a man. And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.

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.

So when I was sent, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me. And Cornelius said, Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour.

[3 : 56] And behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 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. 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. 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 in 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.

[5 : 09] 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 appear.

Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you very much for reading for us this morning. Well, this morning we are beginning a three-part sermon series.

And the title of the series is Touchy Topics. And the reason we've called this Touchy Topics is because these are topics that are rarely addressed in churches from pulpits.

And sadly, when they are addressed in churches from the church. And sadly, when they are addressed, they tend to be addressed in a cultural or social way as opposed to a biblical way. And so this morning, we begin with the topic of racism next Sunday, adultery.

[6 : 39] And then the following Sunday, homosexuality. And again, my goal is that we would address these topics in a biblical way.

And the first topic this morning is racism. So would you bow in prayer with me? Heavenly Father, we are grateful that we are able to gather in this place.

We're grateful that we are able to be reminded of your saving grace that has come to us. That we who once were in darkness have been translated into the marvelous light of your son's kingdom.

And Father, we trust your providence that you have brought us to this place. To experience all that we have experienced.

And now to sit under the preaching of your word. I pray, Lord, that we would find your words this morning to be wonderful.

[7 : 53] I pray that your word will transform our hearts and our lives. And I pray that the posture of all of our hearts in this moment will be speak, Lord. Your servant is listening.

So Father, would you speak? Would you speak? Through me to us. For your glory. And for our good.

And we pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen. I want to begin by giving a definition of racism. Because racism can vary.

The definition can vary from person to person. Simply put, racism is the belief that one race is superior or inferior to another.

And that's what I'm referring to when I refer to racism. The belief that one race is superior or inferior to another. And people who hold the view that one race is superior or inferior to another.

[9 : 03] Those people are racists. Having defined racists. Let me ask. How many of you have experienced racism?

I certainly have. I want you to show your hand. If you've experienced racism, just put it straight up. Okay. A lot of hands went up.

I'd like to see the show of hands of those who have never experienced racism, as best that they know. Anyone. Never experienced racism, as best you know. Three hands have gone up. Wonderful.

You've had an experience, obviously, that the majority of us have not had. But I want to ask a second question. And I don't want to see a show of hands on this question.

How many of you hold racist views? Don't raise your hand. And what about other forms of prejudice?

[10 : 11] Again, don't raise your hand. What about color prejudice? And here I'm not talking about black and white. I'm talking about shades.

I'm talking about darker and lighter skin tones. What about people from different ethnicities or of a different nationality?

Do you hold, for example, prejudice against Jews or Arabs? Ethnic prejudice.

Or national prejudice against, for example, Haitians or Jamaicans to bring it closer to home for us? And I think when we think about this issue of racism, it's helpful for us to think about it broadly.

It's helpful for us to think about it beyond just generic racism. But to think about it broadly in terms of prejudice.

[11 : 22] And especially prejudices that are close to home to us in the Bahamas. And from the outset, let me say that my chief concern is not prejudice in the world.

That's not my chief concern this morning. My chief concern is about racism and prejudice in the church.

Certainly all forms of prejudice, whether it's based on race or ethnicity or color or place of origin, whatever it is, it is sin.

But my concern is not general this morning. My concern is very specific and local. It is prejudice among God's people.

There are a lot of places in Scripture I could have turned this morning. But I believe that the most graphic account of racial prejudice among God's people is recorded in the passage that we've just read.

[12 : 43] And it's a reminder that Christians are not exempt from the sin of racism or showing prejudice towards people for one reason or another, whether it's color or ethnicity or nationality.

And brothers and sisters, we would all do well if we begin at the point where we accept honestly and humbly before God that none of us is exempt from committing the sin of being prejudiced.

Considering some people inferior to us and ourselves superior to them. It's a sin that's easy to excuse.

It's a sin that's easy to excuse. Before we look closely at the text, I think it's helpful to give a bit of background.

In case you may not be aware about the author of the book of Acts. The author of the book of Acts is Luke.

[14 : 03] Luke was a Gentile. Luke also wrote the book of Luke. And one of the consistent features of both the book of Luke and the book of Acts is that Luke presents his gospel as a Gentile to Gentiles.

And he addresses and identifies aspects of the racial prejudice that was practiced by Jews against Gentiles.

Luke has a keen eye in both of his gospels to present this issue of Jews who were racially prejudiced against Gentiles.

And not just before Christ. Luke helps us to see this even after Christ had come. One of the first examples we see of this is as early as in Acts chapter 6 when there were Grecian widows who were the only ones who were being overlooked in the distribution of the food when all of the Hebrew widows were well taken care of.

Luke points that out. But here when we come to Acts chapter 10, Luke is highlighting this issue of Jewish racism and how it presented a barrier to the gospel being shared with non-Jews.

[15 : 41] And his focus is on the apostle Peter. But Luke puts Peter in perspective. He begins in chapter 9 and in verses 22 to 35, he gives us this account of the Lord using Peter to heal this man, Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years.

And then in verses 36 to 43, he gives us this man, It's not a passing thing for Peter.

His prejudice against Jews, against non-Jews, sorry, was deep and deeply rooted. And sadly, Peter was not alone.

This view of prejudice against non-Jews was widely held among Jewish Christians.

We won't cover it this morning, but when we go into chapter 11, we'll see that there were some when they heard that Peter had gone to be in Cornelius' house.

[17 : 08] They criticized him for doing so. And Peter had to defend his going into the house of Cornelius.

He had to go to great lengths to defend to them why he went and how he was able to go into Cornelius' house and to proclaim the gospel to them.

Now, with that somewhat lengthy introduction, let's now consider the text. To help you to follow along, if you want to take notes in particular, I've organized the sermon under three points.

The first point is a divine visitation. That's what we see in verses 1 to 8. The angel of the Lord visits a Gentile man by the name of Cornelius who lived in the Roman city of Caesarea.

And we're told in the opening verses that Cornelius was a centurion, which meant that he was a high-ranking military officer.

[18 : 17] He had some 100 Roman soldiers under his command. And he would have been a wealthy man because centurions, we're told, they earned about five times the amount of salary that a regular soldier would earn.

If you have an ESV study Bible, there's a footnote in the ESV study Bible sharing that information. And so Cornelius was undoubtedly wealthy.

He was undoubtedly well introduced in society. In verse 2, we're told that he and his family were devout and God-fearing, which means that they generally practiced the Jewish religion, but they didn't fully embrace it because there were aspects of the Jewish religion that some non-Jews did not find attractive.

For example, circumcision was one of those unattractive parts of the Jewish religion. But what they did was they would have gone to synagogue and they would have practiced the two most important and prominent aspects of piety and devotion in the Jewish religion, which were prayer and the giving of alms to the poor.

And one day while he was praying at the set time of prayer, one of the set times of prayer was the ninth hour or 3 p.m. in the afternoon.

[19 : 56] Something unusual happened to Cornelius. This angel appears to him. The angel tells him that his prayers and almsgiving had come up before God as a memorial, meaning that they came up to God as a kind of precious sacrifice that got God's attention.

And this angel was sent to him and told him specific things that he needed to do.

This brief account of Cornelius, this introduction to Cornelius, we see a humble man. We see a man who is very sincere, powerful in the Roman military, prominent in society.

He clearly had forsaken polytheism, which is the worship of multiple gods, and he'd embraced monotheism, which was the worship of one God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But as remarkable as Cornelius was and as memorable as his prayers and almsgivings were, they were not enough.

[21 : 08] They were not enough to make him right with God. Cornelius was missing something that was far more important, which was salvation through Jesus Christ.

And so the angel tells Cornelius, send to Joppa for this man named Peter. He is staying with another man, a tanner, someone who works with leather, tans the hides of animals to turn them into leather.

Send for him, and he is going to tell you what you are to do. In verse 7, we are told that Luke, Luke tells us that the angel departed, and Cornelius called two of his servants, and he called a devout soldier.

This tells us there was another soldier under his command who was devout like he was, who was God-fearing like he was. And he sends these three men to Joppa to call for Peter.

Now, Cornelius would have known that Peter was a Jew, and yet he didn't hesitate to send his men to Joppa as instructed by the angel.

[22 : 22] Cornelius had a divine encounter with an angel from God. We're told in verse 9 that the very next day, the men went on their journey, and as they approached Joppa, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour, which would have been 12 noon, another set time of prayer by the Jews, and he went to pray.

And this brings me to my second point, which is a divine confrontation. That's what we see in verses 9 to 22. Luke records this divine confrontation between the Lord and Peter.

And in that confrontation, we come face to face with the clearest and the strongest rebuke of racism that we find in Scripture.

Some people have wrongly interpreted this account to be the Lord confronting Peter about food and his dietary preferences, but that's not the case at all.

And I trust that as we consider this, you'll see that this was not a confrontation over food. Here we see in God's providence, just as these three men are approaching the city of Joppa, Peter goes up on the housetop to pray.

[23 : 52] And as he ran up, I don't think on Peter's heart was a burden for Gentiles. I don't think that Peter had on his prayer list, how can I reach the Gentiles?

How can we share the gospel with the Gentiles? That was not on his heart, but it was on God's heart. And Luke is setting this up for us.

Luke is writing again, primarily from the vantage point of Gentiles, to Gentiles. And he wants them to see that there is a God who is concerned about Gentiles.

Even when his own people, those who bear his name, those who stand on his behalf, don't have a concern for Gentiles.

And as Peter's praying, he falls into a trance, but not just falls into a trance, God brings him into a trance.

[24 : 59] And I think it's important to see that this is the Lord's doing. This is not Peter just being drowsy and dozing off and having some dream, some random dream.

No, what Peter experienced was a divinely initiated, supernatural experience by God. In this trance, Peter was in a visionary state. His normal consciousness was suspended, but his senses became focused entirely on what God was revealing to him in that moment.

And in his vision, Peter saw something like the heavens open and a great sheet being let down from heaven to earth from the four corners. And on this sheet were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds.

And the voice came to Peter and said, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. And Peter answered, By no means, Lord. I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice responds to Peter and says, What God has made clean, do not call common. And this word common simply means defiled or polluted.

[26 : 17] It speaks about that which is to be avoided or separated from. And in Peter's vision, this sheet with the myriads of creatures lowered to the earth, three times this happened and it was taken back up.

No further comment, no further explanation. And naturally, Peter's perplexed. He's wondering about this vision. He's wondering about what it meant.

He's perplexed. The Lord would tell him to eat unclean food. He's perplexed at what was formerly unclean for him that God is now saying is clean and you can go ahead and eat it.

And as Peter's pondering this vision, the three men who were sent to him, they inquired about where he was staying and they are now at the gate as he is pondering the vision and the spirit speaks to him and says, there are three men who are downstairs who want to see you.

Go and accompany them without hesitation. And Peter does so. It's very interesting to see what happens with Peter.

[27 : 44] And it's kind of difficult to tell where the actual transformation in Peter's mind took place, where Peter was convicted, where Peter changed his views about Gentiles.

It's kind of hard to tell exactly the point at which he was convicted about his racist views. But he certainly had a lot of time to think about it because the men stayed with him that night and then the next day they would have gone on to Caesarea, which was a 31-mile journey.

But I think as we work our way through, we'll see the point at which Peter would have come to the conclusion. Well, actually, let me just say without keeping you in suspense, I think the moment that Peter came to the conclusion that the vision was more than about food was when he went down and he saw three Gentiles standing at his gate.

And I think Peter was perceptive enough to realize that each lowering of that sheet with all those unclean foods on it, each lowering was for one of those Gentiles.

As a matter of fact, if we look further down in verse 28, Peter says to, sorry, not verse 28, verse 29, Peter is addressing Cornelius in his house and he says this, so when I was sent for, I came, I came without objection.

[29 : 38] When I was sent for, I came without objection. So when he went downstairs and he asked them, what do you want? And they told him, he said that he went without any objection.

And that was because Peter understood that God had sent these men to him. notice what he says in verse 28.

I should have started at 28. He said, and I said to them, 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. Peter understood that it was more than about food.

And he says in verse 29, so when I was sent for, I came without hesitation. It was that vision that Peter had with the sheet coming down three times and then going down to those men as he pondered, what does all this mean?

[30 : 52] And he ponders, he sees these three men, they say, Cornelius, who he knew as a centurion, being a Roman and not a Jew, he knew this was God.

And God is saying to me that I must not consider these people, indeed anyone, common or unclean.

but if there's any doubt about what Peter understood in those verses, in the latter part of this account, there should be no doubt because what we see in the latter part of this account is Peter speaks about the divine revelation he received from God.

And this is my third and final point. Peter goes with the three men from Cornelius and he takes some brothers from Joppa with him and upon arriving in Caesarea entering Cornelius' house, he meets Cornelius gathered with relatives and close friends.

And we see the humility of Cornelius in the fact that he fell down at Peter's feet and worshipped him. And Peter rightly tells him, you stand up, I'm a man just like you are.

[32 : 23] And then Peter begins his address to Cornelius and his family. Look again at verse 28, which we just read, but let's look at it again.

He starts by saying, 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.

Notice that Peter begins his address by pointing out that the prejudice of the Jews was not a private thing. He was able to say to these Gentiles gathered, he says, you know this.

You know it's unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit people of other nations. This is a public awareness about the prejudice of Jews.

But notice Peter's confession. confession. And let me just say this before we come to the confession.

[33 : 40] When Peter said, you know it's unlawful for a Jew to visit or associate with Gentiles, it wasn't unlawful because God made it unlawful.

It was unlawful because they, through their sin and through their lack of appreciation, that the gospel came to them by the grace of God.

Believing that they were special, believing that they were above all the other people, and the only reason that God chose Abraham and the only reason that God worked through that line and chose them to be a people for himself was by his sheer grace, his amazing grace.

But they took it to their heads and they believed that they were special and so they considered all other people below them. This was a sinful practice of the Jews, not a lawful enactment by God.

But notice Peter's confession again in verse 28, but God has shown me, God has shown me. I've had a divine revelation.

[34 : 50] My eyes are now open. God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. not about food, that threefold vision that came down, not about food, that was about people.

And God showed Peter that he is not to consider any person unclean, any person off limits, any person less than, any person that you're not supposed to be able to associate with.

Peter could have continued his Jewish dietary practices. He could have continued all the restrictions that he engaged in up to that point.

What he could not continue was his prejudice towards non-Jews. people in verses 34 to 43, we come to the sermon that Peter preached to Cornelius and his household.

And in Peter's sermon, it's just a heart affecting account of the gospel. And it's the gospel that Cornelius and his household would have been cut off from if Peter had remained in his racial prejudice.

[36 : 15] Again, considering the opening words of Peter in verses 34 and 35 to further underscore this divine revelation that God had given to him.

Look at what he says. 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.

Brothers and sisters, we need to take these words to heart. God shows no partiality. The one who created us all, he shows no partiality.

Whatever our distinctives are, whatever our differences are, God shows no partiality and neither should we. And if we do, for whatever reason, we need to confess it and we need to repent of it.

Because all people need the gospel and prejudice against anyone for any reason creates a barrier to sharing the gospel and reaching the lost who are different from us.

[37 : 37] And brothers and sisters, there is no greater privilege, there is no greater honor, there is no more important endeavor in this life than to be able to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the lost.

blessed. There is no greater honor or privilege, no greater endeavor in this life than to be able to do that, than to have the good news and to share that with others.

And when we allow the barrier of prejudice to come in the way to prevent us from doing that, brothers, we have forfeited the most precious privilege that we can have in this life.

And what we have done is we have withheld the most important message from someone who needs to hear it. And what a blessing it is to be able to say with conviction and concern to any person that no matter who you are, God shows no partiality.

No matter who you are, whatever nation you're from, if you fear him and you do what is right, you're acceptable to him.

[38 : 52] That's what Peter says to Cornelius and his household. Brothers and sisters, what a blessing this is to proclaim the gospel of peace to all people, regardless of race or color or ethnicity or nationality or other distinctions.

And the good news is that God sent Jesus Christ. This is the good news that Peter shares with Cornelius and his household, that God sent Jesus Christ to this earth.

That Jesus came and he was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil because God was with him.

God but evil men put him to death. Evil men hung him on a cross but God raised him on the third day.

And he appeared to many witnesses and he appeared to his apostles and he commissioned them and commanded them to go and preach and testify to all people.

[40 : 07] And notice what they are to preach in verse 42. He commanded us, notice that, 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.

That is the message that we are to proclaim to all people that God has appointed Jesus Christ to be the judge of the living and the dead.

He will do that one day. He has come as Savior but one day he will return as judge and he is going to judge all people living and dead.

And it's a final judgment. And it's going to determine where people spend eternity. And Peter says this is not something new.

In verse 43 he says this is not something new. He says the Old Testament prophets testify to this. That everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

[41 : 23] Again, brothers and sisters, there is no greater honor, no greater privilege in this life than to share the good news with lost people who are on their way to a crisis eternity in hell.

And again, what a privilege, what a tragedy it is when we through our prejudices put up a barrier that make it difficult or impossible to be able to share this essential message with those who need to hear it.

And what an even greater tragedy when our prejudices prevent us from having genuine concern for lost people and we therefore don't even consider sharing the gospel with them.

At the outside of this sermon, I asked several questions. I asked if you were racist and I asked that you didn't show your hand. And even though I didn't ask for a show of hands, I doubt if any of us would identify as racist.

I asked other questions. I asked what other forms of prejudice, whether it's shade of skin or place of origin.

[43 : 09] And again, I asked that you didn't raise your hand. And here's what I believe. I believe if I did ask for a show of hands, and I believe that if I did press you to be reminded that you are in God's house and to tell the truth, I believe many hands would have been raised.

Many hands would have been raised. And brothers and sisters, because we're sinners, we're able to say, I'm not racist, and we're able to berate the person who is racist, and at the same time, we practice our own form of the same.

And see, we can go further than talking about just color, shade of skin, and places of origin. We can talk about class as well. Although racism, pure racism, may not be pervasive in our country, classism is.

And it is a sin, brothers and sisters. It is a sin because God shows no partiality, none whatsoever, among people.

And whatever brand of prejudice we may hold on to, whatever brand of prejudice we may practice and harbor in our hearts, we need to repent of it. We need to repent of it because not only is it sin in the sight of God, it is a barrier to sharing the gospel with those people.

[45 : 01] One of the realities that we face, having largely been people who are affected by slavery and colonialism, colonialism, is that we tend to think that the narrower skin color is too white, the better and more preferable it is.

And while that is easily on the surface identified by having come out of slavery and colonialism, the root of that, brothers and sisters, is sin. It is sin.

That's what it is. That we can put aside the social explanation of it. The root of that is sin. It is sin that we need to repent of.

It is sin that God graciously forgives. Our first step towards repentance is honest confession before the Lord.

And so brothers and sisters, let us not try to hide or justify our prejudices. One of the ways that we, as a people, have hidden and justified our prejudices against Haitians and against Jamaicans is under the cover of illegal immigration.

[46 : 32] And those are two separate issues. Do we have an illegal immigration problem? Yes, we do. And does the government have a responsibility to address it?

Yes, it does. But, brothers and sisters, none of that has anything to do with how we view people of other nationalities.

It has nothing to do with it. And sadly, the reality is that some who are among us illegally are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Yes, brothers and sisters in Christ break the law as well. There are brothers and sisters in Christ who are in prison for even worse crimes. Christians. And the writer to the Hebrews admonishes us that we have to visit those in prison.

And he has in mind not just strangers and unbelievers, he has in mind the brethren. He has in mind brothers and sisters. And so brothers and sisters, let us not hide behind this issue of illegal immigration and hide our own prejudices.

[47 : 59] Let the world do that. Let them do that. But we must not do that.

It is interesting to consider that you would think after this encounter that the apostle Peter had with God about his racial prejudice towards Jews that it would have been settled once and for all.

But it wasn't. In Galatians chapter 2, the apostle Paul shares an account of how he had to openly rebuke Peter.

This is many years later. He had to openly rebuke Peter because of his prejudice towards the Gentiles. Peter, on one occasion, was intimidated by legalistic Jews who came and they were insisting that if you didn't keep the law of Moses, you should not associate with those people.

And when they were around, Peter acted in that manner, and Paul confronted him to his face. Brothers and sisters, let's learn from Peter's example.

[49 : 21] Let's learn from Peter's example. Peter's problem was that he was a man-pleaser. Peter's problem was he had to go with the crowd when they were around.

Brothers and sisters, we will not be able to stand against national prejudice unless we are willing to stand alone before God, accepting that he shows no partiality, and therefore we should show none as well.

If we don't free ourselves from national prejudices by the grace of God, we will find ourselves like Peter, on the one hand saying, God has shown me this, but in practice we're doing something that's completely different.

God has made from one man all people. That's what the Apostle Paul says in Acts 17 verses 26 to 27, he says it this way, and he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and boundaries of their dwelling place.

And here's the reason, that they should seek God in hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him, yet he is not actually far from each one of us.

[50 : 55] again, brothers and sisters, we have this privilege of being God's ambassadors to hold out the gospel to all people without exception, without any distinction, laying aside any peculiarities that we may have about anything, and seeing them as people who are made in the image and in the likeness of God, who have equal worth and equal dignity with us, no matter what their differences are from us.

And I pray this morning that the Lord will help us. I pray that whatever you may have raised your hand concerning in those other areas of prejudices, that your heart is convicted, that your heart is pricked, that our hearts are pricked, and that we would repent and we would trust the Lord to help us to see all people as fellow human beings made in the image and the likeness of God, having equal worth and equal dignity.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that you show no partiality, and in any nation, anyone who fears you and does what is right is acceptable to you.

Lord, will you grant us repentance wherever we need it, and grant us the grace to stand on your word and show no partiality among people for any reason.

We ask that you would do this in Jesus' name. Amen.