

Breaking Down Barriers

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Date: 30 October 2022

[0 : 00] time. We're going to begin our worship this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 89, the Scottish Psalter verse in Psalm 89, page 344 of the Psalm books. We're going to sing from verse 1 to verse 6. God's mercies I will ever sing, and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all. We'll sing verse 1 to 6 to God's praise.

God's mercies I will ever sing, and with my mouth I shall thy faithfulness make to be known to generations all. For mercy shall be filled, said I, forever to endure.

Thy faithfulness deep in the hand, thou wilt be salvation. I with my chosen one have made, a covenant gracious me. And to my servant, to my love, to give this for now I, that I thy seed established shall forever to remain, and will to generations all, thy throne will maintain. The praises of thy wonders, Lord, the heavens shall express, and in the congregation of saints, thy faithfulness. For who in heaven with the Lord may once may one's sins self compare, who is like God among the sons of those that mighty are.

Let us come to God. Let us come to God in prayer. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, as we have sung these words, we are reminded of the wonder of who you are.

Who in heaven with the Lord may once himself compare, the psalmist asks. And as we think of these words, we recognize that there is none, no one who compares to you. You are the God of mercy. You are the God of miracles.

[4 : 34] You are the God of creation. You are the God of salvation. You are the God of covenant and all your promises that are, yea and amen, in Christ Jesus our Lord. And we thank you that in these words that we have sung, we are reminded of so many of these promises, that you have established a covenant graciously, that you have loved your people, that you have sworn that you will keep them, that you will establish through your seed, one who will remain forever and to generations all your throne will be.

And so we thank you that today we come to worship you and to offer up our praise to you as our Lord and as our God. God's mercies I will ever sing and we pray that that will be our portion day by day, that we'll be able to praise your great name, but also too that we will show it forth to generations all, to all people around us and to those who will come after us, God willing, we pray that we will leave, O Lord, the testimony of the power of your word and of your kingdom.

We pray and thank you that you have promised that your kingdom will remain, that your kingdom will come and that it will come with power. And we pray to see that in our own day and age even now, as we think of the kingdoms of this world and how fragile they are at this time.

We think of all the great uncertainties around us, Lord, in our own personal experiences and the experiences of our land and the experiences of our world.

We are reminded on a daily basis, Lord, just how much change takes place, how much evil there is around us. We are reminded of the wickedness of our own hearts and the hearts of the many around us.

[6 : 31] But we thank you, too, that we are reminded, too, of the power of your gospel and that it is a power to change, a power to convict and convert those that lie in sin.

And so we thank you, O Lord, that you have promised that you will build your kingdom, that you will build your church, and that not even the gates of hell will prevail against it.

We thank you that the foundation of it is secure. It is built upon the rock that is Jesus Christ, our Lord, the one who came into this world and who gave himself for it.

And so we thank you, Lord, for your great mercy and the wonder of it, that you would give your only Son so that sinners such as we are might know the great joy of salvation.

So may you keep us, Lord, never losing sight of that, never losing the wonder of salvation and the joy of it. And we know at times, Lord, that even like David in the Psalms, how he expresses that great desire to have that joy of salvation restored.

[7 : 40] We acknowledge, too, Lord, how in our own sins that we fall short of your glory and how there are times in our own experiences when we long for that salvation joy restored to us.

We pray, Lord, that together we will know great joy in your word and in your truth to us, even this evening and in the days ahead, O Lord, that you will make our hearts burn within us.

So we will go from here this evening, not just rejoicing in ourselves, but longing for others to know the wonder of salvation in Jesus Christ. We do pray, Lord, for the work of your kingdom here in our midst and throughout our communities.

We pray, Lord, for the blessing of your Spirit to be poured out upon us. We know that we can make many plans. We can make many attempts, as it were, to reach out with your word.

But we know that apart from you, we can do nothing. And so we pray for your wisdom, for your leading, for your guidance, for your peace and blessing over us as a people.

[8 : 48] Help us to know what to do. Help us to do all for your glory. Help us to do it in a way that we would see, Lord, your power and presence with us.

We know there are many needs. We know that they're always there before us. We can so often, maybe, as it were, bury our heads in the sand, hoping that many of them will go away.

I think even of the conference that's been going on over this weekend, challenges to us all as people, as individuals, as congregations, as parents, as children.

And we live in a world where there is so much moral depravity and so much wickedness around us. But we thank you, Lord, for issues being highlighted that are very sensitive.

And sometimes we don't want to speak about them. But we know that there are issues that affect us all in different ways. And we pray, Lord, for that nearness to you, to be able to know your leading and your guiding and your protection in it.

[9 : 52] We pray for a nearness to one another, to be able to share and fellowship with one another when we struggle with a whole host of sins in our own experiences. May we find that there are brothers and sisters in Christ who are there for us.

And may we find in you, Lord, a God of great grace and mercy, one who is able to heal and to help. And so we pray, Lord, that you will guard us, guard all our people, guard our young ones, and may you bless them even this evening together.

And as they hear from both Joe and Ali this evening, we pray that your blessing will be on that time, that it will be something that they will acknowledge and give thanks for.

So, Lord, may you bless and be with each one in that as well. We thank you, too, for communion season just now. We thank you for the services taking place even at this time and point.

We thank you for our own minister, the Reverend James McKeever, being there. And we pray, Lord, that they will have had a blessed weekend. And even now, as they worship together, may they know your presence, may they know your power, and may they know your great favor upon them as a people there.

- [11 : 05] And throughout our islands at this time, as communion seasons draw to our close, we think of Graver next weekend and pray your blessing on the ministry of your word there.
- Thank you for the Reverend Ian McCritchie and for his work among the people and the congregation there. We pray that you will honor him and the people, elders, deacons, and congregation alike, that you will pour out your blessing on them.
- We pray that for all our congregations, far and wide, too, upon our whole world this day, Lord, that you would come in your power, convicting power, that you will come in your comforting power as well to all who need you, to all who mourn and grieve at this time.
- We pray, Lord, your comfort towards each one, both here in our own midst and far and wide, as we hear of great tragedies around the world, even at this time.
- We pray, Lord, your mercy and your peace upon us. And we thank you, Lord, as we come this evening to your word, that is a word that is so precious, a word that speaks powerfully to us, a word that has power even beyond what we can imagine, for it is your word and your truth.
- [12 : 21] And we pray, Lord, that you will bless it to all our hearts this evening, that you will bless it far and wide, that the promises of it will all be fulfilled, that it will go return to you, having accomplished all for which you send it forth.
- And may that power be ours this evening to know that you are with us. So continue with us now and help us to do all to your glory as we sing your praise, as we offer up our prayers together, and as we open up your word.
- Guide us and lead us, we pray, pardoning all our sin, as we ask it all in Jesus' precious name. Amen. We are going to sing again to God's praise this time in Psalm 20, in the Singed Psalms, page 24 of the Psalm books.
- Psalm 20, verse 1-9, May the Lord answer you when you cry in distress. May Jacob's God keep you, whose name you confess.
- May God send assistance from his holy place and grant you from Zion support by his grace. We'll sing the whole of this psalm to God's praise.
- [13 : 38] May the Lord answer you when you cry in distress.
- May Jacob's God keep you, whose name you confess. May God send assistance from his holy place and grant you from Zion support by his grace.
- May God keep in mind every sacrifice made, accept on the altar your offerings laid, and may he fulfill the desire of your heart, success to each one of your plans to impart.
- With joy we will shout when your victory's won.
- We'll lift up our banners in God's name alone. And so may the Lord hear your earnest request and answer your prayers as seems to him best.
- [15 : 36] Now truly I know that the Lord from above protects his anointed in covenant love.
- From heaven in his holiness God hears his cry, and saves by the power of his right and all high.
- In horses or chalyons some trust for defense, but the name of the Lord is our strong confidence.
- their blood to their knees while in strength we arise. O Lord save the King, hear and answer our cries.
- We can turn together to read God's word in the book of Acts and chapter 10.
- [17 : 05] Acts chapter 10, we take up our reading at the beginning of this chapter. Our focus is mainly going to be towards the end of the chapter where we see Peter and Cornelius meeting together.

But in order to get the full context, I would read from the beginning of the chapter and see the wonder of the way God spoke to Cornelius, first of all, and then to Peter through different visions and brought them to the point of coming together, something that wouldn't otherwise have happened as we will see.

So Acts chapter 10 and at verse 1. 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 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.

[18 : 28] He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside. 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 them, 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 saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

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.

[19 : 45] 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 is 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.

So he invited them 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.

[21 : 08] 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 Persians 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 Persians common or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection.

I asked 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.

And behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your arms 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.

[22 : 18] 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.

And for the word that he sent, 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 caused 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 through his name.

[23 : 58] And so on. And may God bless that reading from his word. Before we turn back to that passage, we'll sing again to God's praise in Psalm 119 in the Scottish Psalter version.

It's on page 400 of the psalm books. We're singing at verse 9 down to verse 16. Psalm 119 at verse 9. By what means shall a young man learn his way to purify, if he according to thy word thereto attentive be?

We'll sing this section of Psalm 119 to God's praise. Psalm 119 by what means shall a young man learn his way to purify, if he according to thy word there to attend to thee.

Psalm 119 by what means shall a young man learn and learn and learn with all my soul and heart.

O let me not from the right path of thy calmness depart.

[25 : 49] thy word I in my heart abid, but I offend not thee.

O Lord, the ever-blessed heart, thy statutes teach thou me.

The judgments of thy mouth each warm, my lips keep lit up.

More joy thy testimonies way, than riches all be gave.

I will thy holy presence, my meditation.

[27 : 14] O Lord, the ever-blessed heart, my heart is one. And carefully I'll have respect upon thy statutes, my divine, shall constantly be set, upon thy statutes, my divine, shall constantly be set, and by thy grace I ever will thy holy word forget.

O Lord, the ever-blessed heart, my holy word forget. Well, if we can turn back to our reading in Acts chapter 10.

We can just read again at verse 33. Acts chapter 10 at verse 33, where Cornelius is speaking to Peter as they have come to meet together in the house of Cornelius.

It says, 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.

[28 : 59] And so on. It's quite a remarkable passage, this chapter 10 in the book of Acts, how it describes to us this remarkable way where Peter and Cornelius, both in separate places, were given a message by God through different visions, how they were to come together.

And as it says there in verse 33, the reason for their coming together was to be in the presence of God, to hear what the Lord has commanded.

It's a remarkable coming together in so many different ways, as we'll see as we go through this passage. But it makes us wonder tonight of our own hearing the word of God and thinking, Are we worthy to hear this word ourselves?

Do we deserve this word of God ourselves? When we think of maybe how long we've been under God's word, how long we've had God's word at our fingertips, are we worthy of it?

What are we doing with it? Do we recognize that even here this evening we are all gathered in the presence of God? What does that mean?

[30 : 16] To be gathered in the presence of God, to be here to hear what he has to say to us, to realize who it is that is speaking to us. We become so accustomed just to coming and hearing what is said, but do we realize it is God who is speaking to us?

Sometimes we need to be reminded that it is a wonder at all that God would speak to any of us, to you or to me, because we are truly undeserving of it.

But there are times too when God, by his grace, just takes hold of us. And when he speaks to us in a powerful way and we are left just in awe of him.

And this encounter between Peter and Cornelius, it leaves them and those who are with them in great awe and wonder at the grace of God. Have you ever gone to a place where you went in, not really sure what it was going to be like or whether in going there it was really worth going at all in the first place.

But then you have gone in and at the end of it you have really enjoyed yourself. You have loved the whole experience of being there and you didn't want to leave. Sometimes it can happen in the strangest of places.

[31 : 34] I remember once being in London and we were going to the theatre and I'd never been to the theatre before. And if I'm honest, it wasn't the first choice of where I would want to go on a night in London.

But I went along, not really knowing maybe what to expect, not thinking I would really enjoy it. But by the end of the evening I was just blown away by the whole experience of watching this show in the theatre.

It was a powerful experience and a wonderful experience in many ways. But then you think of the wonder of hearing the Gospel and the wonder of being under the Word of God and you recognise that even though there are many good things in this world, many experiences that we will enjoy and places that we go that we will delight in, there is nothing that compares to being gathered together under the Word of God and hearing what God has to say to us.

And that's at the heart of what is before us here in this passage. Where Cornelius has gathered friends and family together, probably many of them not sure why they're there in the first place.

Maybe many of them not wanting to be there, wondering should they be there at all. And when they see the guests that Cornelius has invited, Peter, to come into their midst, they're probably wondering, what's this all about?

[33 : 04] Maybe they'll just want to get up and leave. Peter himself is probably wondering the same. Why, Lord, are you taking me to these people? They would have so many questions.

And yet we see here that God is working powerfully, powerfully in bringing them together to recognize there is unity in Christ, that Christ is one who breaks down so many different barriers.

Their purpose in being together was to hear the Word of God. And here we are this evening, gathered together in Stornoway Free Church, Sunday, the 30th of October, 2022.

Is it a significant date for ourselves? Many ways it's not. We'll be here. We'll move on. We'll maybe forget about it. But we're here by God's grace. We're here under God's Word.

We're here because God has appointed this time for us to be here. It's an appointed time by God. And hear this.

[34 : 12] God has appointed this time for you and I to be gathered here in His presence to hear His Word. And as we see in this encounter between Peter and Cornelius, it really is a remarkable one.

One that without God's power and intervention would not have happened in and of itself. That's made clear for us as you read through the whole of this chapter.

Peter makes it clear as he arrives in the midst of this house of Cornelius that this is not a place that he should be. He says in verse 28, How Peter was viewing people before God intervened.

How Cornelius was maybe viewing Peter before God had intervened. You can imagine them both having their own views of one another. But it's a reminder to us of the power of the Gospel.

And what can this Word do for you and I this evening? Well, it can do exactly the same thing. It can break down barriers that maybe exist in our own hearts.

[35 : 38] People that we see around us who maybe we feel are undeserving of the Gospel for whatever reason that might be. Sometimes we need our hearts cleansed of that kind of attitude.

To see that everyone is made in the image of God. To see that every soul is precious to God. To see that every one of us needs the Lord Jesus.

Peter and Cornelius here needed their hearts changed. And perhaps as we think of the work of the Gospel here in our own midst, we need our hearts changed.

We need our eyes opened more and more. To see the great need around us. To see the people around us truly for who they are. A people who are not unclean in any way.

But who need the cleaning power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Russian writer Leo Tolstoy once said, Everybody thinks of changing humanity.

[36 : 39] And nobody thinks of changing himself. Maybe that's our attitude so often. We look around us and we think everybody else needs to change.

Those around us, they're the ones that need to change. But there are times when we have to look in our own hearts. And ask, is it me? Is it my attitude? Is it my life?

Is it my ways that need to change? Peter and Cornelius recognize that here. And they're brought to that point where God changes their heart. And what comes from that is a pouring out of the Gospel.

The blessing of the Gospel. Going far and wide. And maybe that's a prayer we should have for ourselves this evening. Lord, change our hearts. Change our hearts so we would not look down on anyone.

Or not look above. That we are above anybody else. Change us, Lord. And then we can see about changing humanity. Sometimes we need to change our hearts.

[37 : 40] But that is what the Gospel does. So here we are gathered together this evening. Under the Word of God. To hear what He has to say to us. This is God's appointment.

And I want to see three things about this appointment for us this evening. As we learn from this passage before us. And the first thing is this. God's appointed time.

In this account in chapter 10. You have these main characters, if you like. Who are poles apart. Cornelius, we are told, is a Roman centurion.

A Gentile. And on the other hand, you have Peter. One of the apostles. A devoted Jew. And they weren't going to mix.

Not by their own choosing were they going to come together. But behind everything here is God. God. God who appears to Cornelius. And God who appears to Peter.

[38 : 39] And the result of this is the Gospel spreading far and wide. And continuing to spread to this very day. So that we too are privileged to be under this Gospel ourselves.

And the wonder of it. God is here orchestrating these events to bring these two men together. In a way that in many ways shocked them both.

But it broke down many barriers that existed between them. You think, what kind of things would Cornelius have said about Peter? You wonder what kind of conversations they would have had before Peter comes.

And what kind of man is he? Or what kind of people are the Jews? The Jews were seen or saw themselves very often as a class above. And the Gentiles, they were a different kind of people.

There were two kinds of people in these days. The Jews, if you weren't a Jew, you were a Gentile. And there was no mixing between them.

[39 : 41] But many of the Gentiles, like Cornelius, who probably looked at the Jews and said, Oh, they are so legalistic. It's all about do's and don'ts. Why can't we just worship God the way we want to ourselves?

Maybe Peter, as we see here, being saying things that we were not even meant to mix with you people. He would have been saying about Cornelius, he doesn't deserve to hear the gospel.

He hates the way of the Jews and what they stand for. But look what happens when the grace of God intervenes. When God's appointed times comes and he brings them together.

The result is this encounter between the two where they become united, if you like. They come under God's word. And the result of this encounter today is that all people throughout the world can hear the wonder of the gospel of God's grace.

As he says there in verse 34, Peter says, Truly I understand that God shows no partiality.

[40 : 51] He shows no favoritism. He doesn't look on one person as better than another. There's no partiality. But in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is acceptable, what is right is acceptable to him.

Is that our heart attitude too? We have to confess that there are times when we lack that kind of attitude. We can look around and think we're better than others.

We've got everything sussed in the way that we worship or the way that we do church. That we know it all. That we know better. There are times we have to confess we don't.

And we have to confess before God that in our hearts, our hearts are partial. We look on ourselves more than we look on others.

We have to ask the Lord to break down that barrier. The wonder of it here is that God appoints this time when they come together. And in the same way, our lives aren't filled with chance happenings either.

[41 : 59] This was God's appointed time for Peter and Cornelius to come together. And this is our appointed day. This is our appointed time. This is our appointed place.

And what are we going to do with it? How are we going to live our lives? How are we going to interact with those around us? We don't see any meeting with people as just chance meetings.

Recently we looked at the Jesus meeting with the woman at the well. Again, a Jew and a Samaritan, they weren't meant to mix together either. But God appointed that time and what a blessing came from that.

Hearts that were open to receive and to speak. And the blessing that flowed from it. So for ourselves, this is not a chance meeting that we're here tonight.

Perhaps we've been invited. Perhaps this is our first time here. Perhaps we've come out of curiosity. Perhaps we're here most weeks, week after week. We are all here because God has appointed this time for us.

[43 : 05] But what are we going to do with it? Are we going to hear what God is saying to us? Are we going to hear that maybe God is using us and preparing us to be used in his service?

Even though we might say, what can I do? What do I have to offer? But that God has something for us all to do. Everyone has something to offer and something to give.

And perhaps God is laying on your heart a particular burden for a people or a group of people. So we look around ourselves today. There's so many people around us.

Maybe you ask, well, are we allowed to go and speak to these kinds of people? There's visitors to our town. There's people who have moved here from other lands and other nations. People who have moved in to maybe next door to your home.

And you're wondering, should I or can I even go and speak to these people? Well, it's important that we see that God has appointed such times for us.

[44 : 03] To be a people who will bear witness to God in our communities. To be a people who will show the wonder of the gospel to those, to all who are around us. Just like Peter, we need to understand that God shows no partiality.

So this is our appointed time. This is our appointed place. And that we are to be a people who are ready to respond to God's will for us.

To be a people who show forth the gospel to those around us. Peter was told to go and to meet with Cornelius.

Are we told to go and meet with those around us? Well, yes, of course we are. In Matthew 28, verse 19, you have the great commission.

Commission to the church of Christ to go to all the nations, to all the people. To show no partiality, but to seek the glory of the gospel for all people.

[45 : 06] So there is God's appointed time. The second thing we see here is this God's appointed word. If God has appointed this time for Cornelius and Peter coming together, he's also appointed the purpose of their coming together.

And it is to hear the word of God. You notice the way Cornelius puts it there in verse 33. 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. There was a purpose in their coming to me together.

And did Peter have to pause and think about what he was going to say? Not at all. He had the message ready to go.

And it begins, first of all, with a confession. He confesses his own heart before them. In verse 34, there is a confession there.

[46 : 08] Truly, now I understand that God shows no partiality. He knows his own heart has been wrong in the past. And he is confessing that.

But he goes on then, in verse 36. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all.

This is the message that he has to bring to the people. It is good news. It is the gospel preached to all.

The gospel that is able to break down barriers. The gospel that is able to unite and bring peace. Because Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all.

He is Lord of all. And as you look at this word, you recognize this is what our world needs. This is what everyone around us needs to hear.

[47 : 11] Good news. And he goes on and explains all that has happened in their day. How Jesus had come into the world. And beginning in Galilee after his baptism.

And so it goes on. All of these things had taken place. He was crucified. But then on the third day, he rose again. He explains then the wonder that God sent his son into this world.

What an amazing message they had. And what an amazing message we have ourselves too. The wonder of this gospel that God sent his son into this world for us.

And for those around us who will come through faith to believe. They are all acceptable. Everyone who will believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the word that he proclaimed. And who needed to hear this? They all did. Peter needed to hear this.

[48 : 17] Because the Lord convicted him in his own heart. And he had to confess the sin of partiality that he had been suffering with. But Cornelius needed to hear the word too.

All who were with him needed to hear the word. And his word had to spread far and wide. And you just look at Cornelius just for a moment. What kind of man he was.

It says a lot of good things about him. At the beginning of the chapter, Cornelius was a centurion of what was known as the Italian cohort. A devout man who feared God with all his household.

Gave alms generously to all the people and prayed continually. Everything would seem right on the outside with this man Cornelius. He was a good man.

A devout man. But he needed to hear what Peter had to say. He needed to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified for our sins.

[49 : 21] But you see, he was a good man. Well, if you just jump over to chapter 11, verse 14. There, Peter is reporting back to the church all that had taken place.

And in verse 13, he's telling about this account of his encounter with Cornelius. He told us how he had seen the angels stand in his house and say, Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter.

He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved. You and all your household. They had to hear this message.

And how many people around ourselves tonight, many of us need to hear or re-hear this message. The wonder of the grace of God that is through faith that we are saved.

So we see this wonder of the word of God. The word of God that is powerful to save. And this is the word of God that we have to share with others.

[50 : 28] To remind them that this is good news. That this is what they need in their life now. And for all eternity that's before us. We need the Lord.

C.S. Lewis who once said, God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from himself. Because it is not there. There is no such thing.

And perhaps you're trying to balance it, to juggle it in your life. To find happiness in the world and to find happiness with God. To try and get the two of them in balance.

But it's not working. Because it is God you need. And God alone. And to come and trust in him. And the same is true for all around us.

As we think of those who need to hear the gospel. Those who feel there's all happiness in this world. That life is fulfilled in every other way apart from God.

[51 : 30] No. We have this word that needs to be shared. This word that is powerful to save. And the greatest burden of all that God puts on our heart.

Is when he reminds us of our end. That God here as well as appointing a time. Appointing his word. He reminds us here too that he's appointed a judge.

He has appointed a judge. In verse 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. That's the seriousness of this. The wonder of this encounter.

The appointed time. The amazement of that. The wonder of the word of God. The amazement of that. But the seriousness too. That he has appointed one.

[52 : 33] To be judge of all. And that puts a sense of urgency of all of this as well. That if our hearts are showing partiality.

If we don't see others as worthy of the gospel. That God would break down our hearts in that. That we would say it's not them that needs to change. But us too.

That our hearts need to change. You know there are many places that we can go. Many places that we can go for a while. And we can leave them behind.

You think of your own weekly routines. You go into the workplace. And you leave. You go into school or college. And then you leave after a time.

Even coming to church. You come in for a time. And then you leave. And you're saying to yourself all of these things. I just want them to pass by. I just want the time to go on.

[53 : 34] But all the time. Our time is going on. It's taking us closer towards this appointed time. And this appointed judge. A time we will not get out of.

A meeting we will not get away with. And since life is short and uncertain. And eternity is before us forever. The important question to ask of us all is.

How can I be saved? How can I know I am right with God? And how can I tell others of this great need to be right with God?

While he's saying here. There's an appointed judge. And it says in verse 43. To him. All the prophets bear witness. That everyone who believes in him.

Receives forgiveness of sins. Through his name. There is a serious day coming. But there is hope. In this gospel.

[54 : 31] For all. Who believe. Everyone who believes in him. Receives forgiveness of sins. Through his name. How can we be ready.

For this day when it comes. It is to be standing in Christ. To be trusting. In him. There was a story told.

Of the time when the. Pioneers were making their way. Through the country of the United States. They'd arrived. On the east coast. And they were making their way inland. Setting up towns.

And villages along the way. And there was this one time. When a large crowd. Were making their way. Through the prairies. Making their way. To a place. That they were looking forward.

To building new homes. And a new life. And they were journeying. Through the prairies. And their wagons. Drawn by oxen. And it was slow progress.

[55 : 29] It took a long time. Men and women. Boys and girls. All making their way. Some on the wagon. Some having to walk. It was very slow progress. And as they were traveling. Through the prairies. This one day. It was very warm. And it had been for a time. Very dry place. But they began to see smoke. On the western horizon. And the smoke was coming. Towards them. Towards them. And they began to realize. What was happening. The prairie was so dry. And the sun was so hot. That the dry grass. Had started burning. And the little wind. That there was. Was blowing the fire. Towards them. And they recognized soon. That there was no getting away. From this fire. It was heading towards them.

And at a faster pace. That they could get away. They had passed a river. The day before. But they knew. There was no time. To get back. To that river. And what were they going to do. They were starting.

[56 : 27] To get terrified. They were horrified. By what lay ahead of them. But then one man. Knew what had to be done. And to the shock. Of those. Around him. He said. We have to set on fire. The grass. That's behind us. And the people. Are thinking. You're crazy. Why are you going to start a fire. That's just beside us. But he said. No. This is what we have to do. We have to burn the grass. That's behind us. That we've already. Travelled past. And so he did that. He set the fire alight. And the grass.

Started to burn away from them. Back the way. That they'd came. And as it gathered pace. And as the fire moved back. Away from them as well. The people began to realize.

The wisdom. That this man had. You see. The grass. That had been burned. The area was getting bigger. And bigger. And they started to move on. To the land.

[57 : 22] That had been scorched. Recognizing. That as the fire. That was coming. The other direction. Came towards them. It was going to go around them. And miss them. It couldn't touch them. Where the fire had already been.

And that in itself. Is a reminder. Of the wonder of the gospel of Christ. The man said. To one little child. The flames. Cannot reach us here.

For we are standing. Where the fire has been. And when we think. Of what we have in Christ. That is our hope too. As we trust in him.

We recognize. The day of judgment. Brings judgment. For our sins. But when we are standing. In Christ. We cannot be touched. We are safe.

Through the precious blood. Of Christ. The fire. Cannot touch us. Because Christ. Has borne our sin. He stood. Where we deserve to stand.

[58 : 22] He bore. The wrath of God. On the cross. And through his. His. Obedience. We too. Can be saved.

We are standing. Where Christ has been. But are you tonight. Are you standing. On that ground. Are you standing.

On that rock. That is Christ Jesus. The wonder. Of it all. Is God has given us. This time. He has appointed. This time. For us.

To hear. What God. Is saying. To us. That we would see. The wonder. Of the gospel. Our need. Of the gospel. Around us. Of the gospel.

That he has appointed. The word. That speaks. To us. So clearly. Reminds us. That we are sinners. Who are deserving. Of the wrath. Of God.

[59 : 18] But it reminds us. To. That God has appointed. One. Who is judge. And all. Who believe. In him. It says here. Everyone who believes. In him.

Receives forgiveness. Of sin. Through his name. The reality is. None of us. Deserve it. The wonder of it is.

That God gives it freely. And we are not to show. Any partiality. In that. But to share. With all around us. The wonder of this gospel.

And the forgiveness. Of sins. That is ours. Through his name. May we never lose sight. Of the wonder. Of it all. But proclaim.

And praise. His glorious name. To all around us. Amen. Let us pray. Our father in heaven.

[60 : 13] We do rejoice. That in Christ. There is such great hope. The one who came. To bear our sins. The one. Who we can have forgiveness. Of sin. To all.

Who believe in him. And we pray Lord. That as your word. Ministers to our hearts. That it will change our hearts. Just as Peter and Cornelius. Were changed.

By the wonder. Of the way that you spoke to them. And how they recognized. Their need of. One another. But also their great need of Christ. And to share that hope.

With all around them. We pray that you will do that for us. That you will unite us. In the bonds of love in Christ. That we will be able to share that love. With others. And that they would come to know.

The wonder. Of the good news. That is Christ Jesus. Our Lord. We pray it all. In his glorious name. Amen. We are going to conclude.

[61 : 10] By singing. To God's praise. In Psalm 40. In the sing Psalms version. Find this on page 51. Psalm 40. Singing at verse 13. Down to the end of the Psalm. Be pleased. O Lord.

To rescue me. O Lord. Come quickly. To my aid. May all who seek. To take my life. With shame. And turmoil. Be repaid. We will sing. From verse 13.

Down to the end of the Psalm. To God's praise. Be pleased. O Lord. To rescue me. O Lord. Come quickly. To my aid. May all who seek. To take my life. With shame.

And turmoil. Be repaid. We will sing. From verse 13. Down to the end of the Psalm. To God's praise. Be pleased. O Lord. To rescue me.

O Lord. Come quickly. To my aid. May all who seek. To take my life. With shame. To take my life. With shame.

[62 : 08] To take my life. May all who seek. To take my life. With shame. To take my life. With shame.

And turmoil. To be repaid. May all who blot. My overthrow.

Turn back. To space. The way they came. May all who blot. My overthrow. Turn back. To space. The way they came.

May all who blot. May all who blot. May all who do. Why. May all who luke. My face. May all who luke me.

Poor. May all who luke me. May all who'M. May all who luke me. May all who TFIM ■■■■
borne. May all who mauvais.

[63 : 07] May all who the rejoice. May all who revenge. Deathly. May all who Goodman fight. For
heaven of harm. Be joyful in you all their days.

Let those who love salvation say, Exalted be the Lord always.

Yet I am good and in great need.

Lord, thank you me, I humbly pray. You are my Savior and my help.

Come, O my God, do not delay. Amen. After the benediction, I'll go to the door to my right.

[64 : 26] Close with the benediction. Now may grace, mercy, and peace from God, Father, Son,
and Holy Spirit, rest upon and abide with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.