

SERMON RECAP FROM JUNE 8, 2025

PENTECOST SUNDAY, ACTS 10:34-48

“Empowered by the Holy Spirit”

Sermon by Robb McCoy

On the day of Pentecost the twelve were gathered in one place, but were swept out into the public square when the strong wind of the Spirit blew through the house. Tongues of fire lit on each of them and there was a great miracle of communication as Jews from all over the world were able to understand this group of Galileans as they proclaimed the wonderful works of God. Some scoffed and called them drunk, but Peter realized what was going on. He remembered the prophet Joel and declared

“God says ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young will see visions. Your elders will dream dreams. Even upon my servants, men and women, I will pour out my Spirit.’” (Acts 2:17-18)

For today’s reading, we fast forward a little bit to a moment when two men had visions. Acts 10 tells us the story of Cornelius and Peter. In many ways, these two men were opposites, but they each had visions given to them by the Holy Spirit that helped set the course of Christianity. Peter begins today’s reading by saying, “I really am learning that God doesn’t show partiality to one group of people over another. Rather, in every nation, whoever worships him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

This is an incredible moment in Peter’s life and in the history of the Church. The Pentecost miracle was amazing, but everyone in that story from Acts 2 was Jewish. They were from all over the world, but they were all of the same “nation.” They knew the Torah, the prophets, and worshipped the same God.

Cornelius, on the other hand, was a Roman Centurion. He was intrigued by God and was kind and generous to the Jewish people, but he was NOT of their nation. While he is called a “God-Worshipper,” which means he appreciated Jewish traditions and Yahweh, but he was not Jewish. While living in Caesarea, he had a vision of an angel that told him to send for Peter, who was in Joppa.



Even these two cities, Joppa and Caesarea, were polar opposites. Caesarea was a deeply Roman city, built by King Herod as a port city to rival the older and more Jewish Joppa. Caesarea had a temple dedicated to Roman gods. It housed Roman military (hence it was the home of Cornelius the Centurion). Joppa, on the other hand, was a much older city that was long a stronghold for Jewish nationalism. In the war that came in the 70s, Joppa was destroyed by Centurions from Caesarea.

When Peter had a group of Centurions come to him and take him away, the proper translation of Peter’s response was “What are the charges.” This would have been a terrifying moment for Peter. When Centurions come to Jewish doors (especially to a close friend of someone who had been crucified by the Romans), this inevitably meant trouble.

But Peter had also had a vision. He had a dream that revealed to him that God was doing something new. In his dream Peter was commanded to eat unclean food, but he refused. Eventually vision told him, “Never consider unclean what God has made pure” (Acts 10:15).

Peter trusted God and his vision and went to Cornelius. There, the two formed an unlikely bond. Cornelius learned from Peter, and accepted that “I should never call a person impure or unclean” (10:28).

When Peter made his incredible declaration that all people are welcome in the Kingdom of God and that all who “does what is right is acceptable to [God],” he was responding to the visions of the Spirit. And he was responding to his own experience with Cornelius. He trusted the Spirit to go into an uncomfortable place, and came out transformed because of it. The visions changed things, but it was the relationship between two unlikely people that led to the transformation of that community and ultimately, the world.