Acts Sunday School Series Lesson 21

Acts 10: 1-47

“No Bouncers Necessary”

Introduction:

There are many things in our world that just aren’t what they used to be. It seems like you don’t get service in stores like you used to, the products that keep getting more expensive are at the same time being produced with cheaper, almost disposable materials. If you were to ask someone who grew up 40 or 50 years ago they are very likely to say that cars and other products just aren’t the same quality that they were before. It is sad sometimes to think that you are investing your money into things that you know aren’t going to last very long. This is probably true of most things that are within the price range of the middle class. There are however, some things today that still possess the high production standards that our society once enjoyed. Whether it is cars, handbags, shoes, or clothing, the things that maintain a high quality are so because they use quality materials or ingredients. There have even been people in history that have thought that a better community or society you would have to do the same, exclude those who were considered to be inferior or unworthy in any way. We are going to see that the community that God is trying to see come together for His name does not operate under this premise.

1. Cornelius was a man who sought to know God and please Him.
   1. The passage tells us that he was a man that feared God.
      1. Verse 22 says that he was of good report among the Jews.
      2. Cornelius apparently was a man who sincerely desired to know God and was trying his best, but he was still considered unclean by the Jewish community (v.28).
   2. Cornelius did not stumble at the message of God that called him to act on something out of the ordinary.
      1. God gave him instructions and he simply obeyed.
      2. He apparently believed that God would do what He said he was going to do.
   3. There are people like Cornelius all over the world who seek to know God.
      1. If you could ask people if they wanted to offend God the truth is that a majority of them would say no.
      2. God has given man a conscience, and that compels us to do right and reproves us when we are wrong.
      3. There are many as the sinner in Luke 18:13 recognizing that they are unworthy to come before God.
         1. This was true of Cornelius because he was a Gentile.
         2. This is true of people today because they are sinners, and sin separates us from God.

Transition: However the acceptance that Christians enjoy with God, just like Peter, was not gained because we deserved it, it was gained because God worked on our behalf.

1. God’s divine direction is what worked to unite Peter with Cornelius.
   1. God’s hand in this is a significant emphasis in the first portion of the passage.
      1. Cornelius prayed and fasted but he was not the first to do so. It was God who supernaturally intervened to give detailed instructions on what He was about to do.
      2. Peter was hungry and fell asleep when God worked on his end to bring him to Cornelius. Peter would not have been out looking for gentiles to encounter, although he does show some readiness cross cultural boundaries by staying with Simon the tanner in the previous chapter.
   2. There was a sense of mystery in the way that God worked on both ends.
      1. Cornelius knew that Peter would have words, but He did not tell him what was going to happen. In fact Peter did not even know what he was going to say (v.17).
      2. God spoke to Peter through a vision, but its meaning was not clear. He had to do it three times for Peter to get that God was trying to tell him something.
   3. God is still working in the lives of lost people and in our lives to bring people to Christ.
      1. This work is simultaneous as well as continuous. Sometimes we may find ourselves in a place we would rather not be:
         1. Doctor’s office
         2. Mechanic
         3. DMV
         4. On a plane…etc.
      2. When we are around people we must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit because you never know if you are sitting next to someone who may be desperately seeking God.
   4. God wants to use you to be a blessing to other Christians as well and providentially leads us to that end as well.
      1. I have heard many stories of people who have had financial needs and even though they did not tell anyone about it, the exact amount they needed came in.
      2. Sometimes it can be as seemingly small as a conversation that God can use to change someone’s thinking about an important decision or to encourage someone going through the most difficult trial of their life.

Transition: I think most people who are here this morning would say that they would like to help others come to Christ, or that they would like to be an encouragement to other believers. So how do we know who to help, or who to confront with the gospel? That is an important question, because if God was looking to attract people who were very tall, or very short, or very rich, or very poor, or very intelligent, or very strong, or very athletic, or very beautiful, or any other thing that we can see we might have some demographics to help guide us. But we don’t,

1. God’s plan is indiscriminant.
   1. The Jewish culture during the time of Peter would have washed their hands after going to market just in case the shadow of a gentile passed over them. They would do this with cups and other dishes as well. This discrimination was based on race as well as religion.
   2. This is one of the most significant portions of the book of Acts because it is another shift in God’s working in this world that included ALL MEN.
      1. It is important to note that the Jews did not develop these things completely out of nothing.
         1. They were the chosen seed of Abraham.
         2. In their commandments they were told not to touch unclean things.
      2. Uncleanness today is still seen by Christians.
         1. Smoking, drinking, partying, promiscuity, drugs, violence, addictions, selfishness, these are all things that we see in our community.
         2. These actions and lifestyles are indeed unclean, and are a true offence to God.
   3. But the blood of Christ has taken that all away so that God is not a respecter of persons.
      1. Peter preached the saving gospel of Christ to the household of Cornelius.
      2. At this moment God was making it plain that the true requirement for being accepted by Christ was not based on nationality or race, but by a individual’s willingness to put their faith in Him. (v. 35)
   4. So as we go about our lives the criteria for sharing the gospel is not based on anything other than whether a person is willing to hear God’s message of salvation.
   5. God placed His mark of approval by doing something supernatural in their midst.
      1. The Holy Spirit came as a sign of His empowering there people who were previously considered unclean.
      2. Peter’s presence was another way that God tied this event to the apostles and hence to Christ Himself.
      3. The sign gift of tongues is seen again in this passage.
         1. This was done for a sign that the lost would believe by seeing a display of God’s supernatural intervention.
         2. The tongues with which they spoke were not unintelligible babble, they magnified God in diverse tongues as in Acts 2.
         3. Because we have the complete and preserved Word of God we do not need the sign gifts as a test of authenticity. If something is the authentic work of God it will line up with the Bible.

Conclusion: When it comes to household products and food it is good to have high quality materials or ingredients to produce a better result. I’m glad God doesn’t look at His church like that. This is because we are not what make church special, if not for God and the love that He has poured into our lives we would have nothing and be nothing. Sometimes as Christians we can fall into the trap of thinking that we are better than others because we don’t do some of the wicked things as those around us. God blesses and delights in our acts of obedience, but our acts of obedience were not, are not now, and never will be good enough to get us to heaven. May the Lord help us to be indiscriminant in the spread of the gospel both here in our community and around the world.