

VCB
Pastor Mike Reid
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Acts 10

“Jesus the Closer”

A few weeks ago, a Villager asked about being baptized ...

- I knew she loved God
- Doing all she could to follow him
- Jesus had died for the sins of mankind
- Considered herself a Christian

But I was not sure she had made it personal that He had died for HER

I was praying and thinking about what to preach today

- Acts 10, Cornelius followed God, but had not yet "closed the deal" with him
- I think many at Village ...

People come to Village from various church backgrounds.

- A wide net, more like an interdenominational church.

One of the results... broad range of theological backgrounds.

We have folks who, like Cornelius: truly love God, want to know and follow Him, acknowledge that Jesus died for sins...

- But have not "closed the deal" with Him
- Haven't taken the big step of "receiving Him."

Read Acts 10

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment (verse 1).

- Gentile.
- Centurion, few hundred soldiers
- The story of how Christianity spread from the Jews to Gentiles.
 - God instructed Peter... Gentiles not unclean, give the gospel to Cornelius.

He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly (verse 2).

- Cornelius was a man who knew and loved God
- "God-fearing," a Gentile follower of the God of Israel

One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!" (verse 3)

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. (verse 4)

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. 5 Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. 6 He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea." (verses 5-6)

- He obviously had something going with God. *He had a vision.*
- So, A pious and religious man who sought to follow God and live a moral life.

- In verses 22, 35 it's added: "respected by all the Jewish people"

When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. 8 He told them everything that had happened and sent them to Joppa. (verse 7)

- Verses 9ff - The angel also speaking to Peter, and the men find him

Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests. The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa went along. The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them *and had called together his relatives and close friends.* (verses 23-24)

Here's something I love about Cornelius....

- He's expectant and has made sure others don't miss it
 - "Found a large gathering" (verse 27)
 - We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything (verse 33)
- Henry Blackaby says every person should "Figure out where God is at work and join Him there."
- Cornelius takes it a step further by making sure the people he loves are there too
 - "Don't forget to include those you care about."

- A good example for us
 - If we think God is going to do something significant here at Village be a "bringer."
 - And if we don't think he's going to, what are we doing here?
 - (Cornelius speaking) [Now] We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us." (verse 33)

- Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached - how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (verses 34-38)
- He knew Cornelius must already know about Jesus
 - "You have heard of Jesus ..." (verse 36-37)
- The story of Jesus life and deeds had spread throughout the region
 - Brought son of widow back to life...
 - They were all filled with awe and praised God.
 - This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. (Luke 7:16)
 - Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching, preaching the good news, and healing every sickness among the people.
 - News about him spread all over Syria. (Matthew 4:23-24)
- "We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. (verses 39-40)
 - Killed Him, the resurrection
 - Cornelius probably knew this too
- He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." (verses 41-43)

The message of salvation consists of two simple facts:

1. I have a sin problem
 - This is not about "the sins of the world"
 - This is personal, it is first person.
 - "Hello, my name is Mike and I have a sin problem." (Hello Mike)
 - And any of us could say the same thing.
 - It's true for everyone.
 - You have sinned and I have sinned.

- There's NOBODY who does not sin, and there is nobody who can fix it, so as to be worthy enough to stand before the Almighty Holy God of the Universe.
- "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23
- "Whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking it all." James. 2:10
 - No amount of good behavior or well-meaning efforts are going to be enough.

So, the message of salvation has two parts:

1. I have a sin problem.
2. Jesus is the only solution to my sin problem.
 - Killed Him, hanging him on a tree, but God raised Him up again! (verse 39b)
 - Jesus died for one reason: to pay the price for your sins and my sins.
 - He was pierced for our transgressions,
 - He was crushed for our iniquities;
 - The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)
 - God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21)
 - As one person put it, "He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay."
 - God judged our sins by taking upon Himself the judgment we deserved.
 - It's as if a judge fined you for something you did wrong, then stepped down from the bench and paid the fine himself.
 - Look at verse 43 again
 - "All the prophets testify about him that *everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*" (verse 43)
 - While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

- Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days. (verses 47-48)
- So, knowing these facts is still not enough.
 - We must personally ACT in response to God's solution – make it our own.
 - Every person must personally "close the deal" with Jesus
 - *"everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins"* (verse 43)
- That is, believing He died for YOU and staking your life on it.

It is possible to be following God and still not be complete in your spiritual journey.

- Cornelius followed God and knew about Jesus, yet he needed more
- Deborah was in the same place.
- I was this way, a long time ago when I used to sit back there (pointing to pews)
 - I was a follower of God for some time before I understood what it meant to give my Life to God through Jesus.
 - I attended Village as a God-follower who had not yet closed the deal with Jesus.
 - Of course, I didn't know that.
 - Good works, obedience, attended Church, quit some habits, attempts to please God
 - But essentially unhappy because it wasn't working.
 - I was trying, yet I was still troubled.
 - You are trusting God, now trust in me. (John 14:1, Living Bible)

There are others at Village in this very place.

- I asked our Elders to pray regarding the message this weekend.
 - One emailed back ... "I believe there are quite a number of Villagers who have never actually opened up their hearts to Christ. They know about the Lord, they believe intellectually in Him, but they have never invited Him into their heart as Lord and Savior."

Have you ever actually intentionally acknowledged to God that you understand and embrace that Jesus died for You?

- That's what it means to believe and receive Him.
- If that is you, today can be the day you take care of that. Today you can "close the deal" with Jesus.

“To all who received him he gave the right to become the children of God.” (John 1:12)

"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9)

Some have believed for some time now He died for all, without acknowledging He died for ME.

- Have never "completed the transaction" of salvation (by inviting him in) by putting faith in the fact of his death
- He covered YOUR sins.

A commitment prayer

- O God, I know I am a sinner. I am sorry for my sins, and I want to turn from them. I believe Christ paid the price in full for my sins, and I confess Him as my Savior and Lord. Thank you Jesus for coming into my life. Amen.