**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 7-4-2021
 A New Thing is Born!**

It was 245 years ago today, the American colonies declared their independence from England. And with that, the United States of America was born. A new thing was beginning. And the world would be forever changed dramatically through this new nation.

Yes, it would take several years before our young nation would successfully win its independence. And America would become a nation that not only promotes freedom within its borders, but around the world. And here America is today, still one of God’s tools to help bring greater freedom to many people around the world.

But as important as the creation of America was, our wonderful Triune God was birthing something far greater nearly 2,000 years ago. What He was birthing was greater than any one nation. He was creating a new people, a new humanity, a new movement, that would be made up of people from every nation. And our Lord used 2 supernatural actions to confirm what God was birthing in His world.

Let us turn now to this critical story found in the Book of Acts chapter 10. And we will pause a couple of times to unpack this longer passage together. Let’s read of the first of these 2 powerful encounters beginning in verse 1.

**At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. 2He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. 3One 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!”**

**4Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.**

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

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

Let’s just pause there for a moment. Cornelius is this Roman Centurian. Centurians were in charge of 100 soldiers. This was a man with lots of power. But despite his power and authority, Cornelius worshipped the Lord. He was called a God-fearer. God fearers would be followers of Yahweh but who did not go all the way to becoming Jewish through submitting to the laws that God gave to Moses.

And here, an angel of God gives Cornelius clear instruction to send men to Joppa to find and bring Simon to him.

Picking up again with verse 9, let us turn to the 2nd of these two supernatural encounters from God.

**9About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. 10He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. 11He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. 13Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”**

**14“Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”**

**15The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”**

**16This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.**

Let us pause again.

The story with Simon Peter begins normally enough. We read that Peter was hungry as it was about lunchtime. I trust that we can all relate to that. 😊

And Simon has this vision relating to eating, but his vision was nothing that Peter would have guessed. It was far from kosher.

It was all of these unclean animals. And the Lord instructs him to kill and eat. It was a startling message. What was God up to?

And this happens 3 times, just to make sure that he didn’t just dismiss this supernatural encounter.

Continuing on in verse 17, we read:

**17While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate. 18They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.**

**19While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+10&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27279a)**] men are looking for you. 20So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.”**

**21Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”**

**22The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” 23Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.**

**The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. 24The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. 26But Peter made him get up. “Stand up,” he said, “I am only a man myself.”**

**27While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. 28He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean. 29So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?”**

**30Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me 31and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ 33So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”**

**34Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. 36You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. 37You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38how 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.**

**39“We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, 40but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41He 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. 42He 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. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”**

**44While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. 46For they heard them speaking in tongues[**[**b**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+10&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27306b)**] and praising God.**

**Then Peter said, 47“Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 48So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.**

It was so significant about this moment in time that the Lord was giving multiple visions to Simon Peter as well as a clear angelic encounter to Cornelius? I believe it was that our Lord wanted to make it especially clear what He was doing.

The simple but profound truth was that Jesus was birthing a new thing. The freedom that is available to people through Jesus Christ is not meant to be for only one nation, but to ALL who respond to the good news of Jesus with faith.

Cornelius, who would have been considered an outsider to the Christians at the beginning of this story, is now received as a brother in the faith.

Cornelius did not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. All that was needed was His submission to Jesus as His Lord and Savior.

And we read that the Holy Spirit comes upon him and the other Gentile Romans that were gathered to hear Peter speak. The Holy Spirit was confirming that these new believers were as much a part of the church as the Jewish believers were.

So, friends, as we think about this new thing that was born in Caesarea that day, we are reminded that Jesus came to unite all who would put their trust in Him as their Lord and Savior --- whether they are Jews or Romans.

So as we think about this chapter and how God was birthing a new thing, what does it mean for us today? I think that it simply means this very important truth.

\*\*\*\*If we have Jesus, if we have trusted in Him we are forgiven of our sins and we are incorporated into this new people of God. And this is true no matter our backgrounds. No matter our history. No matter our past.

We presently live in a world where people like to divide us. Divide us based on the pigment of our skin. Divide us by our political views, to divide us by our backgrounds and in various other ways as well.

But Jesus unites all who trust in Him. In Him we are made brothers and sisters with everyone who believes, no matter the country they are from, no matter our pasts.

This story in Acts 10 reminds us that all of humanity needs the Savior – Jesus Christ. The Roman oppressors needed Jesus just as much as the oppressed Jews did.

And Jesus brings together Jew and Gentile into one family of God.

\*\*This passage also reminds us that it is not the law of Moses that can save us. It is Jesus Christ. As Christians today, we must understand the Old Testament law through Christ. For Jesus didn’t come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. I hope to do a sermon series on this at some point, because there is a lot to unpack on this topic. ***But for today, this passage reminds us that Jesus alone is the One who can save us***. And this passage from Acts makes this abundantly clear!

As we read and study the Bible, please never lose sight of this. Jesus is our Savior. Our trust is in Him.

Nothing and no one has the power to save us from our sins. No government. No amount of good works. No amount of law keeping. Not even knowing a lot of Scripture. Our faith is in Him and in what He did in giving His life for us on the cross.

So friends, on this Independence Day, be thankful for our freedom as Americans – and continue to fight that these freedoms continue. But far more important than us being American citizens is being a citizen of heaven, citizens of the kingdom of God, part of God’s family, His household. Friends, we are united to Christians from every nation. We have brothers and sisters across the globe and in practically every place.

Think of Simon Peter & Cornelius. One Gentile and a prominent Roman soldier. The other a Jewish fisherman turned apostle of Jesus --- now brothers.

Finally, please remember this, our Triune God is constantly multi-tasking in bringing people into an awareness that Jesus is the One and only Savior of the world. God is multi-tasker. Remember, He did this with Saul and Ananias. Jesus revealed Himself to Saul and also appeared to Ananias, instructing him to go to help Saul.

So please know, sisters and brothers, that the Lord is not only working on you, but He is working on me and on each and every one of us.

We are not called to do everything. We are simply called to do our part. To respond in faith to Jesus and to let Jesus lead us through life. As the creator of the powerful Christian show, The Chosen, often says, “It’s not your job to feed the 5,000, only to provide the loaf and fish.” So friends, let us follow Jesus in faith and offer Him our loaves and fishes and let Him do the rest.

Let’s pray…