**Mike and Deb Malooly**

**Message 05 | Series: Communication Shift| Theme: Building the Lord’s Church |** Text: Acts 10:1-48| Speakers: Elders and spouses | Date: 9-10-2017

This is our final messages in our series “Communication Shift and our theme today is “Building the Lord’s Church. As we set our story in context our Lord wants to communicate with you and me and has placed the Holy Spirit into our hearts so we can hear the voice of God. In today’s world there are many ways, plans etc. to build a church, but to do so without involving the Lord in prayer and being led by the Holy Spirit results in dependence on yourself not the Lord. Nowhere in the Scripture does the Lord want us to depend on ourselves. Psalm 127:1 says, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.”*And Romans 8:14 says, “For *all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.”*

  Today our story has three parts and our theme addresses those three parts. Our first story is about the Roman Centurion Cornelius and how God has been working in his life, the second story is God opening Peter’s eyes to think differently, and our third story involves new ministry opportunities because God goes before us and opens our eyes. And now a story from God’s word.

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

4 Cornelius 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. 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.”

7 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.

**Doug and Karyn Brock**

*Peter’s Vision*

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

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

15 The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” 16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. 17 While 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. 18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. 19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. 20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” 21 Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?”

22 The 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 have you come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” 23 Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

*Peter at Cornelius’ House*

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

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

30 Cornelius answered: “Four 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 31 and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32 Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ 33 So 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.”

34 Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism 35 but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. 36 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. 37 You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— 38 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.

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 tree, 40 but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. 41 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. 42 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. 43 All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. 45 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. 46 For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

Then Peter said, 47 “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.” 48 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. A story from God’s word.

**Bob and Marlene Holtz**

 I want to begin our message today by looking at our first part of our story where we are introduced to this man named Cornelius. First, he is a Roman and then a soldier and not just any soldier but one that has a significant rank in the military. What else do we learn about this man Cornelius?

* He is God fearing…he and his entire family.
* He is a man of prayer who prays regularly.
* He is a man who worships God - who believes in the same God as the Hebrews - who has rejected the pagan gods of the Romans and has surrendered to the God of Israel.
* He is a man who leads his family in worship. He is the spiritual leader of his home.
* He is a person of influence…it says one of his soldiers was devout.
* He is a man who is gracious and provides resources for the poor and needy.
* He is a humble man who is open to being led by the Holy Spirit.

 Although Cornelius was part of Rome who were conquers of Israel…the God of Israel had conquered the heart of Cornelius. In God’s grace, He had stationed Cornelius in a place where he could learn about God. God chose a Roman of all people to spread the Gospel…to build His church. Wasn't it the Romans who had been terrorizing the Jews for almost a hundred years? Wasn't it also a company of Roman soldier's that flogged Jesus and nailed him to the Cross? How could God use them to start a spiritual movement?

 Our first thought is this…**God is like a spiritual gardener preparing you and those he calls you to minister to.** Jesus says in *John 15:1, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”* God was preparing Cornelius by getting him ready for his future work as he prepared his spiritual foundation. God was also preparing people of peace that he would be able to share the good news of Jesus with. As God was preparing him he had to learn how to be faithful and obedient because God was inviting him into something great…something beyond his imagination. Are we any different? Think for a minute…How is God preparing your heart and the heart of our church for a harvest of souls and He wants to involve us in his work. Part of preparation is not giving up when it becomes difficult, but to see difficulty as a time of refinement and a time to look to the cross. In many ways Light of Christ at this time is a mustard seed…but a mustard seed has amazing potential when it is planted in the ground.

 As we humble ourselves and lay ourselves down and what we want, God calls us to pick up His plan and what He wants for our life. We are in the midst of a new football season…who do you want to call the plays for your life and the life of our church…yourself…or the creator and master of the universe. God is calling all of us to give up calling our own plays…but that takes humility…we must be teachable. That is the humility Cornelius had...the humility to be led by the Spirit.

**Mike and Deb Malooly**

 Our next story is where Peter has a vision with the four legged animals, reptiles, the birds that for a Jew to eat any of these would be unclean. The Lord told Peter three times to get up and eat. Just at that moment when Peter was trying to figure out what the Lord was telling him the men Cornelius had sent were at the gate. Later as they go on their way back to the house of Cornelius Peter says, *He said to them: “You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.* **God loves to challenge our way of thinking.** Think about how the Lord is challenging our way of thinking about what a church should be about, and what it should look like. The Lord is calling us to not just build a church, but to build the Kingdom and be Kingdom minded. Ministry in the Market Place is going where the fish are, being a volunteer at a Public school is a way of showing the love of Jesus not by words, but by your actions. The possible planting of house churches in our community like they did in the book of Acts to reach people in a much different way than what we are used to. As all of these ministries unfold them may not look like what you thought they should look like…but they look like what God wants them to look like.

 All these ways of ministry are a new way of reaching people with the good news of Jesus verses church is just inviting people to your facility on Sunday. You see as you follow the lead of the Holy Spirit He is going to lead you to be more fruitful in the Kingdom.

 In our last part of the story Peter arrives at the house of Cornelius where he had gathered a large number of friends and relatives to hear what Peter had to say to them. Cornelius recounts his vision to Peter and then Peter began to tell the people about the good news of peace through Jesus Christ and how they crucified Jesus but he rose again on the third day. Then while Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came on all of them as they listen to the message of Jesus and they began to praise God and pray in tongues. Then they proceeded to baptize them.

 Our last thought is **God opens new Doors – If we are ready to receive and rejoice**. Isn’t that what happened to Peter? God was at work in his life and the life of Cornelius, he challenged Peter’s way of thinking and when Peter obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit the Lord opened new doors of ministry reaching people with the Gospel. I believe at this time the Lord is challenging our way of thinking about church here at Light of Christ.

* Where is the Lord working in your life? Where is the Lord at work in our church?
* Where is He challenging your old way of thinking? Where is he challenging us collectively in our old way of thinking?
* Think of the new opportunities to build the Kingdom of God the Lord has for you as you humble yourself to his plan. Think of the new opportunities the Lord has for Light of Christ as we humble ourselves collectively to God’s plan. Amen.

Thoughts:

* Take time to work on your part of the message and become familiar with it.
* Story: It works best when you know you part of the story from memory.
* Preaching part: Feel free to add your own thoughts as the Lord directs you.
* Spend some time praying about what the Lord has for you.
* You have a certain part of the message for a reason…God always seems to know who should go where. Take some time to pray into that and what additional thoughts the Lord may want you to add.
* Paula and I will be praying for you also.
* Thank you for being part of this special message.