

February 8, 2009

Acts 10

Moving Out of Your Comfort Zone

The Call of Christ into His Mission:

The Reorientation of Vocation

My identity:

Boundaries:

What is on the sheet God is lowering in front of you?

The story John read in the sermon is attached. Try rereading it and journaling about how Jesus is calling you/us to love.

Your Story

What foods have you had the opportunities to try that are out of the norm for our culture? How was that experience?

God's Story

Read Acts 10

In what ways do you identify with Cornelius? In what ways do you identify with Peter?

What evidence do you see in this scripture that God was sending the message to Peter that the Jewish Christians were meant to be witnesses to the good news of Jesus and not just the receivers of it? (Talk about the vision given to Peter and all the characters involved in the story told in this entire chapter.)

Jesus & Us in The Story Together

Share one thing that John said in the sermon that caught your attention.

The vision given to Peter is not just about food. It is also about identity. Make a list (to the left) of those things that form your identity.

What would it mean for you to abandon your identity?

In what ways do you create boundaries through these identities as a means of protecting yourself?

Is God asking you to break down any of these boundaries? If so, how can you go about doing this?

At the end of the sermon, when John had us close our eyes and imagine God lowering a sheet in front of us, what did you see on your sheet?

Is it something or someone that you say 'yuck' to? Is your response, like Peter, "Surely not, Lord?" Is God calling you to look in a new way at something or somebody? What do think God would never put on the sheet because it is too "impure or unclean"?

God was patient and persistent with Peter. The vision of the sheet was repeated three times. Peter denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times. Is there something God is bringing to your attention repeatedly? What response is God looking for from you?

The transformation that takes place in Peter begins with the vision, God bringing something to his attention, but it doesn't come to completion until he interacts with Cornelius and the Gentiles with him. Peter is transformed and the entire community of believers is transformed. Are you open to being transformed by someone unexpected? Why or Why not?

Pray Together!

Are you willing to ask God to continue showing you where you are putting up barriers rather than being a loving presence and witnessing to the good news of Jesus?

In the sermon, John read the following story that Tony Compolo told about a friend of his. It is the story of a pastor conducting a funeral for a homosexual man.

“(My friend) said, "About 25 homosexual men came and sat there. Never once, Tony, did they ever look up at me. The whole time I spoke their heads were down and they were looking at the floor. Never once did they ever make eye contact with me all during the funeral. We went out and got in some cars and we followed the hearse out to the cemetery where we lowered the body into the grave. I stood on one side of the grave. These 25 some homosexual men stood on the other side: standing there like statues, neither looking to the right or to the left, looking straight out into infinity. Never budging just sitting there, standing there rigid like statues. I read some scripture. I said some prayers. I committed the body to the grave. I said the benediction and I started to move – to walk away, but they didn't move. They stood there as though frozen so I came back and I said, 'Excuse me, is there anything else I can do?'"

"And one of the men said, 'Yes. I never go to church. Used to go to church but I don't go to church. The only thing I really liked about church was when they read from the Bible, especially the King James. I like the King James. You didn't read the 23rd Psalm. I thought they always read that at funerals. Could you read the 23rd Psalm?'"

So my friend opened the Bible and read the 23rd Psalm. Another man said, "There's a passage in the 3rd chapter of John about being born again. I like that passage."

So he read that. Then a third man said, "The 8th chapter of Romans, right at the end, that's what keeps me going."

And so my friend read to these homosexual men. "Neither height nor depth, neither principalities nor powers, neither things present, nor things to come, nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing. And when he told me that, I hurt. I hurt, because I knew that these men wanted to hear the Bible but would never step foot inside a church because they are convinced that church people despise them. And do you know why they think church people despise them? Because church people despise them.

I am not approving of homosexual behavior. I am disapproving of a church that has forgotten how to love people that Jesus will never stop loving. And if you don't like it, join another club but don't call yourself a member of the church of Jesus Christ for we are the community of lovers and we love all kinds of people with all kinds of sin and that's your good fortune and mine too, for where would we be without such a church. And I want it to be the church that Christ wants it to be."