

'Christians are called to continue God's barrier-breaking ministry'

The sermon.

- **Q:** What does this mean for you? How does this play out in your life? Are there people you are being called to change your attitude about? What does it mean for St Andrew's as we consider a new Sunday service pattern? What does this passage tell us about God and change?

PRAYERS

Spirit of the living God,

Come afresh on your holy land.

Help your people to restore broken relationships.

Give them patience to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust;

ability to discern personal prejudices and the courage to overcome fear.

Teach them to respect each other's integrity and rights so that your kingdom may be established on earth.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Rt Rev'd Riah Abu El-Assal, Bishop of Jerusalem

Pray not for Arab or Jew,

for Palestinian or Israeli,

but pray rather for ourselves,

that we might not

divide them in our prayers

but keep them both together

in our hearts.

When races fight

PEACE BE AMONG US

When neighbours argue

PEACE BE AMONG US

When nations disagree

PEACE BE AMONG US

Where people struggle for justice

LET JUSTICE PREVAIL

As Christ's disciples

LET PEACE BE OUR WAY

AMEN

St Andrew's Goldsworth Park

Sunday 17 April 2016

Kate Wyles

'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.'

study notes

Acts 11.1-18

A gift for all people

A gift for all people

Acts 11.1-18 'Peter explains his actions'

Opener

A. Who can you think of who has broken down barriers between people during the 20 and 21 Centuries? Who do you think is the most significant figure and why?

Or

B. Are there any people in your field of work or experience who you remember as a person who pushed forward the boundaries. Can you share something about them with the group?

The Apostle Peter

'Because of his loud, impetuous character - because he lives life 'out there' Peter is a great resource to us disciples today. We can learn from him; the risks he took, from the times he sunk, stumbled, denied, failed. And we can learn that God doesn't give up on people! Here in Acts we are seeing what God can do with all that raw material of our characters - if we are willing.' The sermon.

Q: How do you respond to the character of Peter? What changes do you see in Peter from the man we meet in the Gospels to the man we meet in Acts?

Read all of Acts 10 and also Acts 11.1-18

'From their earliest days the Jewish people were taught that they were chosen people; chosen by God. As God's chosen people they have to keep themselves holy - unpolluted - so that God's light will shine and illuminate the world through their godly - separate living. The sermon.

Q: What are the boundaries that God is asking Peter to cross in this reading? Why is this difficult for him?

Notice four ways that Peter opens up to this 'new thing that God is doing'.

1. It starts with prayer
2. God calls and Peter goes ('without raising any objections')

3. Peter listens to the strangers when he gets there. (Acts 10.29: 'May I ask why you sent for me?')
4. Peter is ready to explain the Gospel. Both to the Romans/ Cornelius' household and to the 'circumcised believers' back in Jerusalem.

Q: Do you agree that this is how 'Peter opens up to the things of God?' Are there other things that you notice help him?

It all starts with prayer— *'Prayer has to be at the heart of a Christian's life and the heart of the church... Prayer is the place where we grow more like Jesus - it is God's changing room.'* The sermon.

Q: To what extent is prayer at the centre of your life as a family/ an individual/ a small group and a church? What help might you need for prayer to become increasingly 'central' in your life of faith. (Please let Kate know if there are any resources you need).

God calls and Peter goes

Do you know of people who have responded in this way—without objection? Have there been times in your life when you have? Share something of your experience.

Peter listens to the strangers when he gets there. Q: What is the result of Peter's listening at Cornelius' house?

Peter explains the Good News - both in Joppa and Jerusalem.

Q: What is 'new' about the Good News for believers in Jerusalem?

'Jesus disciples had heard Jesus say that many would come into God's Kingdom - from the east and west, from the south and north... but they imagined that in order to do that they'd have to become just like them - to follow Jewish cultural rules and practices and to turn their back on their own culture, and background, upbringing. To become assimilated! Through his vision Peter has made an immense leap from the old position to this new understanding - that God has no favourites.' The sermon (see 10.35 & 36)