

The Holy Spirit Enables Us to See Others the Way Jesus Sees Them

Message 03 in the series: "Marvels of Acts"

1. An angel told a Gentile to send for Peter who could tell him the Good News about Jesus.

"In Caesarea there lived a Roman army officer named Cornelius, who was a captain of the Italian Regiment. He was a devout, God-fearing man, as was everyone in his household. He gave generously to the poor and prayed regularly to God. One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. 'Cornelius!'... 'Your prayers and gifts to the poor have been received by God as an offering! Now send some men to Joppa, and summon a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a tanner who lives near the seashore.' As soon as the angel was gone, Cornelius called two of his household servants... and sent them off to Joppa." Acts 10:1-8 (NLT)

Life Application: God didn't give the task of evangelizing the world to angels. He gave it to us. "...Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone." Mark 16:15 (NLT)

2. God sent a vision to Peter that changed the way he saw Gentiles.

"The next day as Cornelius's messengers were nearing the town, Peter went up on the flat roof to pray. It was about noon, and he was hungry. But while a meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw the sky open, and something like a large sheet was let down by its four corners. In the sheet were all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds. Then a voice said to him, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat them.' 'No, Lord,' Peter declared. 'I have never eaten anything that our Jewish laws have declared impure and unclean.' But the voice spoke again: 'Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean.' The same vision was repeated three times. Then the sheet was suddenly pulled up to heaven. Peter was very perplexed. What could the vision mean? Just then the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house. Standing outside the gate, they asked if a man named Simon Peter was staying there. Meanwhile, as Peter was puzzling over the vision, the Holy Spirit said to him, 'Three men have come looking for you. Get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitation. Don't worry, for I have sent them.'" Acts 10:9-20 (NLT)

a. Peter was an ordinary man through whom God did extraordinary things.

"As Peter entered his home, Cornelius fell at his feet and worshiped him. But Peter pulled him up and said, 'Stand up! I'm a human being just like you!' So they talked together and went inside, where many others were assembled." Acts 10:25-27 (NLT)

Note: God loves to accomplish His work through ordinary people.

"...God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God." 1 Corinthians 1: 27-29 (NLT)

b. God used Peter to tell Cornelius about Jesus and Cornelius to help Peter see Gentiles as valuable to God.

"Peter told them, 'You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.'... 'I see very clearly that God shows no favoritism. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. This is the message of Good News for the people of Israel—that there is peace with God through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all... He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name.' Even as Peter was saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles, too. For they heard them speaking in other tongues and praising God. Then Peter asked, 'Can anyone object to their being baptized, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as we did?' So he gave orders for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ." Acts 10:28-48a (NLT)

Note: Jesus sees our world as a fallen creation filled with lost sinners who desperately need to be brought back into a right relationship with God.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Matthew 9:36 (NLT)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10 (NIV)

“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” Luke 23:34 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to let the Holy Spirit transform the way we think about sinners we don’t like.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:2 (NLT)

3. God used Peter’s experience with Cornelius to change the way the entire church saw Gentiles.

“Soon the news reached the apostles and other believers in Judea that the Gentiles had received the word of God. But when Peter arrived back in Jerusalem, the Jewish believers criticized him. ‘You entered the home of Gentiles and even ate with them!’ they said. Then Peter told them exactly what had happened... ‘As I began to speak... the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord’s words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God’s way?’ When the others heard this, they stopped objecting and began praising God. They said, ‘We can see that God has also given the Gentiles the privilege of repenting of their sins and receiving eternal life.’”

Acts 11:1-4, 15-18 (NLT)

Life Application: We need to ask God to help us see others with love and compassion.

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” 1 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)

Life Application: We need to let the Holy Spirit fill us and give us a passionate desire to help lost sinners come to Jesus.

“...give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word... After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.”

Acts 4:29b, 31 (NLT)

“...God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. How often do you pray for opportunities to talk to others about your faith? What would help you pray about this more often?
2. Jews had nothing to do with Gentiles during Bible times. What kind of people do you find it difficult, if not impossible, to relate to? How would you feel if God told you to invite someone from this group to join you for worship?
3. Read Acts 10. Who do you relate to more in this story, Peter or Cornelius? Why?
4. Read Mathew 28:19-20 and Mark 16:15. Why doesn’t God just send angels to tell everyone about Jesus?
5. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-27. Why do you think God loves to demonstrate His power and grace through ordinary people?
6. Discuss the following passages:
 - Matthew 9:36
 - Luke 19:10
 - Luke 23:34

What would it take for us to see lost people the same way Jesus did? (see Romans 12:2)

7. Read Acts 11:1-18. Spend some time as a group praying for our church to be a welcoming place to lost sinners, no matter who they are.