

Summary

This sermon explores Acts 10, the story of Peter's vision and his encounter with Cornelius, a Roman centurion. The message reveals how God refuses to be confined to our expectations and boxes. Through three scenes - Cornelius receiving a vision, Peter's rooftop revelation about clean and unclean foods, and their eventual meeting - we see that God works in unexpected people and places before we arrive. The sermon emphasizes that before God works through us, He must work in us, breaking down internal barriers like pride, cultural bias, and comfort zones. Peter's transformation from seeing the vision as about food to understanding it was about people demonstrates how God challenges our assumptions about who He can save and use.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together today, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us. Help us to set aside our preconceived notions and boxes we've created, and instead be receptive to Your Spirit's leading. Lord, we acknowledge that You are bigger than our understanding and that Your ways are higher than our ways. Prepare our hearts to receive whatever truth You have for us today, and give us the courage to respond in obedience. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

Share about a time you had to move or help someone move. What was the most random or mysterious item you found in a 'miscellaneous' box?

Key Verses

1. Acts 10:34-35
2. Acts 10:15
3. Acts 10:28

Questions

1. How does Cornelius's story challenge our assumptions about who God is working in around us?
2. Peter argued with God three times about eating unclean food. When have you found yourself resisting what God was asking you to do?
3. What 'boxes' or categories do you think you might have put God in regarding how He works or who He uses?
4. The sermon mentioned that 'someone else's salvation might depend on our transformation.' How does this statement impact you?
5. What internal barriers (pride, cultural bias, comfort zones, etc.) might God need to address in your life before He can use you more effectively?

6. Peter thought the vision was about food, but it was really about people. Can you think of a time when God was teaching you something deeper than what initially appeared on the surface?
7. How does knowing that 'God always goes first' change your perspective on sharing your faith with others?
8. What would it look like practically for you to step out of your comfort zone to reach someone who might be different from you?

Life Application

This week, identify one person in your life who might be 'closer to faith than you think' - someone God might already be working in. Pray for them daily and ask God to show you how He might want to use you in their story. Also, spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any internal barriers or 'boxes' you've created that might be limiting your effectiveness in reaching others.

Key Takeaways

1. God works in people we don't expect, in places we don't see, long before we get there
2. Before God works through us, He wants to work in us - addressing internal barriers and assumptions
3. God's heart has always been for every nation, every culture, every person - He refuses to be contained by our categories
4. Sometimes the greatest barrier to someone hearing the gospel is unfinished work God needs to do inside of us
5. God is still going before us, working in us, and sending us into unexpected places to reach unexpected people

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for this powerful reminder that You are not limited by our boxes or expectations. We confess the ways we have tried to contain You and control how You work. Help us to surrender our assumptions and prejudices to You. Give us hearts that are open to the people You are already working in around us. Transform us from the inside out so that we can be effective ambassadors of Your love and grace. Send us boldly into the places and to the people You are calling us to reach. May we never forget that You go before us and that Your heart is for all people. Use us as instruments of Your love and truth. In Your precious name we pray, Amen.