



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

VOLUME TWO, PART TWO
ACTS 9:32 - 12:25

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A small ember faintly glowed in Jerusalem. A carpenter, seeming to be a common man, collected a few faithful followers showing them what life was meant to look like. But as soon as these followers caught His brilliant vision, their joy and hope would seem crushed upon a Roman cross, because the powers and principalities would stop at nothing to snuff out His beauty and goodness. This is not how most stories begin . . .

But just when it seemed as if the shadows had grown to replace the light, a tomb is robbed of it's death and a risen Savior illuminates hope. Now these followers of Jesus are called to pick up and carry the vision and movement forward into the darkness of this world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they carry the spark of Jesus' vision outward, proclaiming this Good News of a King on a Cross to their city, their people, their enemies, and to the ends of the earth. And what began as a glowing ember in an upper room would gather into a blazing and consuming firestorm of witness across time and space, telling the tale of this carpenter, this risen Savior, the very Son of God.

These are the Acts of the Apostles.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SESSION ONE - 04

Acts 9:32-43

SESSION TWO - 10

Acts 10:1-20

SESSION THREE - 16

Acts 10:21-48

SESSION FOUR - 24

Acts 11:1-30

SESSION FIVE - 30

Acts 12:1-19

SESSION SIX - 36

Acts 12:20-25

SESSION SEVEN - 42

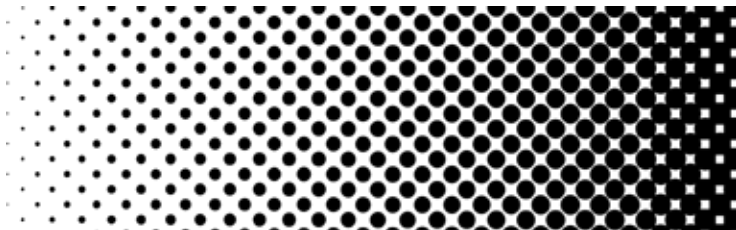
Palm Sunday

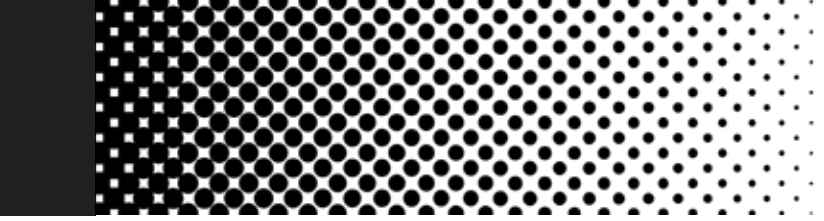
NAME

SESSION 1

³² Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. ³³ There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. ³⁴ And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. ³⁵ And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶ Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. ³⁷ In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ³⁸ Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay."





³⁹ So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them.

⁴⁰ But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

⁴² And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

INTRODUCTION

An abrupt shift from Saul to Peter occurs in this session. Even though the scene changes back to Peter, it marks a progression. Saul, who traveled a distance from Jerusalem on a mission for the religious elite, has been converted to proclaiming the name of Jesus. Now, Peter is pictured continuing north of Jerusalem as well, as Luke pulls back the curtain on the unfolding story.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Map the locations and people performing signs and wonders in the book of Acts so far (Acts 2:43; 3:3-10; 5:12-16; 6:8; 8:4-7, 13; 9:17-19).
2. Read Luke 5:17-26 and compare to the story here in Acts 9:33-35. We have seen several instances where a disciple is likened to Jesus. How does Peter look like Jesus here? How is Peter definitely NOT like Jesus here?
3. In a similar way, read Luke 8:40-42, 49-56. Who was present with Jesus? Find the common features of the two sections.
4. Read Numbers 19:11-19. Why is there no explanation of Peter following Jewish custom in the raising of Tabitha?

5. The text says "a disciple named Tabitha." Thinking back through the Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts so far, discuss the attitude of Christianity toward women. If you can, give specific references.
6. Several widows are mourning Tabitha. Read Exodus 22:22-24 and Deuteronomy 10:18. What is the LORD's disposition toward widows? What might we assume about Tabitha knowing these texts?
7. Have you ever imagined who might be in attendance around your deathbed? Who's there and why?
8. Considering the temple in Jerusalem was the primary place of divine activity, what do these miracles say based upon geography? How does this relate to what Peter later wrote in 1 Peter 2:2-5?

CARRYING THE TORCH



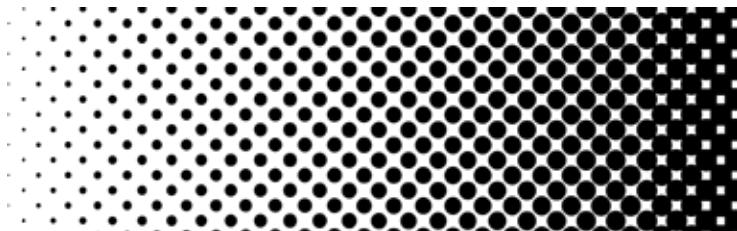
Paralyzed to walking. Death to life. This session could seem like a random aside about miracles, but if we look closer there is something greater going on. Like roots sprouting from the seed of the gospel, we have multiple stories that show how God is moving people outward by His Spirit. When we look closely, these are far-reaching echoes of Jesus' own miracles, and when people see the results of these signs, they come to Him. Our text says "all the residents of Lydda and Sharon" turned to the Lord, and "many believed in the Lord" in Joppa.

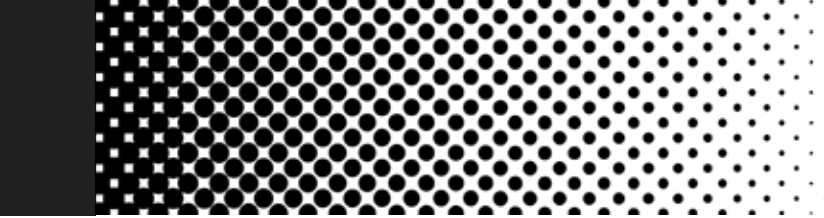
Do we want this to happen in our neighborhoods? Do we pray for such things like Peter on his knees for the life of Tabitha? How can your actions meet your prayers for the life of your neighbors this week?

SESSION 2

¹At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea." ⁷When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and





something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." ¹⁵ And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." ¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

¹⁷ Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean, behold, the men who were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood at the gate ¹⁸ and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

¹⁹ And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. ²⁰ Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus' Acts 1:8 commission continues to unfold, the gospel has reached the Samaritans, an Ethiopian eunuch and even the death-breathing Pharisee, Saul. Now, we meet Cornelius, a Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea, a city built as a tribute to Caesar Augustus by Herod the Great. This Roman coastal city stands in contrast to the ancient Jewish port of Joppa, where we last saw Peter.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What details do we learn about Cornelius and his character? Why might these details be significant in the story?
2. We read about Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8. How do Cornelius and Simon compare as influential figures to those around them? What key differences stand out?
3. Luke 7:1-10 recounts another centurion's story. Aside from their shared vocation, what similarities do you notice between this man and Cornelius?
4. God sends an angel to Cornelius, yet He chooses Peter to proclaim the gospel to him in person. How does this connect to Romans 10:11-15 and what are the implications for us today?
5. Why do you think Luke tells us Cornelius' receives divine contact before Peter? How does this fit the progress of the gospel in Acts so far?

6. Before giving Cornelius instructions, the angel confirms that his prayers and alms have ascended before God. Why do you think this was important for Cornelius to hear?
7. Cornelius promptly obeys God's command. Although Cornelius' messengers didn't receive the command directly from God, they obeyed. Who trusts your character and witness enough to go when you ask? What makes you worthy of this trust?
8. Read Leviticus 11. This is where much of the food laws are located. Considering the parties involved, is Peter's vision about food or something else? Explain.
9. What is the (twice mentioned) city that Peter is in when he has his vision? A prophet from the Old Testament also started off from this same city. Who was it?

CARRYING THE TORCH



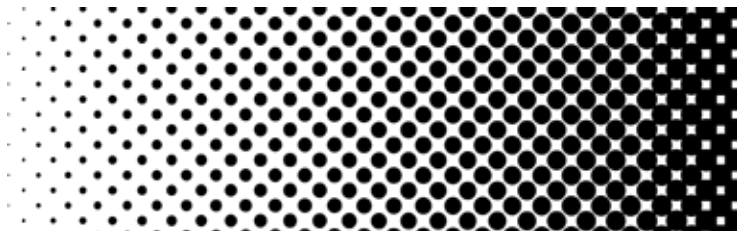
Cornelius was generous to the poor, devoted to prayer, and respected by those around him. Yet, despite his sincere faith and righteous deeds, something was still missing. Even when God sent an angel to him, the message wasn't the gospel itself, but a command to seek out Peter. This passage challenges us to see beyond outward "goodness" and recognize the deeper need for salvation in those around us. We know people like Cornelius. People who are kind, moral, perhaps even spiritually-minded, but do they know Jesus? Human goodness doesn't save; only through Christ can anyone, no matter how upright they seem, be made right with God. Our calling is to be faithful witnesses, even to those who seem to have it all together.

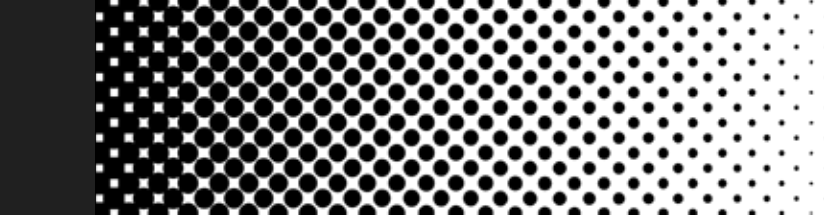
Who in your life appears "good" but has never spoken the name of Jesus? Pray for boldness. Ask questions. You may find a fellow Christ-follower or you may be fulfilling Jesus' call to be His witness to the end of the earth.

SESSION 3

²¹ And Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for. What is the reason for your coming?”

²² And they said, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” ²³ So he invited them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went away with them, and some of the brothers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴ And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. ²⁶ But Peter lifted him up, saying, “Stand up; I too am a man.” ²⁷ And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered.





²⁸ And he said to them, “You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.”

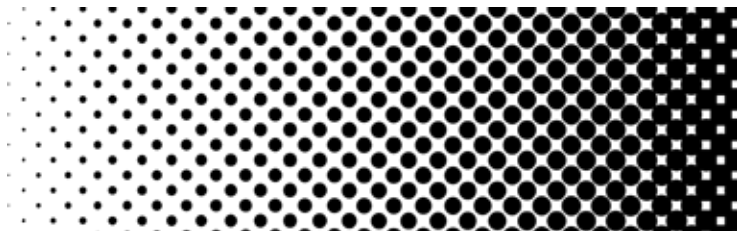
³⁰ And Cornelius said, “Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. ³² Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.”

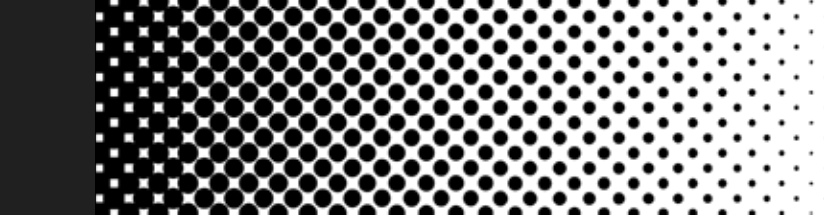
ACTS 10:21-48

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SESSION 3 CONT.

³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), ³⁷ you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.





⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.” ⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

INTRODUCTION

Peter invites them in for the night and the whole entourage, six from Peter's side, the two servants, and a soldier from Cornelius, depart the next day. It is likely several hours of these ten people walking together, Jew and Gentile wondering what was going to happen when they arrived. As a reader, we should have eager expectations along with those on the journey—what is God up to?

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. There are three situations from Acts 9:32 to Acts 10:23 that likely rendered Peter ritually unclean. Identify them. How might this chain of events fit with Peter's vision and the story of Cornelius?
2. From the retelling of visions in this session, did either Peter or Cornelius know the purpose of the divine encounters? Explain.
3. What are some significant differences between Peter's message to his own people in Acts 2:14-41 and the message to Cornelius in Acts 10:34-45? Now compare the responses of those hearing Peter in each case.
4. Who was the last person in Acts to come to Caesarea? What might be the importance of this?

5. Compare the story of Cornelius with the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch from Acts 8:26-40. What are some of the most interesting commonalities and differences?

6. Go back and read Acts 10:1 and consider Cornelius' occupation and position. What makes this conversion story so powerful? Is this just a Gentile conversion story or is it something greater? Explain.

7. Now, compare Peter and Cornelius to Jonah and Nineveh as referenced in last session. How do these stories speak to God's ongoing plan?

CARRYING THE TORCH

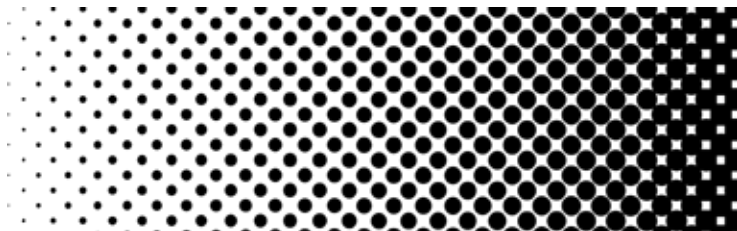


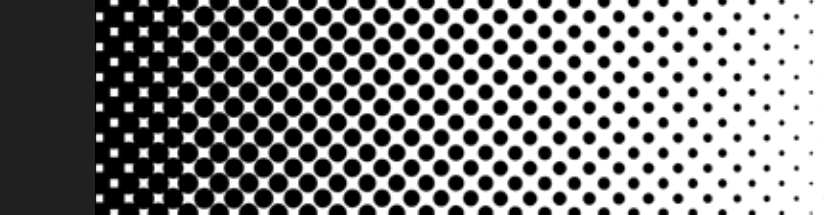
God continues to orchestrate the movement in Acts. Luke is telling the stories in such a way that we can't miss the fact that the Holy Spirit is like a conductor bringing the pieces of the symphony together, each player being instructed to do his part. It should make us consider how much we are willing to trust Him. Both Peter and Cornelius were obedient, in fact, they were obedient without really knowing the outcome. Peter had to stop thinking about what might make him ritually unclean. Cornelius, an image of Rome and its power over the world, had to trust that this Jewish man was an agent of the God he was worshiping from afar.

Before we approach the Lord's Table this week, ask yourself where your trust in God could be stronger. Pray that He would help your unbelief and share with someone who can help you stay on track.

SESSION 4

¹ Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, ³ “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ ¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” ¹⁸ When they heard these things





they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³ When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, ²⁴ for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

²⁷ Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁹ So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. ³⁰ And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

INTRODUCTION

Peter, having just witnessed the Holy Spirit falling on Gentiles, returns to Jerusalem where the circumcision party is concerned about preserving the holiness of the Jesus movement. And Luke shifts our attention to Antioch, a crossroads of commerce and culture, positioned on major trade routes connecting the Mediterranean to the East. Pagan worship, Hellenistic scholarship and Roman luxury dominated life, yet Judaism also thrived there. Here we see the stage set for the early church to take unlikely root beyond Israel's Promised Land.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Luke means by “the circumcision party”? Are they Christians? What did Peter say that changed their mind?
2. Compare Acts 5:38-39 to Acts 11:16-17. Compare and contrast the two different speakers and what seem to be their intentions.
3. In Acts 10:28 and Acts 11:3, it is no secret that Jews avoided close contact with Gentiles. Describe the tension between God’s desire for all nations to come to know Him and the need for His people to be “set apart.” What happens when God’s people create too much separation from culture? What happens when God’s people assimilate too much into culture? Which is your tendency?
4. Have you ever been surprised by someone becoming a Christian who you never thought would? What made it surprising?
5. A great number of people believed and turned to the Lord in this passage. Acts 2:38-47 and Acts 8:12-17 describe similar moments. How does true faith involve both trust and transformation? Where do you see this in your own life?

6. Barnabas sought out Saul to help him teach the growing church in Antioch. What are other examples in Scripture where ministry happens in pairs? How does working together strengthen a mission? How might we apply this principle in our own lives?
7. Agabus prophesied famine which we see also in Old Testament passages like Genesis 41 and Ruth 1. How has God used times of scarcity to shape His people? How has He used difficulties (financial, emotional or spiritual) to grow your faith?
8. The believers in Antioch gave “as each was able” to help those affected by the famine. How does this compare to other examples of generosity in Scripture? How does this challenge our view of giving today?
9. In this passage, we see God using persecution, relocation, encouragement, teaching, prophecy and generosity to advance His kingdom. Which of these speaks most to your life right now? How is Jesus inviting you to respond?

CARRYING THE TORCH



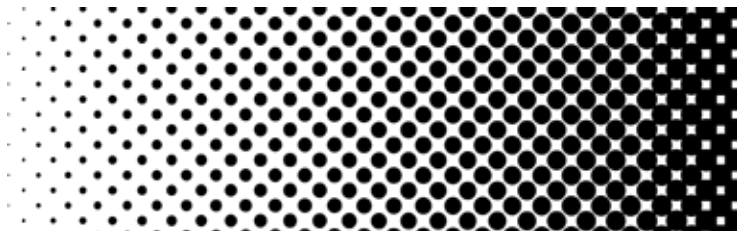
The spread of the gospel to the Gentiles and then to Antioch is clearly the sovereign work of God. Even amid persecution, the Lord's hand was on the believers, guiding them to new places and preparing hearts to receive the message of Jesus. The early church didn't rely on personal strategies but on the leading of the Holy Spirit. When Peter is called to Cornelius and when Barnabas is sent to Antioch, they didn't just see people gathering. They saw the grace of God at work. Peter, Barnabas, and Saul begin to disciple these new believers, uniting Jews and Gentiles in Christ.

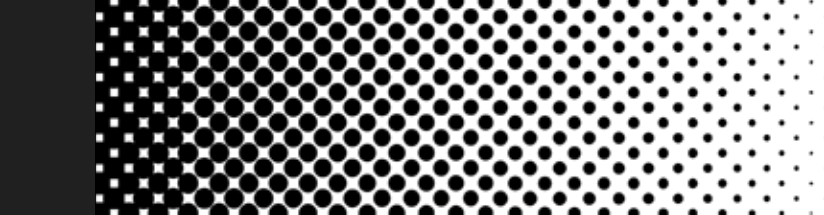
Today, we are called to the same dependence on God. Do we sincerely seek His direction in our daily lives and decisions? Or do we make plans and ask Him to bless them afterward? True unity comes when we surrender our will to His and follow Him. What area of your life do you need to surrender right now? How can you intentionally seek the Holy Spirit's guidance this week?

SESSION 5

¹About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ²He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

⁶Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." ⁹And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹When Peter





came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

¹² When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³ And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴ Recognizing Peter’s voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵ They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” ¹⁶ But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷ But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place. ¹⁸ Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹ And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there.

INTRODUCTION

New forces come on the scene, not just breathing murder against the Christians. The scene is horrific and can make us really ponder the situation. In God's providence and sovereignty we see James, brother of John, lose his life, yet Peter is miraculously saved.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Read Mark 14:1-2 and Mark 15:6-14. As a reader of Acts 12:3-4, what might a reader of the Gospel accounts expect Herod is going to do?
2. Peter has had visions, and the previous scene with Cornelius is proof. In Acts 12:9 it seems Peter may think this is another vision. One is a vision of God's desire to save Gentiles, and the other is a reality that God was saving Peter. Do both visions come true? How might this affect Peter's faith? How about our faith?
3. How do you respond to the fact that James was killed and Peter was saved? How should we respond and why? How is faith in Jesus critical in situations such as this? Explain.
4. In Acts 12 verses 5 and 12, Luke shows us how the early church prayed. What can we learn about how they prayed and when they prayed? How does this inform how we pray today?

5. Given God was already working behind the scenes, how should we think about our prayers and their purpose? Are they not important? Discuss.
6. Compare and contrast Saul's desire to stop Christians with Herod's. How were their motivations different?
7. Compare Herod's use of his soldiers with how Luke has described God's use of His agents (angels, apostles, and disciples) so far in the book of Acts.
8. Reading Acts 12:18-19, why would Herod kill the sentries? How does this compare with the previous "Herods" in the story of the Gospels? Describe how this same use of power is still prevalent today.

CARRYING THE TORCH



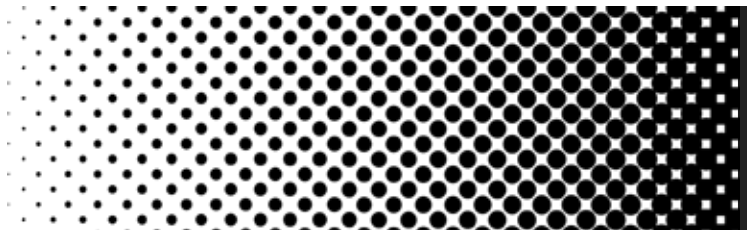
The scene so quickly breezes over the murder of James that it can knock the wind out of us. Is Luke being cavalier about death? Does God not care about such an important apostle? Of course He does. The point is, nothing will get in the way of what God is doing, not even the death of a powerful disciple. What about Peter's imprisonment with four squads of soldiers? That won't stop the Spirit of the Living God either. Herod uses his worldly power to destroy for his own benefit, even destroying his own soldiers. As seen in the last few sessions, God uses His Divine Power to save an enemy outsider, a leader of soldiers, to bring hope and joy to the world. Peter understands this as he would write,

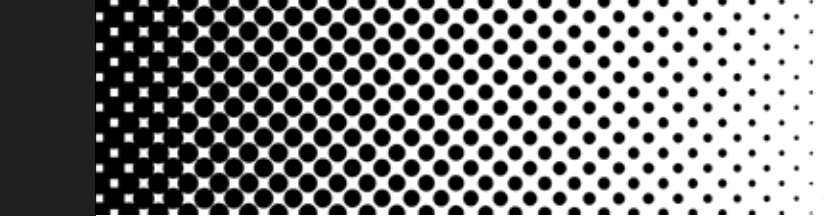
"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:3–5 (ESV)

Do you underestimate God's love for you? Do you question if He loves you less than others? Spend time this week recognizing that the Cross of Christ represents an inheritance, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. It is kept in heaven for you by the One who would give His life for those to whom He owes nothing.

SESSION 6

²⁰ Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. ²¹ On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²² And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!"





²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. ²⁴But the word of God increased and multiplied. ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark.

INTRODUCTION

It may seem unusual, but Luke continues the story of Herod in this session. It is a vision not only of his royalty and power, but a powerful statement about his divinely enacted death. While it is a short treatment of someone who does not believe in Jesus, it is a cautionary tale that is valuable for Christians as well. God is not to be trifled with.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Go through the scenes in Luke and Acts that include the “angel of the Lord” (Luke 1:11; 2:9, Acts 5:19; 8:26; 12:7; 12:23). How would you define the actions of this divine messenger? Can you easily differentiate the messenger’s divine activities from God’s activities?
2. Read Daniel 4:28-37. Compare with Herod in today’s passage and discuss how God responds to human pride.
3. What is the reason that Herod was struck down? Describe what you think is meant by the term. Why is it important?
4. Read Proverbs 3:34-35, 1 Peter 5:5, and James 4:6-10. What are ways that pride has caused you to stumble? What are some strategies that you have used to fight your own pride?

5. Compare this scene to Acts 5:1-11. How are the scenes different? What is the reason for God's intervention in each?
6. Should this scene about the graphic demise of Herod comfort us? Why/why not?
7. Read Romans 12:17-19. Whose vengeance applies in Acts 12:20-24? Would you say you are vengeful? Explain.
8. The idea of "multiplication" and "increase" as it relates to God and His church has been used several times (Acts 2:41; 2:47; 5:14; 6:7; 9:31; 11:24). How is this time different?

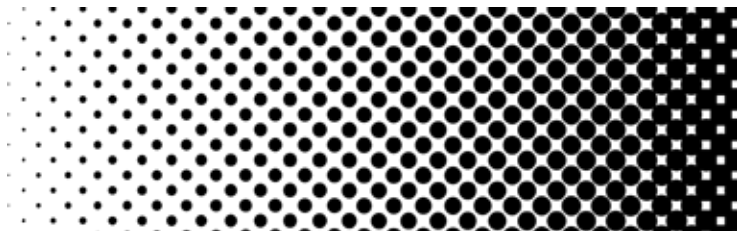
CARRYING THE TORCH

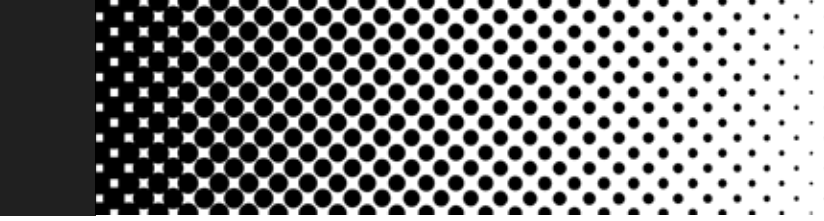


Luke closes out the story of this Herod and it is pretty graphic. It would seem that as he sows with violence and discord, so he also reaps. While we may want to see God serve justice on behalf of James, Luke simply says that Herod received what he did “because he did not give God the glory.” Maybe part of Herod’s fate includes answering for his murderous ways, but we are reminded that God is the one who gets justice. Vengeance is His. But here’s the thing. Whether Nebuchadnezzar, Herod, or us, pride is a tricky beast. While it can seem relatively easy to seek out sins like lying, coveting, stealing, and so forth, pride can sit in ambush and remain undetected. Chasing pride is like digging a hole on the beach at low tide. Every day it gets covered up again and requires more digging.

Have you recognized pride in your life? Have you considered how it interferes with your proclamation of Jesus’ name? This week, ask someone close to you where they think you may be leaning into your own pride rather than the Spirit of the Living God.

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say this: ‘The Lord has need of it.’ ” ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ And they said, “The Lord has need of it.” ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road.





³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” ³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

INTRODUCTION

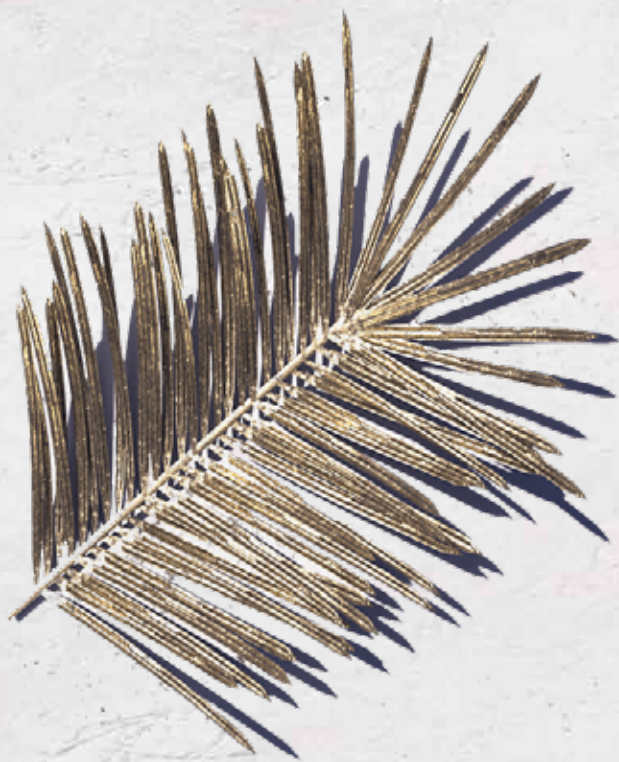
This day represents the coming of the King back to His people. But what begins as a time of celebration and welcome of a King will take a dark turn to a place of rejection and death. Palm Sunday is a perfect time to think about the way we live. How will the time between Palm Sunday and Good Friday affect our trust in Jesus Christ when we understand what He has done and what He is calling us to be? Will our loyalty diminish out of fear of following Him or will we be more bold in His name?



REFLECTIONS



1. If you have participated in the Lenten season, how has your fasting or abstaining gone? Has it been easy or hard? Have you used the time to connect with the Lord?
2. What things have you put off, minimized, or simply rejected as parts of your living out a Christian life? Explain.
3. What makes Good Friday good? Why has this been a rhythm for every Christian for over 2000 years?
4. What is the difference between simply proclaiming a belief in Jesus on Sunday and having a life transformed by Him during the week?
5. What are you planning to do this week that would give this sacred time the weight that it deserves? How might you invite others to join you?

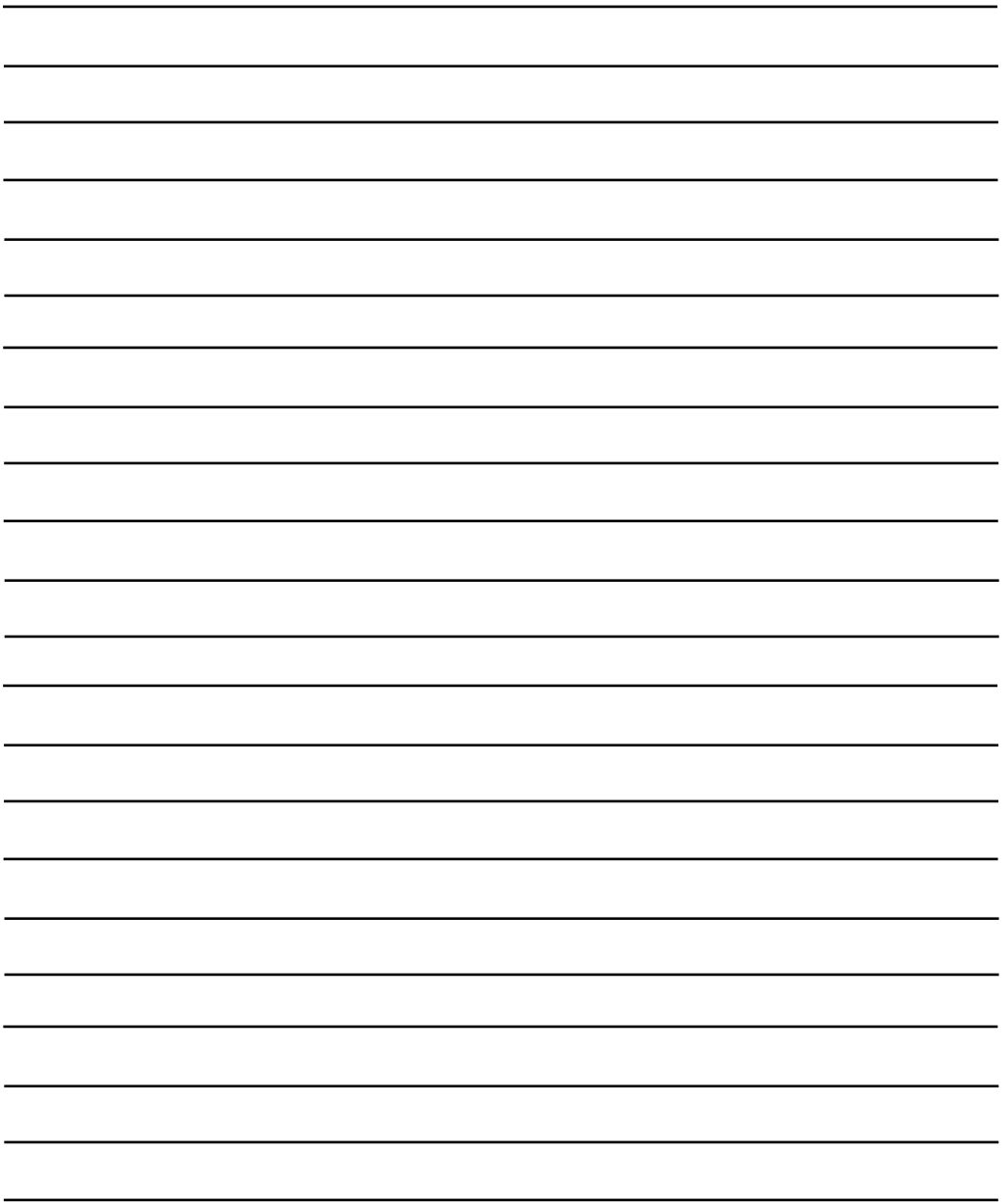


P A L M S U N D A Y

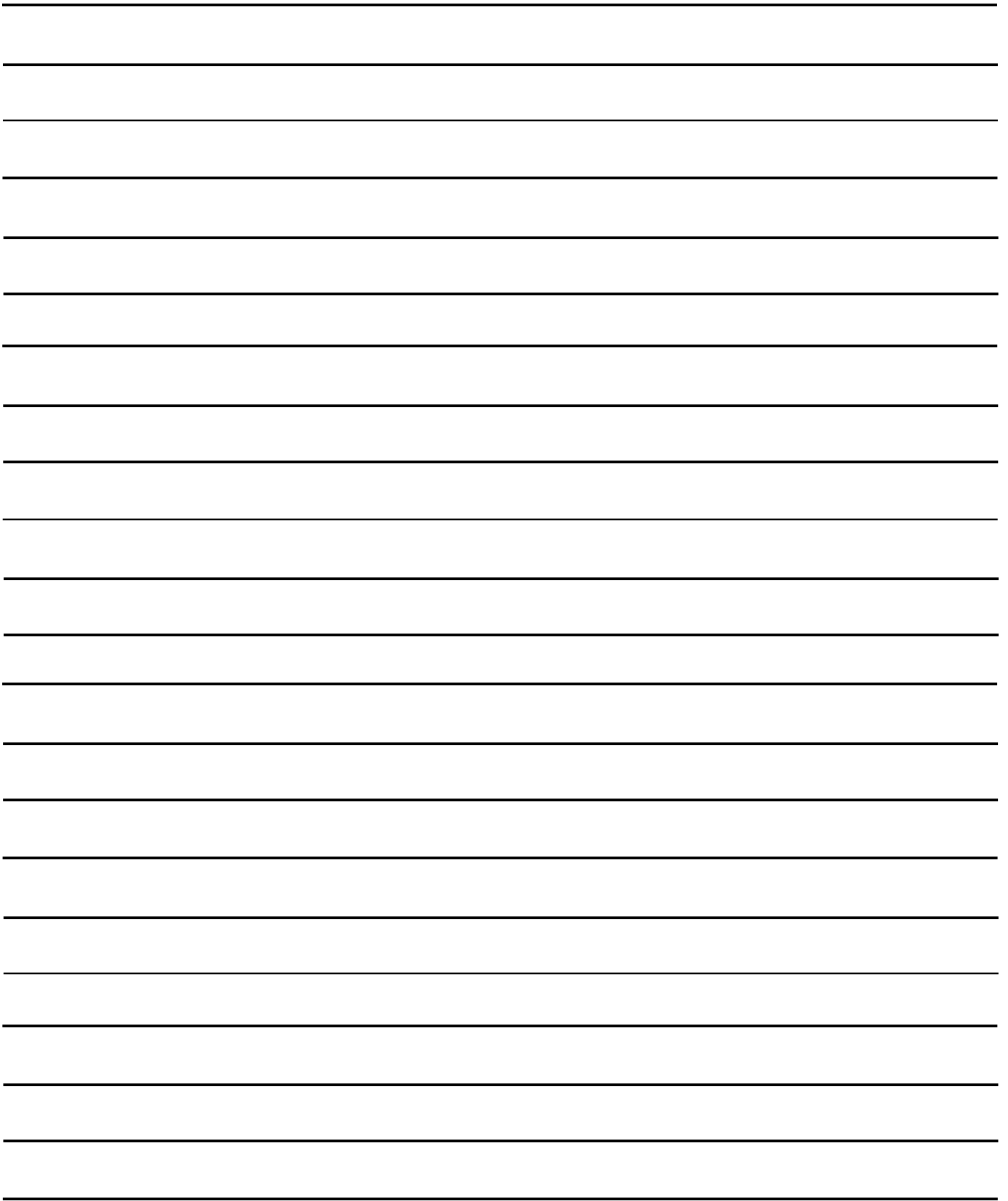
This week we prepare for Good Friday. The Lent season has been a reminder of our own mortality, culminating in the injustice of the cross and the death of Jesus. But in His death we find life. The weight of this annual reminder should bring sadness for our sin and the brokenness of humanity, but ultimately, joy in our salvation.

The darkness of night at Good Friday will soon give way to the rising of the Son on Easter Sunday.

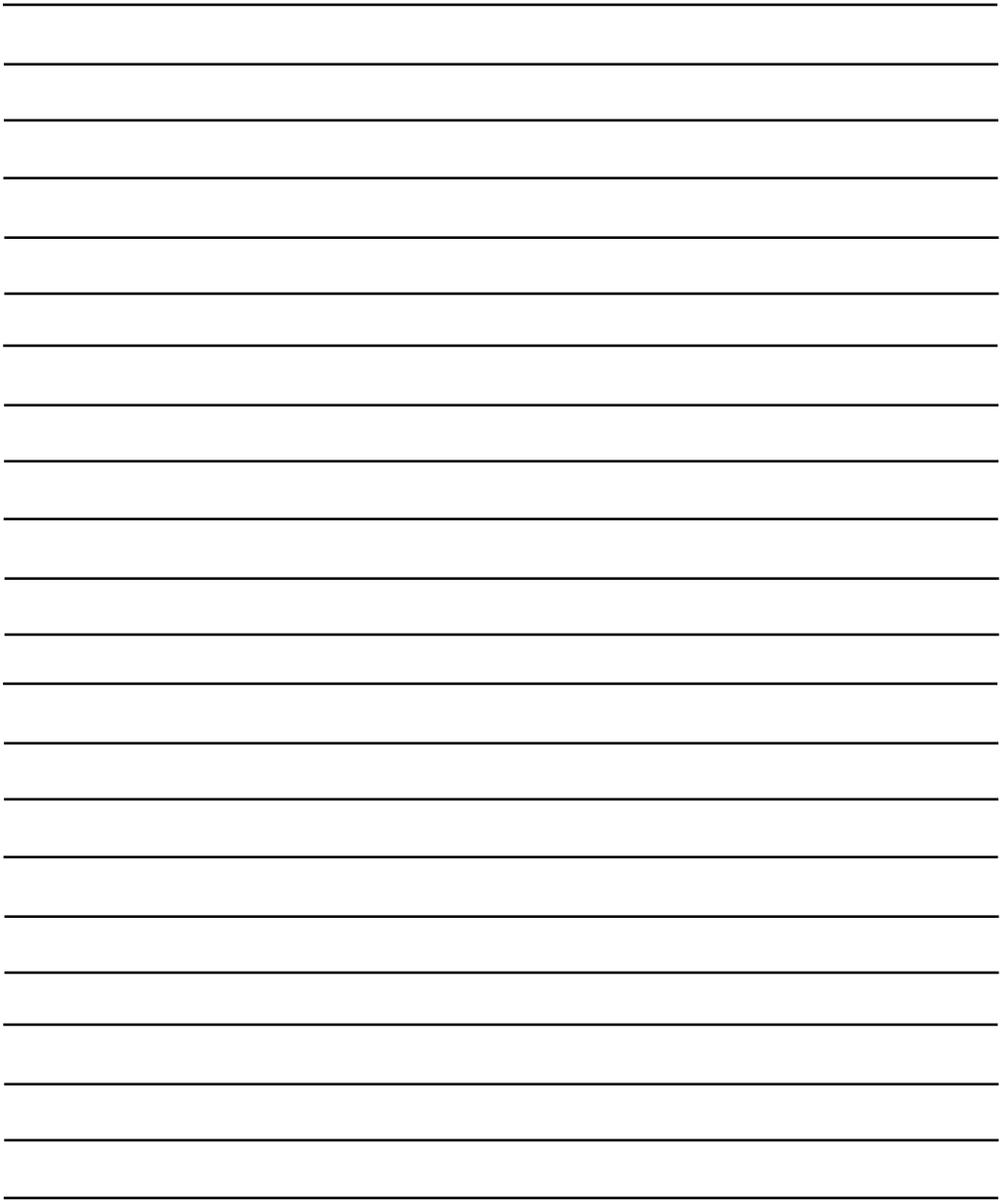
This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



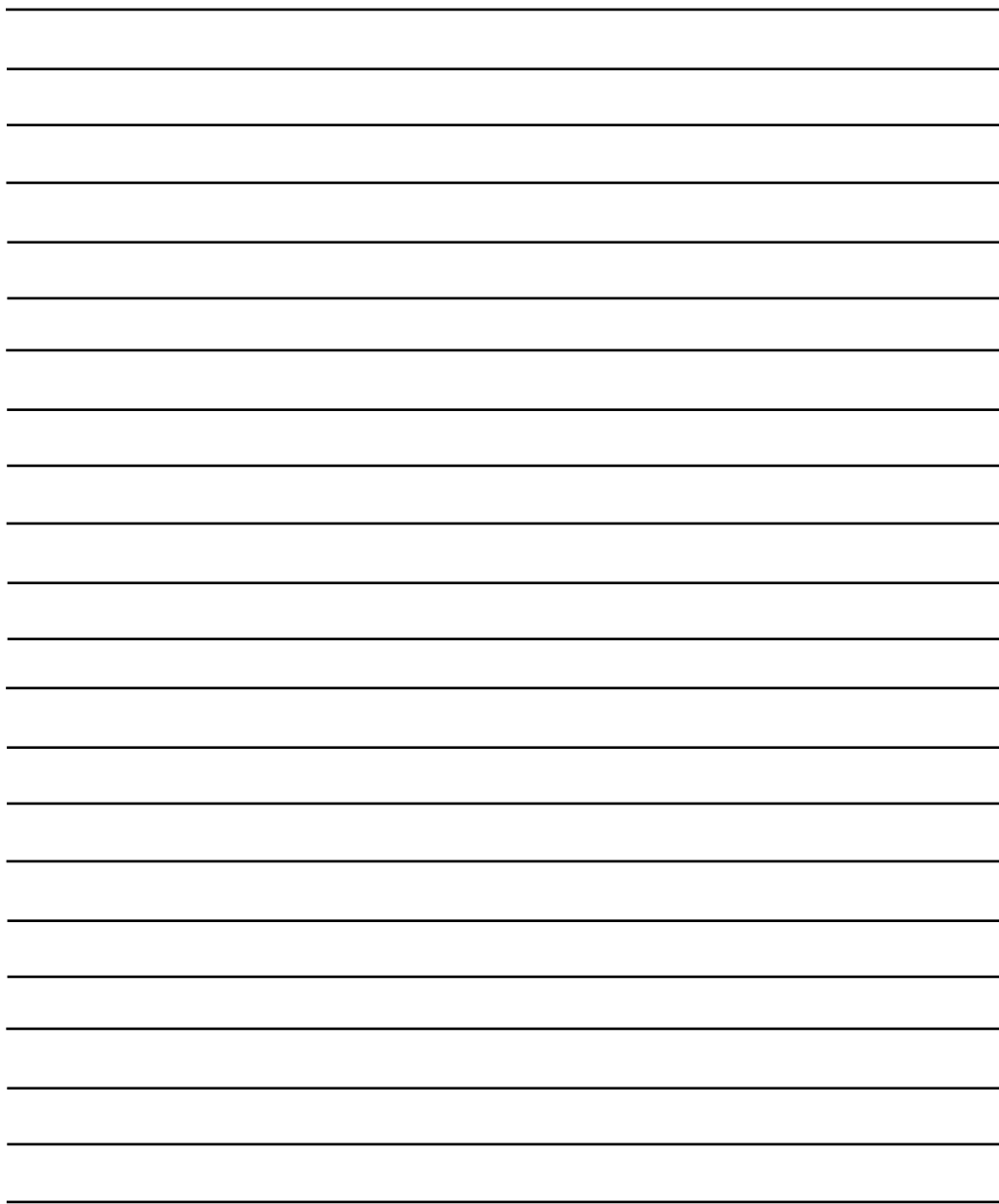
This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.





SVCCchurch.com