



# The Peace Between

## *Sermon outline*

### Thesis

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It is two thousand years after the death and resurrection of Christ and then the subsequent birth of the Church, and we still struggle to make sense of this seemingly deceptive task to fulfill the Great Commission. [Matthew 28:16-20]

16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

### The Peace Between

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- I. It should breathe hope into our world-weary souls that Acts 10 allows us to glimpse that very same wrestling in the mind and the heart of Peter.
  - a. Acts 10: 13-17 — Peter wrestles with the working out of this new and sometimes frustrating faith.
    - i. 'Get up, kill, and eat.'
  - b. Acts 10: 34 - 43 — 'I now realize...'
    - i. Peter expresses that the experiences [the message of peace through Jesus Christ, the baptism the John preached, the anointing of Jesus, the good and the healing that Jesus did, the crucifixion of Christ, the resurrection, the witnesses] together with his recent rooftop vision.

- II. When Peter goes on to express his newly formed revelation, that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right, both our human nature and our reason demand that we find balance between God's justice and his mercy.
  - a. Identity and belonging
  - b. The Other
  - c. God's inclusivity to reach across all ethnic and religious borders. All are welcome to call him Lord.

## God has no favorites

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- III. This Acts 10 narrative shouts the message of God's inclusivity from the margins of the story.
- IV. There is Simon, the tanner, who opens his house on the sea to Peter.
  - a. A Jew, but just barely because of his occupation

## Voices from the margins

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- V. The city of Joppa, that most unhappy seaport from which the Jewish Jonah boarded a boat for Tarshish in the opposite direction of God's will. [Jonah 1:3]
  - a. The Pharisees demand a sign and Jesus replies, "A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be give it except the sign of Jonah." [Mathew 16:4]
- VI. But it takes a vision from God and an entourage sent by the powerful Centurion Cornelius and his subsequent testimony and finally the tangible visit of the Holy Spirit to move Peter from a theology of exclusivity to one of inclusivity.
  - a. For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. [John 3:16]

## A 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective

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- VII. To bring this New Testament story into our 21st century reality, we need no look no further than the refugee situation.
- VIII. In the face of the world's trauma to refugees and their desperate movement to various parts of the world, the words of the Bible echo the depth of this tragedy in the history of mankind.
  - a. God is manifested, chooses His people to be the face of the merciful God.
  - b. The kingdom of God is established here and now.

- IX. Yet, in truth, even with the benefit of 2,000 years of Christian process and thought, and three centuries of Church councils wrestling to define for us grace and justice and the inclusive nature of the Trinity, we still struggle to understand that we are 'the other'.
- a. God allows his 'borders' to be crossed by humanity.
  - b. God becomes 'Other' and was a refugee.
  - c. Each of us, as 'the other' is a refugee.
  - d. In the kingdom of God, we belong.

## Verses that deal with refugees and strangers.

Leviticus 19:33-34	Love the refugee as you love yourself
Leviticus 19:9-10	Keep food for strangers and the poor
Deuteronomy 10:18-19	God loves the foreigner residing among you
Ezekiel 16:49	The sin of Sodom is not helping those in need
Exodus 23:9	Do not persecute a refugee
Malachi 5:3	Do not hold justice from the foreigner
I King 8:41-44	Prayer for God to hear and to respond to the foreigners need
Job 31:33	Keep your door open
Matthew 25:35-36	Invite others
Luke 10:36-37	Have mercy

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