

SCRIPTURE READING FOR FEBRUARY 12, 2023 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Acts 10:9-23

NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

⁹ About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof *to pray*. ¹⁰ *He became hungry* and wanted something to eat, and while it was being prepared he *fell into a trance*. ¹¹ He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. ¹² In it were ALL KINDS OF FOUR-FOOTED CREATURES AND REPTILES AND BIRDS OF THE AIR. ¹³ Then he heard a voice saying, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” ¹⁴ But Peter said, “By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is *profane* or *unclean*.” ¹⁵ The voice said to him again, a second time, “What God has made **CLEAN**, you must not call *profane*.”

¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

¹⁷ Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon’s house and were standing by the gate. ¹⁸ They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Look, three men are searching for you. ²⁰ Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation, for I have sent them.” ²¹ So Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?” ²² They answered, “Cornelius, a centurion, a *righteous* and *God-fearing* man who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish people, 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 Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the brothers and sisters from Joppa accompanied him.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Acts, or the Acts of the Apostles, is thought to be the second half of the gospel of Luke – written by the same author, it tells the birth and emergence story of the early Church as the movement of Jesus moves from the 12 apostles to many people – men and women – from Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) nations. The Acts of the Apostles contains two famous conversion stories: the first of Saul who becomes Paul in Acts 9 and here in today’s reading (Acts 10) of the Apostle Peter.

to pray... He became hungry ...fell into a trance :: a normal house would have an exterior staircase to get to the roof, a space where one might go to be alone. So while not out of the ordinary, Peter’s time of prayer and lunch-time hunger leads to a vision, and apocalyptic language used to express this vision.

ALL KINDS...OF CREATURES...:: this is shocking to Peter, an observant Jew who follows the Torah Law which specifies that certain animals are *unclean*- and not to be eaten, listed in Leviticus 11 these include: “the camel, the rock badger, the hare, the pig, Of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch; they are unclean for you. ...anything in the seas or the streams that does not have fins and scales,...of their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall regard as detestable...among the birds, these you shall regard as detestable. They shall not be eaten; they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, the buzzard, the kite of any kind; every raven of any kind; the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, the water hen, the desert owl, the carrion vulture, the stork, the heron of any kind, the hoopoe, and the bat.”

a voice:: the voice of God coming from the heavens. This story calls to mind the baptism of Jesus in Luke 3, the transfiguration of Jesus in Luke 9 and Moses encountering God in the burning bush in Exodus 3.

²¹ Now when all the people were baptized and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a *voice* came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Luke 3:21-22

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!"

Luke 9:34-35

⁴ When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ⁵ Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Exodus 3:4-5

So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging :: Observant Jews would usually keep a strict physical distance from Gentiles - non-believers; because they worshipped other gods or idols. This comes from many scriptures including:

Ezra 9:11-12

"Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.

Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children for ever."

They were commanded not to marry, nor seek the peace or welfare of the Gentiles.

Devout Jews would not enter into idolaters' homes lest they unwittingly participate in idolatry; they apparently extended this custom to not entering any Gentile's home. It was considered unclean to eat Gentiles' food or to drink their wine; although this purity regulation did not prohibit all social contact, it prevented dining together at banquets and made much of the Roman world feel that Jews were antisocial. Cornelius is undoubtedly accustomed to accepting reluctant (10:22) snubs, so Peter's statement in 10:28 would mean much to him.

Peter's statement makes two moves toward interpreting his vision, one dramatic, one subtle. The dramatic move is that Peter perceives that his vision was about more than clean and unclean foods; it involves proper social interaction with persons—"no one should call a person impure or contaminated." Gentile hostility toward Jews was rooted in part in Jewish adherence to dietary regulations and purity customs (Tyson 1987, 627). This view is born out by Jub. 22.16: "Keep yourself separate from the nations, and do not eat with them; and do not imitate their rites, nor associate yourself with them" (for a Gentile's perspective, see Juvenal, Sat. 14.104-105; Tacitus, Hist. 5.5). Thus to move from the issue of food to persons would have seemed natural to the audience. Taken from <https://tinyurl.com/4yax9ab5>

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- The larger story told in all of chapter 10 of Acts, tells that Cornelius sends for Peter after having received a vision from God – and then later Peter visits him and his household and they all are baptized after being overcome by the presence of God's Spirit. Our section is the key turning point. A conversion of Peter before the conversion of Cornelius.
- How does Peter connect with the Vision that God has for the world?
- How might Peter's conversion story be a metaphor for your own – what you need to receive/or let go of to see the world differently – *as it is*?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, as a church – to act, speak, be or change through this word of scripture?

