

**“God of all People”**  
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**Readings:**

**Acts 10:34-36**

**INTRODUCTION**

- In Canada, the month of February is marked by the celebration of Black History Month, just as throughout the year we remember and celebrate diverse cultures and histories.
- These dates exist because we are still striving to build a more just society and reduce prejudices that, unfortunately,
  - still remain real
  - and often closer to us than we'd like to admit.
- What is the biblical approach to prejudice? Does the Bible address it?
- The text from Acts helps us answer this, reminding us, along with many other texts in Scripture, that the God we worship is the God of all peoples and shows no partiality.
- There are biblical texts that not only teach us something new, but they reposition us in the world.
- When Peter declares:
  - "I truly believe that God does not show favoritism.",
    - He is not simply making a theological statement;
    - He is confessing to an inner conversion.

- Something inside him changed.
- Before arriving at Cornelius' house, Peter had a vision in which God showed him animals considered unclean and commanded him to eat them.
  - Gradually, he realizes that the vision wasn't just about food, but about people.
  - Those whom religion deemed unworthy were also included in God's actions.
  - This experience prepares Peter.
    - to understand that the Gospel knows no exclusions.
    - and to affirm that God does not show favoritism.
- This word originates in a real, concrete context, traversed by religious, ethnic, and cultural boundaries.
  - Jews and Gentiles did not mix.
  - The fear of the "other" was normalized.
  - The exclusion was justified on spiritual grounds.
- But then God acts:
  - And when God acts, The Spirit always broadens the horizon of hope.
- We live in a world marked by deep wounds:
  - Racism, prejudice, exclusion, dividing borders, oppressive economic systems.
- But the gospel does not paralyze us in the face of these realities.
  - The gospel empowers us to believe that a new reality is possible.
  - Because God is already at work.

## 1. The Hope That Springs From Revelation

- Peter does not come to this conclusion through intellectual reflection,
  - But because God reveals himself.
  - The Spirit leads Peter to Cornelius, a foreigner, a Roman, someone who symbolized everything that had previously been seen as a threat.
- When Peter enters that house, he crosses an invisible, yet real, boundary.
  - And there he discovers something liberating:
    - God was already there.
- God does not wait for the world to be ready to act.
  - God acts first.
  - God anticipates our resistance.
  - God is already present among those whom we often ignore or avoid.
- If we think about our context here in Canada, we will remember that:
  - Canada was built on immigration.
  - But it also bears the open wounds of colonialism, especially against indigenous peoples.
  - The Truth and Reconciliation Commission reminds us that acknowledging the past is not about generating paralyzing guilt, but to open paths of healing and reconstruction.
- The God who shows no partiality was already with the indigenous peoples.
  - before colonialism;
- Therefore, God does not ask us to evangelize by force, but by love.

- He invites us to participate in the process of reconciliation between himself and humanity, through humility, listening, and hope.
- Peter, a Jew, needed to understand that the Roman was not excluded by God.
  - Therefore, he couldn't exclude it either.
  - And this implied not imposing the entire cultural, moral, and legal system of Judaism on the Romans.
- To receive the Roman in the same way that God receives him, Peter needed to accept that the Roman was different and that God received him in that way.
- When Peter states that God welcomes those who fear him and do what is right, he is not speaking of moral perfection, but of a way of life.
  - Doing what is right, in the light of the gospel, is not about following rules, but about learning to love.
    - Peter had to give up his rules in order to love.
- Wherever there is genuine love, respect, and care for others, God is already at work, even when it surprises us.

## **2. God does not abandon a wounded world**

- We cannot deny it: the world carries deep sorrows.
  - Racism, xenophobia, and violence continue to mark individual and collective histories.
- Recent cases clearly illustrate this:

- José Lucas, a 9-year-old Brazilian boy living in Portugal, was attacked by his classmates and had to have two fingers amputated, just because he was an immigrant.
- A story like this saddens us, outrages us, and rightfully so.
  - And unfortunately, there are many, many stories like this.
  - And to make matters even more difficult, there are Christians who cause this kind of suffering, saying they do it in the name of God.
  - This is the world we live in.
- We create borders:
  - imaginary lines drawn on a map
    - These imaginary lines have the power to destroy, to separate, to kill.
    - But they do not limit God's actions and love.
- This is the reality in which we live.
- But that's not the only reality.
- The gospel teaches us something fundamental:
  - Pain doesn't have the last word.
- Jesus experienced the pain of xenophobia, racism, and radical religion.
  - The Christ we worship was a foreigner from the very beginning.
  - He fled to Egypt as a refugee.
  - He lived under imperial occupation.

- He was Jewish, belonging to a people marginalized by the Roman Empire.
  - But he was also marginalized by radical Jews;
- His body carried the history of exclusion, and yet, it was through that body that God chose to reconcile the world.
- God does not observe the world's suffering from a distance.
  - God goes inside.
  - God gets involved.
  - God transforms from within.
    - To teach us and show us that there is still hope for change.

### **3. A NEW PEOPLE**

- In Acts 10, the decisive moment occurs when the Holy Spirit descends upon those who were considered "outsiders."
  - Before baptism.
  - Before the Session approves them.
  - Before any human control.
- The church is born:
  - when we learn to recognize God's work beyond our usual limits.
  - When we stop asking "who deserves it?" and start asking "where is God already working?"
- And that changes everything.
  - It changes the way we look at immigrants, refugees, and marginalized peoples.

- It changes the way we understand power, money, and borders.
- It changes the way we live our faith:
  - no longer as a defense of privileges, but as an expression of love.
- We may not be able to change the whole world.
  - But we can change the world around us.
    - We can build communities where people are seen, heard, and welcomed.
    - We can educate our children so that they do not repeat the cycles of hate.
    - We can use our resources not only to accumulate, but to share.
- This is the power we have:
  - the power to live grounded in the God who shows no partiality.

## CONCLUSION

- Acts 10 reminds us that the Kingdom of God doesn't begin when everything is resolved, but when ordinary people say "yes" to the work of the Spirit.
  - Peter wasn't perfect.
  - The early church was not perfect.
  - But God chose to act through them.
    - and continues to choose to act through us.
- Despite the world's wounds, there are clear signs of hope.
- Signs that are seen when:

- We don't treat someone better or worse because of:
    - the color of their skin;
    - Or the country of origin;
    - nor based on their financial situation;
- God does not show favoritism.
- May we leave here strengthened by grace and moved by hope.
- May we leave here confident that, with God, a new reality is not only possible,
  - it's already beginning.
- The history of faith teaches us something curious and ironic.
  - Jonah was sent to Nineveh, precisely to the people he felt did not deserve salvation.
  - Peter was sent to the Romans, representatives of the oppressive empire.
  - Paul was sent to the Gentiles, the same people he had zealously persecuted.
- Perhaps that is why we should be careful about those we exclude from the Kingdom of God.
  - because, quite often, it is precisely them whom God chooses to love.
  - And it may be that God sends us to tell them this.
- Amen.