

Focus on Acts 10:44–48

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” A. Katherine Grieb

As our passage begins, Peter has just given testimony concerning Jesus’ healing ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection. Peter summarizes: “To this all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (v. 43). The word “everyone” apparently functions as a dramatic cue for the Holy Spirit to fall upon Cornelius and upon his companions, fulfilling the prophecies Peter has just mentioned and demonstrating beyond a doubt that these Gentile believers in Jesus have also received forgiveness of sins in his name.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

The intervention of the Spirit in Peter’s meditation indicates that God in the Spirit often goes before to plead the case of those on the margins, those who are excluded. In Peter’s case the Spirit interrupts his meditation and orders him to engage strangers at his door. Peter is presented with another opportunity to learn something new concerning the divine persistence on behalf of persons in need. It is interesting that an apostle as devout as Peter has something fresh to learn about the divine character.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,”

Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis

While Peter and Cornelius have central roles in this narrative, it is not a story about them. Rather, it is a story about the Holy Spirit and how the Spirit’s purposes are accomplished in spite of the boundaries constructed by humans. The witness of the text is that neither Peter nor Cornelius was able to cross the boundaries on their own. But the outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowered each of them to move from their segregated places. The Holy Spirit broke the barriers and propelled the witness of the resurrection beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and Galilee.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,”

Barbara K. Lundblad

The Holy Spirit can be disruptive. Church historian Rosemary Radford Ruether says that the church must be organized to do two things: to pass on the tradition from one generation to another and to be open to the winds of the Holy Spirit by which the tradition comes alive in each generation. Sometimes the Holy Spirit has a hard time getting through our stubborn desire to stay the way we are. Where is the Holy Spirit trying to break through traditions that have become rock hard? How do we continue to pass on the traditions from one generation to another while also being open to the Spirit that brings the tradition alive?

May 5, 2024
Open Waters,
Moving Spirit

Adult
Resource Sheet 2

What Does It Mean to Be Moved by Spirit Today?

[Acts 10:44–48] is an important text for the church today. Not only do the wounds of exclusion run deep in our culture and in the church; the realities of uncrossed boundaries still exist. Neither society nor the church has overcome racism, classism, ageism, nationalism, heterosexism, and other prejudices. We continue to propagate segregation in many forms as we hold firm to the visible and invisible boundaries between “us” and “them.”

Reflecting on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles, can we imagine what the Spirit might do with relations between people of different races? Is it possible to imagine the Christian community embracing the full participation and leadership of women and men, young and old, poor and wealthy, straight and gay, capitalist and socialist, and so on? Can we imagine any boundaries so rigid as to be impassable by the Holy Spirit? . . .

Peter and Cornelius were given visions to see the world differently. Who among us today are seeing visions of the expanding scope of God’s grace? Are there voices, perhaps from the margins, that have been empowered by the Holy Spirit in ways that challenge the boundaries of prejudice and exclusion? Will the church be the astonished “circumcised” ones who are astounded at what the Holy Spirit might do?

We should be careful preaching these stories in the church. Those who are hearing the voice of God, the young who have visions and the old who dream dreams (Acts 2:17, Joel 2:28), might just be empowered to speak truth, share their visions, tell of their dreams. Or perhaps if we do preach these words, we should be prepared to be led to the threshold to cross a boundary.

—Excerpted from Jeffrey D. Peterson-Davis, *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 2 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 482.

