



Handout for week of 4/15/19 Jn. 20: 1-18 & Acts 10: 34,, 37-43

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Acts 10: 34-43

34Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.

37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he

went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

I. Peter "Gets" the Message of Non-Partiality

We can tell that the narrative within which this mini-sermon is embedded is hugely significant for Luke because of the amount of space he devotes to it (about 66 verses). For Luke, the Gospel spread in rather orderly concentric circles, from Jerusalem to all Judea and then Samaria and then to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). So far we have seen a Jerusalem proclamation (1-7); a Judean reference (8:1); and a Samaritan mission (8). In the story for today, the Gospel leaps "to the ends of the earth;" the story of the god-fearing centurion Cornelius is the way Luke illustrates this (10:1-11:18). But just as it takes two to tango, it takes both sides of the equation, a Gentile and a Jew, to open the doors for the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Peter, the leader of the Jerusalem-based church, is given a vision--of unclean animals which he is commanded to kill and eat--which illustrates that the Gospel also reaches to those the Jews thought as "unclean" people. He sees a vision and hears words to this effect. Then, he is visited by servants of a vision-seeing god-fearer, Cornelius, who ask Peter to speak to them and their master what is on his heart. Peter puts two and two together in one moment of inspired insight and says, "In truth, I now understand (present tense) that God is not a respecter of persons..." (10:34).

The Greek verb *prosopolempto*, from which the noun translated "partiality" is derived, is found only in early Christian writers. The verb is taken literally from *prosopos*, which means "face" or "person" and *lambano*, which can be translated as "to take" or "receive." Instead of being derived from a classical usage, the Greek is dependent on the Hebrew phrase *nasaa kanim*, which appears in Deut. 10:17. Here is that text:

"Circumcise, then the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing" (Deut. 10:16-18).

Notice the ethical dimension of God's not showing partiality. It does not mean, simply, that God "accepts" all people, but that God executes justice on their behalf. Thus, when we hear Peter's message in Acts 10, a message of acceptance of Gentiles as basic to the Gospel, we limit our vision if we think it only refers to "spiritual" privileges. God's lack of partiality is a judicial concept that has its outworking in the social sphere.

Back in 1984 I asked Fr. Beck to design a logo for our new venture that was to be known as The Growing Edge. [He created this and](#) said that the "Growing Edge should always be about growing things at the edges of what was assumed possible." Every now and then he would hide a part of it in one of his drawings as in the one here and wait to see how long it would take me to spot it. Do you see it? The Growing Edge took on a new name after surviving three floods and became The Ark, hence the www.theark1.com. I invite you to see what it is becoming now.