

Theme: **God's Will Gives Us Boundless love through Christ**

Text: Acts 10:34 – 48

Season: 6th Sunday of Easter

Date: May 6, 2018

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

(Put up a Barrier.)

*Grace and peace to you as you let God's Will be done in your life, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

In our lives, we often spend a lot of time building walls, barriers between ourselves and others. Sometimes these barriers can be quite elaborate and at other times they can be invisible. Today in our scripture readings God wants to talk to us about the barriers that we build between each other as He reminds us that He has broken down all those barriers through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His only Son. The barriers that we build don't just separate us from those that we don't want to associate with, they often also separate us from the greatness of God's love, grace and mercy given to us.

In chapter 10 of the book of Acts, God shows us the barrier that were built through the years between the Jews and the Gentiles. Chapter 10 begins with God sending an angel to the Gentile Cornelius, a centurion living in Caesarea, who had learned about God and had been praying to God for help in his faith. Through the angel, God tells Cornelius to send a messenger to Joppa and bring Simon Peter to meet with him so that he can learn about the Good News of Jesus Christ. Cornelius sends two devout servants and a devout soldier to Joppa to find Simon Peter and bring him back to Caesarea. Mean while in Joppa, Simon Peter is having a vision of a giant sheet coming down out of heaven filled with the animals that the Jews people called unclean. Three times God shows Peter this vision of the sheet with all the animals and each time God tells Peter, **"Rise, Peter, kill and eat."** Each time Peter responses by saying, **"By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is unclean."** God's responses to Peter with, **"What God has made clean, do not call unclean."** As Simon Peter is contemplating this vision, God tells him that three men are coming to the house where he is staying and they will ask him to go with them to Caesarea to speak to a man called Cornelius. He is supposed to go with them and proclaim the Good News of Jesus' life, death and resurrection to him and his family. When Peter and his traveling companions get to Cornelius' house Peter tells Cornelius and his family, **"You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean."** (Acts 10:28)

Sin builds barriers, while Jesus lived a perfect life for us, dying on the cross of Calvary to pay for all our sins and rose again after three days in the grave to break down the barrier that prevents us from having God's great love, grace and mercy in our lives. Today because of God's love and Jesus' actions there is no barrier that separates us from God, it has been torn down just like the temple curtain was torn down at Jesus' death on the cross of Calvary. At one time only the High Priest could enter into the most holy place with God, but now we can come into the presence of God because we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Peter says to the family and friends of Cornelius, **"Truly I understand that God shows no partiality,<sup>35</sup> but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him. <sup>36</sup>As for the word that He sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)."** (Acts 10: 34- 36) Simon Peter now understands the vision that God had given to him three times in Joppa. God's love for mankind is not limited to a certain race or nationality. God loves all of His creation and wants all of mankind to live with Him in His love, grace and mercy now and forever. Simon Peter also realizes that out of love God has chosen to give Him the ability to walk and talk with Jesus Christ and the understanding of all that Jesus has done for all mankind, for you and for me, therefore he has to be a witness of that. Jesus has made us clean again from all our sins by His life, death and resurrection. That's good news, because now we have peace with God and the love that God wants to give to us, it's this love that we need to share with all people even those whom we have but behind barriers.

Simon Peter came to see the greatness of God's love for all mankind and out of that love given to him wanted to share God's love with all mankind, so he opened his mouth in love for God to let those outside the barriers of this world know that God's love is for them. Simon Peter shows us that the Word of God binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ. God reminds us through the Apostle John, **"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of Him."** (1 Jn. 5:1)

What are the barriers in our world that separate us from sharing the love of God given to us with those on the other side of our barriers? They are many and quite often different. They even can come from those who have faith in God's love. Let me give you an example: When I was in Junior high school, I helped organize special dance and I asked Gwen Griffin to go with me to the dance. I arranged with my parent to take me to her house and pick her up and then take her home after the

dance. Gwen was one of the girls that I had worked with for the past month to organize the dance. In all our meetings and preparations, we had become friends and that was why I asked her to go with me to the dance. At the dance, I had fun dancing and being with Gwen, we got along well with each other and the dance was a success. About a week later, I when with my family to my Grandparents house, I was in the kitchen watching my Grandma prepare the dinner. Everyone else was out of the kitchen and she said to me, "Pete, I heard that you took a colored girl to the dance with you." I said, "Yes, her name is Gwen Griffin. She's a friend and we worked together in organizing the dance." Grandma stopped preparing the dinner and turned to me and said, "You don't date or marry a person of a different race Pete. It's not right and you should not date her again." I stood there not knowing what to say; I had never heard my Grandmother speak that way about anyone before. Not feeling comfortable I left the kitchen and the conversation was never brought up again. I never dated Gwen Griffin again, but I remained a friend to her and her twins brother, Steve Griffin. I did many things with them in high school but lost contact with them in college. In the fifth-year reunion gathering of Fairview High School I talked with Gwen again. We both had gotten married by that time. She was a model and had a child, I was a school teacher and looking forward to having our first child. Sometimes the barriers that we build up in our lives are built by a miss understanding of God's love for ALL of mankind and it take a better understanding of God's love, grace and mercy through God's Word, to break those barriers down.

God's love binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ, giving us the same forgiveness, the same mercy and the same grace even if the world that we live in has built barriers of sins between us. Simon Peter declared God's love given to all mankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and then said, "**Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that He is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.** <sup>43</sup>**To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.**" (Acts 10: 42 – 43)

Jesus's life was the perfect expression of God's love for ALL of us. Jesus' death was the ultimate act of love to save ALL of us, even those who had hung Him on the cross. As Jesus hung there on the cross and said, "**Father forgiven them for they know not what they do.**" (Lk 23: 34) God raised Jesus on the third day and He appeared to some 500 witnesses in the 30 days after His resurrection, to show us our forgiveness and the new life we now have as brothers and sisters in

Christ. The Cross of Christ and His resurrection is what bind us all together in God's love, grace and mercy. Jesus is the one who at the end of time will judge our love for Him and destroy all the barriers of this world so that we can live with Him in His perfect love, peace and joy forever. God through the Apostle John reminds us, **"For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world, and this is the victory that has overcome the world – FAITH."** (1 Jn. 5:4)

It's the Holy Spirit that gives us the faith to proclaim all that God has given and done for us. It is in your faith in the love of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that enables us to show His love for us and all mankind by our words and actions, even those who were at one time behind the barriers that we and the world built in our lives. By the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and Sacraments we have been given God's love so that we can share the Good News of God's love for us with others and bring them to be baptized for the forgiveness of all their sins so that the Holy Spirit can work in their lives. God through the Apostle John tells us, **"For there are three that testify: <sup>8</sup> the Spirit and the water and the blood; and these three agree."** (1 Jn. 5:7-8)

We see the same love given to us and others by the Holy Spirit working in our lives to gather us around God's Word and Sacraments. True love is found in a true confession of God's love for all mankind found in God's Word and Sacraments. Oh, many of the standards of mankind in this world build barriers in our life, but the right belief in God's love given to us by Jesus' life, death and resurrection enables us to break down those barriers and to live lives according to God's commands, telling others about God's forgiveness and His faithfulness to everyone. God's loves to bind our lives together by His Word and sacraments. The risen and living Christ breaks down all the barriers of this world and replaces them with the salvation of every soul – salvation that is unbroken by sin, death and power of the devil. May each of us live in repentance to Jesus Christ, for His love unites us and our baptism makes us all children of God, a family united by Christ. So, let God's will be done in your life and share the Good News of His love with everyone. Amen.

Let us pray: