

Isaiah 65:17-25/Acts 10:34-43/John 20:1-18

Today we are celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Some of us we are afraid of death because the formula of our lives is that we live and die, but Jesus facilitated his death because the formula of his life was to die then live. By resurrection Jesus changed the face of death. Death is no longer a prison, but a passage into God's presence. The message of Easter is that you can put truth in a grave, but it will not stay there. The message of Easter is that you can nail truth to the cross, but it will not stay there. The message of Easter is that you can wrap truth in winding sheets and shut it up in a tomb, but it will rise. In dying and resurrection, God's truth was revealed to the entire human race that God is a God for all. He does not discriminate. He does not respect ethnic boundaries, He does not observe racial boundaries, nor does He recognize tribal differences. He died for all and resurrected for all. Paul summarized it all in 1 Corinthians 15:14ff when he said, "If Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain, and our faith has been in vain".

This hidden truth did not take long to manifest through Peter as captured in the book of Acts chapter 10. Today we read from Acts chapter 10:34ff but the whole story started in verse 1 of chapter 10 when Peter saw a vision of a net coming down from heaven and heard a voice, "**Rise Peter kill and eat**". Peter replied, "**My Lord, I have never eaten anything that is unclean**". The voice came again, "**Do not call anything unclean that I have made clean**". From that vision, today we see Peter in Cornelius house, Cornelius a Gentile who was being represented by the unclean animals in Peter's vision.

Acts 10 does not only narrate a significant change in Peter's own life but also a massive shift in the trajectory of the Church's mission in its earliest days. Peter had challenges in accepting the task to minister to Cornelius due to his Jewish background because it was not allowed for a Jew to set a foot in a Gentile territory, this is the reason why people who would travel from Jerusalem to Jericho or vis versa would deliberately avoid the land of Samaria-it was a Gentile territory. But one day, Jesus broke that ethnic barrier and crossed through the region of Samaria on his way to Jerusalem if you recall Luke 17:11ff-healing of the ten lepers. The physical setting of Peter's speech is exclusively Gentile in two ways:

- Peter is in the City of Caesarea Maritima, the coastal city that King Herod had built for his Roman patrons, the capital of the Roman Province of Judea.
- Peter is in the house of an Italian officer in the Roman army named Cornelius despite that it was well known that Jews do not visit the homes of Gentiles. Peter even reminded Cornelius of this law upon arriving in Cornelius' house on Acts 10:28, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean". Even the Gentiles themselves knew this law that is why in Luke 7:6ff, the centurion in Capernaum had to send messengers to tell Jesus that it was inappropriate for Jesus to come to his house. Due to this background, it is then of no doubt that Peter's presence in this territory had been arranged by God himself. In Peter's narrative, just like in the resurrection of Christ, the basis of membership in the kingdom of God is now being radically redefined. The kingdom of God is for those who believe regardless of their social, political or economic status. What astounds Peter in this case is how can someone become a Christian without first becoming a Jew? The risen Christ changed the syllabus of eternity, so we have every reason to rejoice.

John's narrations is also interesting because in the Jewish tradition, women were not allowed to give a legal testimony, but the first thing Jesus is doing after resurrecting is to break gender-based discrimination. Women are the first witnesses to the risen Christ and for the first time Jewish men listened to women's testimony without reservations-the syllabus is being radically redefined.

Good Friday experience was devastating but temporary-Jesus has arisen.

- **No matter how devastating our struggles are, they are temporary because Christ is alive.**
- **No matter how devastating our disappointments are, they are temporary because Christ is alive.**
- **No matter how devastating our troubles are, they are temporary because Christ is alive.**
- **No matter how death hunts us and our loved ones, resurrection promises us a future of immeasurable good.**

May the hope of resurrection fill our hearts and give us courage to soldier on with life in this corrupt world. May the hope of resurrection give us strength to remain steadfast in our faith.
AMEN.