

Series Title: FOR ALL PEOPLE: A Journey through the Book of Acts, Part 6.

Sermon Title: Week 4: Astonished! Scripture: Acts 10:30-46

Date: 03-07-21

✠ **Astonished!**

- *When was last time you were ASTONISHED? Mind Blown! Story of India traffic... “I see this, it’s all around me, but I can barely process/comprehend this”... But for our local driver, just another day. No big deal.*
- *As disciples of Jesus, we know of a reality that is ASTONISHING. Beyond our ability to comprehend or imagine. This MAY have astonished you at some point... maybe it still does. But for many believers it has become something we’re used to... just doesn’t amaze us anymore, although we sing songs saying it does.*

• **What are we talking about? The GOSPEL**

- *For the first generation of Christ followers, the Gospel- the message of Jesus- wasn’t just Good News. It was EPOCH CHANGING, MIND BLOWING, CULTURE ALTERING, LIFE CHANGING... ASTONISHING!.. Especially when these Jewish Christ Followers realized this TRUTH ABOUT GOD wasn’t just for Israel, but for the gentiles- for ALL PEOPLE. Men, women, slave, free.... That the truth of Christ- and presence of Christ, is for ALL.*

✠ **But... just what is the Gospel?**

- *BUT FIRST... PE, Sunday March 7 2021, TO, thanks for joining us....*
- *It’s a word we use a lot, but what does it mean? When we say, ‘preach the gospel’, what are we talking about?*
- *Pastor R.C. Sproul points out there are many good/true things about Christianity that isn’t the gospel.*
 - *My testimony. What God has done in my life... it is my experience, but it’s not gospel.*
 - *I can say “God loves you”... that is true, but it’s not gospel.*
 - *I can speak of how faith in Christ brings new life, brings freedom, and has the power to bring identity, meaning, and purpose to your life.... We can talk about the power of prayer, the gift of Christian community. THIS IS ALL TRUE because of the Gospel, but it’s NOT the gospel.*
- *We BENEFIT from the Gospel. There is HOPE for mankind because of the Gospel. God invites us to enter into His LIFE, His Goodness, through the Gospel. But the Gospel refers to a specific truth. It is the astonishing, mind blowing, life altering Truth of WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE.*
- *We are in ACTS 10. (If you missed last three messages....) Left the story at the end of verse 29- where Peter and his companions have come to the home of Cornelius- the Roman Centurion. Peter’s world has been turned upside down by God’s proclamation that there was no longer any such thing as unclean food, and more importantly, unclean people. ALL PEOPLE are now able to equally come to God through faith in Jesus Christ.*
- *And so Peter, himself still processing this literal change of epochs in how God relates to humanity, comes to Cornelius’ home and says “here I am, why have you sent for me?”*
- *IN THE RESULTING EXCHANGE, we see Peter lay out the essential message of the Gospel. It’s what some scholars call a ‘primitive’ gospel, as it doesn’t yet contain any of the concepts of Jesus’ revelation to Paul. But here we see the core truth of who Jesus is and what he has done... and why this is the GOOD NEWS people need to hear.*

³⁰ Cornelius answered: “Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said, ‘Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. ³² Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.’ ³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.

✠ Reality! All of humanity is in need of the Gospel. Our own goodness, sincerity, or general belief in God is not enough.

- **God does not show favoritism. There are NO PEOPLE who are more deserving, or less needing- of God’s grace, and the Gospel is available to ALL.**
- **Verse 35 is interesting- “God accepts from every nation (ethnos) the one who fears Him and does what is right.” Some have tried to use this verse to teach universal or performance based salvation- if you just believe in God generally, and are a good person, then you are accepted by God. But this takes this verse out of context, for the consistent teaching of the NT, including this very passage, is that forgiveness, salvation, and new life in Christ is only possible through FAITH IN CHRIST, not our own goodness. In fact...**
- **In Romans 1-3, Paul systematically makes the case that there is NO ONE WHO IS GOOD, NO ONE WHO SEEKS GOD. We all have turned away from God, and to ourselves.**
- **THE REASON WE MISS THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL is that we don’t think we are accountable to God. BUT WE ARE, and we have no hope before God unless HE PROVIDES THAT HOPE, WHICH HE HAS.**
- **You see, Peter here is describing the heart of a person who recognizes their need of God. ANY such person is ready to hear and receive the truth of the Gospel. Likewise, even the most rebellious person against God, is acceptable to hear and receive the Gospel when by God’s Grace they surrender to their need of God’s Grace.**
- **AND THAT’S THE BIG STEP, because it means we are finally willing to lay down our pride and desire for control, and make the choice of FAITH to receive/trust Christ as Lord.**
- **Consider Cornelius – he was a good man! Luke tells us God had heard Cornelius’ prayer, and noticed his love and generosity to the poor. Cornelius fears God (believes he exists, respects, understands God is infinitely beyond him),... and he lived in a way that honored God...but HE STILL NEEDED THE GOSPEL- and he knew it. He was ready to hear- he told Peter... we recognize that GOD IS AT WORK, and we are ready to listen! Peter Continues...**

³⁶ You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

✠ Jesus is the bringer of PEACE with God.

- **If you are married, or have ever been in any serious relationship- you know that if there is trouble in that relationship, YOU HAVE NO PEACE. IMAGINE such a relationship, and then, what it would mean if somehow, every conflict, every grudge, every secret, shame, guilt, fear... if ALL OF IT WAS ADDRESSED- it was all dealt with, all was forgiven, the**

relationship fully restored, so there was absolutely nothing standing between you and the other person.. that would BRING PEACE. THIS IS WHAT GOD has done for us IN CHRIST.

- *We are created beings, and the most important relationship we have- eternally so- is with our creator. WHEN WE ARE AT PEACE WITH GOD, we are able to experience peace with ourselves- and others- because we truly can believe that we are accepted, loved, no fear of the future, no shame of our past.*
- *In Ephesians 2, Paul describes the power of God to bring peace between the Jews and Gentiles- at that time, two groups who were separated by every religious, cultural, and racial barrier imaginable. But as Peter and Cornelius were discovering, the Gospel had the power to tear those barriers down.*

Ephesians 2:13-15 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace*

- *Church- the truth of the Gospel that IN CHRIST we may receive and experience PEACE... when we even begin to grasp this... it is astounding.*
- *Then Peter lays out a truth at the heart of the Gospel...*

† Jesus is **LORD** of all

³⁶(we have the)good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷You know what has happened throughout the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached— ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power,

- *Jesus was able to do what he did, he was able to carry our sin to the cross, He was able to bring the Gospel to ALL the world- because He is LORD of all.*
- *Peter's statement that God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power draws upon OT prophetic imagery, and proclaims that Jesus was not just fully human, but that as a man, He was filled with the presence and power of God, as he lived in perfect dependence upon God. In every way, Jesus was GOD WITH US, the WORD made flesh. HE IS LORD.*
- *CHURCH! The reality that Jesus is Lord is not contingent on what we think. Jesus is LORD whether we accept Him or not. You likely remember the words from Philippians 2...*

Philippians 2:9-11 *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

- *AND THE INVITATION OF THE GOSPEL, to Cornelius and his household, and to all people today, is to not only recognize that Jesus is Lord, but accept Him as our Lord.*
- *As Paul states in Romans 10- When we confess that Jesus is Lord, and believe that God raised Him from the dead, we are saved, we enter into a New Life in Christ. THEN, Jesus, our LORD, also becomes our DELIVERER. This is where Peter goes next- that Jesus*

† Jesus **DELIVERS** us from evil

^{38b}...Jesus... went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.

- **Peter says Jesus went around ‘DOING GOOD’. In the Greek, this is a very strong word... used to describe HEROIC ACTS.. a person whose very presence and actions transformed society for Good. In today’s words, Peter just called Jesus SUPERMAN. He is a DELIVERER. We would say “Jesus delivered me from my sin”, but the truth is even greater. Jesus delivers from the power of evil itself, from the power of the enemy, the devil.**
- **We DO have an enemy, who is ultimately behind all deception, human suffering, and the tragedy of the human condition.**
- **SO! When we share the Gospel- we aren’t just inviting someone to a new religion- to start going to church- we are sharing hope for deliverance from the lies and bondage of the enemy of our soul.**
- **And Jesus is ABLE TO deliver us from evil, because He defeated evil and death, once for all, through His RESURRECTION.**

✠ Jesus is the **RESURRECTED** Lord

³⁹ “We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a cross, ⁴⁰ but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen. ⁴¹ He was not seen by all the people, but by witnesses whom God had already chosen—by us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

- **The good news of Jesus Christ ALWAYS will center on the resurrection. Any attempt at the Christian message without the Resurrection is just empty religion. FROM DAY ONE, the Christian movement proclaimed and built its theological foundation on the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.**
- **Peter asserts God had chosen witnesses to the Gospel, of which he was one... In 1 Corinthians Paul tells us that over 500 people interacted with Jesus during the 40 days between his resurrection and ascension.**
- **The resurrection isn’t just the core of the Gospel, it is also the greatest offense of the Gospel- because if Jesus really was raised from the dead, then that means HE IS GOD, HE IS LORD, and all of our objections and attempts to relegate Jesus to mere religious history fall away.**
- **And now Peter turns to one of the least taught, but absolutely essential aspects of the Gospel- we tend to ignore this because it makes us uncomfortable, as it should, apart from our surrender to the Grace of God...**

✠ Jesus is **JUDGE** of all

⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.

- **Church, scripture is clear. Every person who has ever lived will stand before God- before Christ- to give account for our lives.**

Romans 14:11-13 It is written: “‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God.’” ¹² So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. ¹³ Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another.

Hebrews 4:13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- *Scripture is also clear that if we are judged based upon our own merits, even the greatest, most righteous of us will stand condemned. THAT IS BAD NEWS... UNLESS we come to realize, and accept, the miraculous truth that our Judge is the same God who loves us and gave His life for us*
- *Now, Peter ends with the gift made possible by the cross- the result of the sacrifice our Judge endured so he could declare us redeemed, ransomed, and set free. Truth that...*

✠ Jesus brings **FORGIVENESS** for all

⁴³ *All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*”

- *As hard as the process can be, a gift of coming to terms with the extent of our brokenness is to just begin to appreciate the miracle of our FORGIVEN-NESS.*
- *IN CHRIST, WE ARE FORGIVEN. Not incrementally. Not through the recurring work of a human intermediary. SET FREE, once for all, AS A STATE OF BEING.*
- *In Colossians, Paul says...*

Colossians 2:13-14 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.

Romans 4:7-8 “Blessed are those whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. ⁸ Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

- *The greatest third verse of any hymn written- “My sin, oh the bliss of this glorious thought- my sin, not in part, but the whole! Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul! It is well with my soul.”*
- *AND CHURCH, AS ASTOUNDING AS GOD’S GIFT IS, this isn’t all there is.*

⁴⁴ *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.*

- *As Jesus would reveal fully to the Apostle Paul... when by faith, we hear and accept the Truth of the Gospel, we AREN’T JUST FORGIVEN...*

✠ Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus comes to dwell within us.

- *This event in the home of Cornelius is often called the ‘Pentecost of the Gentiles’, as the Holy Spirit authenticates the gentiles faith, much in the same way the Jewish Believers in Jerusalem received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost.*
- *This is a unique event- NT does not teach that faith in Christ must be authenticated by supernatural phenomena such as speaking in tongues- but God chose to do this here, as He placed an exclamation point on the astounding miracle that the work of Christ- the Gospel- truly is for ALL PEOPLE.*
- *That was Peter’s message...SUM UP, THE GOSPEL, to us today...*

- *Reality of the human condition- we are born into this world separated from God, without out hope and without God in the world. ALL PEOPLE need the Gospel*
- *God desires that we be restored to him, that we enter into the PEACE Christ made possible through his death, burial, and resurrection, which we receive by faith*
- *God also desires for us to be SET FREE from sin- not just the eternal consequence of sin, but our bondage to sin NOW- to be set free from the power and influence of our enemy, and our own pride, selfishness, and brokenness*
- *AND SO GOD sent His son, the messiah, Jesus Christ, GOD WITH US- to show us what humanity truly looks like when lived in perfect trust dependence upon God.*
- *Christ willingly- for the JOY set before him- endured the cross, taking all the sin, rebellion, pride, and brokenness of humanity upon himself. He took it to the cross, and suffered death to pay the price for our sin... Atonement*
- *WITH HIS RESURRECTION, Jesus defeated death and the power of sin, he defeated the power of the enemy, and ushered in a NEW ERA, and NEW COVENANT- new way of being in relationship with God.*
- *SO THAT when we stand before Christ as our Judge, we will not be judged on our own merit, our own goodness, but on the goodness, sacrifice, and LIFE of Christ on our behalf*
- *And NOW, UNTIL THAT DAY, as followers of Christ we are FULLY FORGIVEN, and EVEN MORE, we have been made new... brought from Death to Life... we are holy and dearly loved, children of God, indwelt by Christ through the Holy Spirit... as HIS LIFE IS OUR LIFE... bearing the food fruit of the Spirit as we live and walk by the Spirit... AND THE ETERNITY we will spend with Christ- and with each other as the body of Christ- this eternity has ALREADY BEGUN.*
- *MY FRIENDS, THAT IS GOOD NEWS!*
- *If you have never taken the step of faith to confess your belief that Jesus is the son of God, your Lord, and that God raised him from the dead... the invitation of the Gospel stands before you. Cornelius and his household heard, believed, and received the presence of Christ's life by the Holy Spirit. THIS SAME GOSPEL is extended to you. Will you believe?*