

'Love one another as I have loved you'
Acts 11:1-18 John 13: 31-35 Rev 21:1-6

Peter who denied Jesus 3 times, who walked on water, who was a fisherman is here in Jerusalem telling the story of his recent encounter to some circumcised believers

Chap 10 of Acts is an account of the vision and resulting encounter that Peter had. As a result of that vision first told in chapter 10 and recounted here a few verses later Peter goes to the home of a man named Cornelius who is a non-Jew, a Gentile tells the story of Jesus to them the Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles and they are baptised in the name of Jesus

What, I hope, we would see as great news and a time for great rejoicing. But see the reaction he is given in Jerusalem, the centre of the Jewish faith and those newly converted Jews

Vs 2 the circumcised believers CRITICISED Peter

Let's back track for a moment

The believers in Jerusalem criticised Peter because he had gone to the home of uncircumcised men and eaten with them!

It was unlawful for Jews to associate with and even more to visit the uncircumcised - the Gentiles

Back in the book of Leviticus we can read of the many food laws that had been given to the Jews, God's special chosen people word had got to those in Jerusalem that Peter had significantly broken these rules

All the animals that Peter had seen in the dream were forbidden, according to these laws. But through the vision he had and then the meeting with Cornelius and his men Peter's understanding is changed

10:34 Peter says 'I now realise that God does not show favouritism

Peter, a disciple of Jesus, someone respected enough to be teaching others about this new faith had broken the rules and had gone and associated with the unclean Gentile Cornelius and others. Why had Peter done this? Because of a God given vision and the intervention of the Holy Spirit. So Peter goes to Jerusalem and tells them the story

These 2 chapters are a critical turning point a crucial development in the life of the early church. Before this it was the widely held belief that the new path of faith, the way to salvation was to the Jewish people only. At least that is what the Jewish, circumcised believers thought.

Remember what Jesus had said to Peter, what He had said about Peter

Matthew 16:18 And I tell you, you are Peter, [d] and on this rock [e] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

Jesus had changed his name from Simon to Peter meaning Rock and promised that he would build His church upon Peter

Peter had had an encounter with God been empowered by the Holy Spirit had his thinking transformed and was now testifying, just telling the story of what had happened. Peter testified to the fact that God had given the Gentile people the same gift of faith and the Spirit and therefore vs 17 'IF God had given them the same gift when they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then who was I that I could hinder God?'

Peter concluded that God the creator did not intend to exclude anyone from the community of God's care.

This was, I am sure, a challenge to Peter

That experience for him meant

letting go, losing that which was known and familiar to him
risking learning and then acting upon new ways of doing things
engaging with what God had shown him and responding to God

Peter's faith and understanding of God and other people changed as a result of this
When I was training as a teacher a tutor of mine said - there is no summit to teaching. If ever you
think you have got it sussed and there is nothing more for you to learn then give up.
Same for us as Christians DONT GIVE UP! But there is always more for us to learn, to
understand

We need the Spirit to help us discern, and be open and to love like Jesus did
And to tell our stories to others
The world is characterised by dissension and division
What do we have to offer that is different?
LOVE Love like Jesus

John 13 passage

Judas had left the building! And the last few days of Jesus' earthly life were about to unfold
Jesus no longer speaks in parables but in clear, understandable words
Simple words with PROFOUND meaning
Little children... LOVE ONE ANOTHER
This is not a belief not a theory not a story
It is a simple, clear, undeniable command Love one another as I have loved you!

Love love changes everything!

When we love, truly love, it changes us not necessarily the other
Peter was changed at his core when he listened to God, let the Holy Spirit lead him and
reached out to Cornelius
And Jesus had been his example and ours whilst here on earth!
Jesus, the pure, clean and sinless rabbi - circumcised Jew mixed with
Tax Collectors Lepers a woman who was hemorrhaging
touched a dead person went near the demon possessed by the tombs
He gave up his rights, the usual way of doing things in order to show us love

Rev 21 passage

Tells us that one day there will be no separation no division
There will be no sea - and the sea was no more
Remember what I said about imagery in Revelation
Sea represented turmoil and storm
In the picture of the New Heaven and New Earth there is no sea because the sea divides people
Britain & mainland Europe!
In the New Heaven and New Earth there will be no vision
ALL will live in harmony
And to ALL who are thirsty God will give water as a gift from the spring of water of life

As we seek to love one another, those already part of our family here and Please Lord those
who are not yet but one day soon will be here seeking out God we need to LOVE one another
so that we will be recognisable as disciples of our Lord and Saviour

By this shall all men know....

And loving them will mean that we have to change just as Peter had to change
It will mean us putting down some of our ways of thinking and doing and being in order
that we can draw alongside others and share the story of Jesus with them
We need to break down obstacles
And it will be uncomfortable and we may face criticism
But let us be faithful to Jesus' command and follow His example
And put loving Him and loving others before our own expectations.