**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**29th June 2021**

**Acts 10:9-23**

**Welcome**

Hello. Thanks for letting us join you today and you find this a place to bring all that has happened last week, and let go that which you need to let go, and find something to pick up that might bring life this coming week. It is what worship is meant to enable us to do, to change in the experiencing of it.

It doesn’t always feel that way perhaps. Harder on a podcast perhaps. But it is something that happened to Peter on a roof in a vision. It’s a story we aren’t all familiar with. If it was ever told to me when I was growing up in the church then I must have been off that Sunday.

Remember those great Sunday School picnics we all used to go on. We had three busses to take us somewhere exotic like Helensburgh or Largs all the way from Gourock. Sometimes we even got the boat to Millport. I know of some who would place pews on the back of coal lorries, fill them up with children and find their way to the beach.

Today we have a story about a picnic too, but not one like the ones we remember.

**Prayer**

Welcoming Spirit

Space for all

Breadth of grace

And depth of love

Holy one

In this gathering time and place

We gather in every time and place

And centre ourselves

Breathe in, your spirit

And breathe out our worries

Breathe in your spirit

And breathe out our wrong

Breathe in your spirit

And breathe out our fears

May we pause and wait

Seek that sense beyond self

And become aware of all those

Gathering today

We can’t see or even feel

But know are there

From so many traditions and cultures

Gathering within the story of God

Coming to this place

Hungry and well filled

In fear of life and fullness of life

Silently and secretly

As well as some open and with abandon

All your people

A whole company of faithful folk

Yet hurting because of injustice

And prejudice

And narrowness

May we make this place

This sacred space we create

A sanctuary

A safe space for all

An abundant place

Where we name all

Where the least have the place of the most

And in doing so

Confess

And change how we live

For the sake of all

And in your name

Hear us

As we say with a billion others

The global prayer

Our Father, who is in heaven,

Hallowed be your name;

Your kingdom come;

Your will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

for ever.

Amen

**Background**

The book of Acts gathers a whole lot of new people into the kingdom and names them which is more than the gospels do. There we hear of the names of the disciples and a few others but they are fairly generic characters: a centurion, a woman, a daughter, a leper. In Acts they are given names: Cornelius for example, whom we heard about last week when we jumped a wee bit ahead. This is where we first hear of him, a devout man, from the Italian Regiment but a God fearer, who has a vision, to go and meet Peter in the next door town of Joppa.

The whole book expands the breadth of the story, giving the community names and personalities, naming gentiles, women, places the gospel had never heard of. And this story is the moment all that great expansion is given life and meaning, not by the church, early and new as it was, already was falling out over this, but it was given life and meaning by the spirit.

**Reading: Acts 10:9-23**

**9**About noon the next day, Peter went up on the roof to pray. **10**He became hungry and wanted something to eat; and while it was being prepared, he fell into a trance. **11**He saw the heaven opened and something like a large sheet coming down, being lowered to the ground by its four corners. **12**In it were all kinds of four-footed creatures and reptiles and birds of the air. **13**Then he heard a voice saying, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” **14**But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is profane or unclean.” **15**The voice said to him again, a second time, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” **16**This happened three times, and the thing was suddenly taken up to heaven.

**17**Now while Peter was greatly puzzled about what to make of the vision that he had seen, suddenly the men sent by Cornelius appeared. They were asking for Simon’s house and were standing by the gate. **18**They called out to ask whether Simon, who was called Peter, was staying there. **19**While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Look, three men are searching for you. **20**Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them.” **21**So Peter went down to the men and said, “I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?” **22**They answered, “Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and to hear what you have to say.” **23**So Peter invited them in and gave them lodging.

The next day he got up and went with them, and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him.

**Hymn 763: Let us talents and tongues employ**

**Reflection**

I used to go to festivals… The first time I went to Greenbelt I honestly thought I had reached the gates of heaven… The plethora of folk who opened your ears to world views you didn’t know existed, or were allowed to believe…

On my first day I heard Mike Riddell… a New Zealander… take on this passage… and I thought… why on earth have I not heard this story before… I couldn’t remember ever coming across it… and I’m not sure many of us have…

How could we miss this moment the ground shifted in the way the church thought…

We tell these stories in the confidence of hindsight. We’ve settled down, but that actually isn’t the default position for the church… and certainly not the early church…

It was a time of great debate over what exactly this new system of belief was: a new version of Judaism or a threat to it? And Jesus hadn’t helped because he was not clear or consistent about who his message was for. He mostly spoke to the “House of Israel”, but rewrote Judaism to include non-Jews…

So here is Peter, the alpha-disciple. He’s hungry and tired, and in a trance sees a picnic blanket lowered from heaven full of unclean animals according to Jewish law. Peter refuses to eat. For a right relationship with God you need to live by the rules.

But, and it happens too often, just when you think you’ve got it all clear in your head, and you know what this is about, the rule book gets torn up. It’s a bit like changing Covid levels: you know where you are in level three when level two comes round the corner, and you are thrown into confusion.

Peter, holds his ground. He sees this as some divine test and refuses to eat unclean food.

But imagine his confusion when he realises what this is actually about. It is a metaphor for who is to be included into this movement called The Way. Not just a Jewish movement, but a Gentile movement. And if you can imagine Peter’s confusion, imagine the consternation of his colleagues when they learn he’s been fraternising with and spreading the good news to the unclean.

From our perspective, what’s the issue, we’re not all bad, but to those in the early church, this is an earthquake. And, there is this Roman Gentile, Cornelius, sent to Peter and helping him out, and who converts. The more conservative Jews are appalled. The council of Jerusalem is called, it’s like the general assembly on steroids, called to work out what on earth is going on but pandora’s box has been opened and there is no closing it.

The rules have been changed and no one knows where this will end up. And the church is at its best and its worst, in these moments, when the rules no longer work, and we have to reimagine, re-envision, resurrect…

No one knows where it will settle. It is an anxious time, it is life giving, it is exhausting, but it is where we are now. In many ways, the familiar rules of church tradition no longer open us up, make us welcoming.

Gentiles today are a whole bundle of folk: millennials who tick ‘none’ for religious affiliation, folk whom the church refuses to marry because of sexuality, folk who do not find a home in the church because of prejudice and fear. And I know we don’t want that to happen, but it takes effort and a ground shift, and sometimes throwing out the rulebook, to allow us, like Peter, to step onto ground where our compass is not tradition, but love.

We are called in this time to be a church alive in such a time. People of faith are being asked to cast aside categories that are often entrenched, in order to see the real person who is looking back at us, to see folk as they are, not dark-skinned, poor, female, gay, disabled, conservative, wealthy, Muslim, male straight, ugly, liberal, old, Christian, obese, unattractive or whatever category we fall into a habit of defining people by, but as individuals, who like us, do not meet the standard of the rule book. Because the early church threw out the rulebook then, we are the church today.

Ours is to see things reimagined through love and not institution, and that will cause upset, it will challenge us, and make us question, but it is perhaps the very place the generosity of the gospel can be welcomed, shared, and lived.

**Short Video**

**News**

Dinosaurs, postcards, COP26, Zoomday School picnic. It’s summer and we are changing gear but we keep going.

If you are able to send in your dinosaur designs and coloured in stencils then please do so my next weekend if you can. We have 250 million years to cover in a series of windows we are designing about world and the environment. We need quite a few dinosaurs so if you can please send them in. You can download outlines from the website and post to us. And if you are in Canada, Australia, South Africa, Trinidad, Singapore where we have a number of guests, then we’d love to receive yours too. You can send to mail@nkchurch.org.uk. Here’s my tartanadactyl.

Dear Friend, is how we’d like to invite you to start a few postcards to local folk who are feeling isolated in their homes or residencies. It’s a postcard project to keep in contact with folk over the summer in the same way we did at harvest, christmas and easter. A few lines about summer, gardens, family, that is upbeat, sign your name and send it to us at the church, we will send out 550 of them to the local area. We have many blank postcards if you need any. Just let the office know.

Next week in all the great traditions of the church, we are having a socially distanced zoomday school picnic in the manse garden. Water races, treasure hunts, garden art, bouncy castle. Don’t you wish you were a generation younger…

And thanks to Catherine who read today and to Dougal who is just about to lead us in prayer. Let’s gather all we are as church, and as a world, and come together in prayer. Dougal.

**Prayers for Others**

Let us pray

Eternal God, we pray for and on behalf of all people like Cornelius who are living and worshipping in a foreign land or situation. Those who are posted as military personnel, those who are refugees within or outwith their country of birth and those simply out of their comfort zone at this time.

Caring God, as we seek to be rid of the Covid pandemic, equip us to tolerate the strictures of eliminating its grasp on those afflicted by it and those affected by the resultant personal isolations, deferred diagnoses and operations and separation from loved ones. Today especially reach out your healing hand to the people of Brazil.

In the wider world may the international agreements and treaties made in recent weeks among the major world nations be upheld and help to make this a safer world to live in. Give inspiration to world leaders, heads of all nations and all with political and administrative responsibility for running their countries both poor and rich. Help us to understand the political decisions made and to trust those who make them.

God, Giver of life, where there is drought, hunger and conflict we ask for so much to relieve people of their suffering. The homeless now in Palestine and Israel, the mistreated Uighurs in China, the Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh and the people of Yemen and anyone for whom today has brought personal disaster and sorrow. Please bring your justice and relief and comfort. At home and abroad enable aid agencies, charities and their volunteers to bring good works like Cornelius did to those who needed it.

God who made the earth, may we continue to care for our local environment at a personal level. Remind us every day to do what is right to protect and to maintain the beauty of our locality in teamwork and generosity of our talents.

Caring God, may we ask for your guidance and strength to all those hard pressed doctors and nurses, all the paramedical staff in hospitals and those out in the community in people’s own homes and in care homes. While we pray for those professional givers of care we also ask your blessing on those for whom they are caring in hospital and at home. Relieve their physical pain or mental anxiety so that they may regain their strength and peace of mind.

Sustaining God, in the summer season where we try to get a break from everyday living, we ask your blessing on our minister and his family as they go on a well-earned holiday. May they be relaxed and nourished during three weeks away from this parish and obtain sustenance in mind and body in other parishes of our beautiful country.

Lord, while Roddy is away may we go forward in faith serving this parish and community by sharing the love that inspires all that we do. May we continually reach out and give hope to others in all sorts of communication and especially in prayer.

And now, in a few moments of silence wherever or whenever we are listening to or watching this worship together, we commend those known to each one of us, who need our prayers today.

Lord, we name them now…..

Heavenly Father, to those we have named and the countless people we will never know nor meet, please give a loving hug of comfort to all who need one at this time.

In the name of Jesus Christ your Son.

So be it …………………..Amen

**Hymn 713: Come all who look to God today**

**Benediction**