

PREPARING AT HOME

May 13-19, 2019

Focus reading: Acts 11:1–18 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=421996953>)

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 148, Revelation 21:1–6, John 13:31–35

Theme: Spirit of Solidarity

While “Choosing Welcome” is Prospect’s ministry theme this year, the decision about whether to choose welcome or separation is not always so clear in Scripture. The Jewish people lived with the tension of being called to welcome the alien while at the same time being warned to separate from foreign cultures in order to preserve their distinct identity. The Hebrew Scriptures are filled with stories of how God’s people separated themselves from the idolatrous cultures that surrounded and at times ruled over them. Separation and disunity only serve to strengthen the power of empire. In an effort to maintain purity, early Christians continued to separate themselves from “the other,” a practice that benefitted the Roman Empire. News of Peter’s association with Gentiles reached Judea even before his arrival. When Peter is “greeted” by those who question him about eating with uncircumcised men, Peter tells them about a dream in which he is shown that nothing in God’s creation is unclean. Peter also reports that the Spirit told him “not to make a distinction between them and us” (verse 12) and tells the story of baptizing a Gentile household. Recognizing that God has gifted them with the same Spirit, Peter cannot “hinder God” (verse 17) by turning away from Gentiles. The Roman Empire promised peace, and used division as a means of keeping that “peace.” The resurrection peace that God offers unites people and leads them to stand in solidarity.

EVERYONE WELCOME!

Peter learned that everyone belongs when it comes to following Jesus. No one is excluded. Is everyone welcome in our church? How do we welcome people who are in wheelchairs or who have trouble moving from place to place? What more can we do to welcome people with limited mobility? Are people of all ages welcome and included? In what ways? What more can we do? How can we welcome others? Draw ways in which we do or should provide a welcome to all.

IN OR OUT?

Talk about the following with your child: How does it feel to be included? How does it feel to be excluded? For what reasons do people/children exclude others? What can you do to be more inclusive? You might role play some of these situations.

PRAYER

God of love,
We give thanks that you welcome us as your children.
Help us to see all people as
created, loved, and welcomed by you.
May we welcome all people and live together in love.
Amen.

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