

# Sermon for The Sixth Sunday of Easter

**Date:** May 9, 2021

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran

**First Reading:** Acts 10:34–48

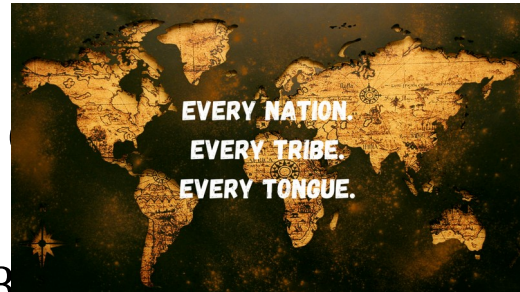
**Epistle Reading:** 1 John 5:1–8

**Gospel Reading:** John 15:9–17

**Sermon Text:** Acts 10:34–48

**Sermon Title:** Through God's Eyes

**Introit:** Psalm 66:1-2, 8-9, 20; Antiphon: Psalm 66:16



**Hymns:**

LSB 829 – Christ the Eternal Lord

LSB 844 – Lord of All Nations, Grant Me  
Grace

LSB 650 – Holy Spirit, Ever Dwelling

**Liturgy:**

Divine Service III, p. 184

**Songs:**

Song: Bleed The Same

Song: Colored People - DC Talk

He Reigns - Newsboys

Make Us One - Jesus Culture

**Liturgy:**

Creative Worship



Pastor James Groleau  
St. John's Lutheran Church  
1200 13th Avenue NW  
Austin, MN 55912  
Office: (507) 433-2642  
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net  
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org  
KAUS 1480 AM Sun. 9:00am



### **Text: Acts 10:34–48**

Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

**NOTE: Copyright** information.

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2021 Pastor James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace and peace, in Jesus' name. Amen.

It had been a long time since Steve had gotten out of bed on a Sunday morning to go to church. Oh, he would go to the candlelight service on Christmas Eve, but that was the extent of his involvement in church, ever since he'd graduated from high school.

This Sunday was different. He was tired of being alone. He was confused about life. His job left him unfulfilled and wanting more. His efforts to self-medicate with booze failed to fix his life. He was empty. That was the word that he thought best described his life, "empty." Maybe it was time to give St. Mark Lutheran Church a try.

He had passed by St. Mark Church many many times times to and from work, noticing the thought-provoking messages on the church sign. This Sunday, mustering some courage, he got in his car and timed his arrival at 10:32. Two minutes after the service started. It worked well. He slid into the last row unnoticed, except for a friendly, usher who slipped the bulletin to him. Scanning the congregation, Steve noticed some families, some elderly couples, some younger people, some sitting with others, some like himself, sitting alone.

He heard the last of the pastor's pre-service announcements and was surprised when he heard the pastor say, "We are so pleased you've made your way to St. Mark Church today. We believe God led you here today, and we truly want to have you know and experience God's grace today. Grace. G-R-A-C-E: **God's Riches at Christ's Expense**. We want you to know that God is rich in His love for you, no matter who you are or where you've come from.. We want you to know that Jesus died on the cross, and rose again from the dead, for you. God bless you today."

The part about "**God's Riches At Christ's Expense**" took Steve back in time some twenty years. His pastor had used the same acronym to define "grace." With that old memory in mind, Steve settled back into his seat for the service.

Today we hear about God's grace in a special way in Acts 10, where Peter proclaims:

Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.<sup>1</sup>

God shows no partiality. That's the way it is with His heart of grace. His love reaches to anyone, anywhere: all nationalities, all ages, all types of people, rich or poor, lifelong Christians or brand new believers. God's love reaches to you who

1 Acts 10:34-35

have known and worshiped God as long as you can remember, and His love reaches to you who are searching to fill the emptiness in your lives, like Steve was. No one is out of the reach of God's love.

Our Savior "desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."<sup>2</sup> Aren't you glad that's true for you? That you are included among those God desires to save? Aren't you glad that it's true for everyone else?

What is our experience with people? It's that the people around us can be so difficult to love! You've been hurt by the words and actions of people. Close relatives have disappointed you, have failed you. At work, you may have been passed up for a promotion by someone who didn't deserve it when you did. Do you see those people as God sees them? A little self-evaluation and honesty might cause you to understand that we are difficult to love too.

If you struggle with seeing people as God sees them and loving them as God loves them, join the club. Peter, and the other earliest apostles, Jesus, the Messiah, first of all to the Jews in the region of Israel, in places like Judea and Galilee. It made sense to Peter, John, James, and the other believers that they, "the children of Abraham" and members of the household of Israel, were part of God's family through Spirit-given faith.

But for those earliest followers of Jesus, God's grace toward those outside the "chosen people" of God, was difficult to accept. Would God be so giving with His grace that He would pour out His Spirit on the Gentiles too? Would He welcome them into His family?

The disciple Peter was one of those doubters. It took a God-given vision for Peter to understand this about God. It is recorded in Acts 10, just before what we read today. Peter is hungry, and he has a vision about food being let down from heaven on a sheet. The foods he sees are various animals, reptiles and birds that were unclean according to Jewish Torah Law. In this vision, God tells Peter to kill and eat. Peter protests that this food is unclean. God says, "What God has made clean, do not call common."<sup>3</sup>

Moments later Peter receives a request from a man named Cornelius, a Roman soldier, a centurion, a Gentile, not a Jew, to come to his house. Turns out Cornelius has had a vision too. So Peter goes to his home. When he arrives and sees a whole crowd of Gentiles eager to hear God's Word from him, he gets it! He says, "God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean."<sup>4</sup> Peter went

2 1 Timothy 2:4

3 Acts 10:15

4 Acts 10:28

on to proclaim the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection to Cornelius and the others that day. He said:

All the prophets bear witness to [Christ Jesus] that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.<sup>5</sup>

The Spirit fell on these people and they were baptized. God showed no partiality. His love engulfed them and they were saved. You will meet them some day.

It is clear that God does love all people and that He wants all people to be saved through faith in Jesus. No repentant person is unclean or common in His sight. Though we are all common and unclean. I'm referring to the sin that clings to us all. Everyone has it. We're all poor miserable sinners. We're all unclean sinners. God sees this sin clearly in the worst of us and in the best of us. He sees it in people of all types and ages, all nationalities and races, in all places. Sin requires God's punishment. It requires death, eternal death. Sin sure creates problems.

Sin causes us to showing partiality ("playing favorites") is the sin God's Word is uncovering today. This sin, of showing partiality, of giving preference to some over others, can have immense consequences. In our partiality we might listen to only one political points of view. We might value the opinions of longtime church members but disregard the opinions of new ones. We play favorites.

Our playing favorites, our showing partiality, can result in feelings of superiority or inferiority, depending on which side you find yourself. It can lead to an attitude of, "If that's what your Jesus is about, I don't want anything to do with Him!" Sadly, I've heard comments like that for many years.

We need help. We need some Divine intervention from God. He delivers that help in sending His Son Jesus into this world as the Divine Partiality-Buster. Have you ever really looked at how the Bible describes Jesus? Jesus hardly looks Divine. He looks like a common man, blending in with the men of the villages of Galilee and the crowds in Jerusalem, but there is something strikingly different about Him. Jesus showed no partiality. He did not play favorites. He crossed the boundaries of society, bringing hope and forgiveness to shepherds and fishermen, to the woman at the well, to tax collectors. He healed. He restored. He fed. He taught as One who had authority. He didn't look different, but He was. He was God in human flesh.

Jesus loved perfectly and obeyed His heavenly Father. Though He was the sinless Son of God, He was the victim of gross injustice and partiality. He was accused by His fellow Jews of claiming to be God and by the Romans of claiming

5 Acts 10:43

to be king. Death by crucifixion was His sentence. It was the greatest injustice in all of eternity. Sinful men nailed sinless Jesus to the cross but that was the heavenly Father's plan, that this punishment should happen to His beloved Son. Jesus is the Father's promised Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.<sup>6</sup> The Righteous for the unrighteous, the Impartial for the partial. God the Father laid on His Son the guilt of us all. My sins were on Jesus. Your sins were on Jesus. The sins of all people of all generations, all nationalities, all tribes, all ages, all types of people in all places. God showed no partiality.

Jesus suffered on the cross. He died, and it appeared God had lost. Our God doesn't lose. On the third day Jesus rose from the dead. This was the great sign that the Father had accepted the sacrifice of His Son. The sign that sin is forgiven and life wins. Nothing could stop the apostles from proclaiming the Good News of the resurrected and victorious Savior, and nothing should stop us either: "Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."<sup>7</sup> Everyone! God shows no partiality.

We are the people who belong to the Church of the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ! He is alive and His Spirit is active within the faithful. The Spirit is moving to make us a community of believers who know and rejoice that we are dearly loved by God. The love that saved us is the love that also transforms us! Living in that love of God we can be different people. We can be people who don't play favorites, people who willingly serve and joyfully love all people.

What does this transforming love of Jesus look like for you with your family, with those at work or school? That brother-in-law or sister-in-law, that co-worker or fellow student is dearly loved by God. Jesus died for them too. He saved them. Will you condemn them?

What can the transforming love of God for you mean for our life together? We live in an impersonal and sometimes harsh world. People are looking for community, a place to belong, a place where they are loved and accepted. Jesus' Church should listen. Jesus' Church should serve. Jesus' Church will attract others. Jesus' Church will connect others to the love of Christ, which knows no boundaries and forgives any and all sin.

Getting back to Steve and his visit to St. Mark Church, that congregation didn't play favorites. The people showed no partiality. Steve saw it was okay that he was there. He heard of God's riches for all people at Christ's expense, God's riches for

6 John 1:29

7 Acts 10:43

him, the wanderer. Steve could see God's love for him, in Jesus Christ was beginning to fill his emptiness, beginning that very day.

After the service, Steve was greeted by some that day. He was invited to the pot-luck they had going on. Later, as Steve made his way to his car, he was already making plans to come back again.

Amen.

Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people

