

## **What is the Gospel We Proclaim?**

Acts 10:34-48

Pastor Jason Van Bommel, Forest Hill Presbyterian

*" . . . 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.*

- Acts 10:37-43, ESV

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone when they suddenly started trying to sell you something? I remember a time during college when a friend of mine invited me to lunch. I was excited to eat and catch up with my friend. Suddenly, I was in the middle of an Amway pitch - not what I signed up for!

When we have an opportunity to tell someone about Jesus, do our words sound like a sales pitch? Are we focused on the wonderful benefits a relationship with Jesus will bring into their lives? A sales-pitch Gospel dishonors Christ's kingship and makes the other person feel like I felt that day at lunch, like we're trying to pull a fast one on them.

When Peter had an opportunity to present the Gospel to Cornelius, he did take a few minutes to confess his past sin of discriminatory attitudes against Gentiles. But after that, he didn't say, "Listen, Cornelius, do you ever feel like your life is missing something?" or even "Cornelius, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" No, he immediately connected with what Cornelius already knew about Jesus and went on to give a clear and authoritative declaration of the Gospel, not a sales pitch.

The Gospel is good news, the message about what God has done in and through the person and work of Jesus. It is a royal declaration focused on who Jesus is and what He has done. Peter's message went from what God did through Jesus, to what Jesus did to pay for the sins of His people, to who Jesus is now, what authority He has been given and, finally, to what Jesus will do in the future. Only after Peter had finished telling Cornelius about Jesus' person and work- who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do- did Peter begin to tell what God now requires of people.

Notice the kind, clear, and yet firm authority with which Peter speaks. He is not selling anything. He is proclaiming. The Gospel is news to be announced, not a product to be sold. It is the best news and has the best benefits for people, for *"everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."* Let's pray for God to give us wisdom, clarity and loving boldness to be faithful Gospel ambassadors, declaring what God has done through Jesus Christ. Such a witness honors Christ and trusts God to save whom He will.

*Heavenly Father, You do not call us to be salespeople but to be ambassadors, not to be pitching a product but to be lovingly declaring a proclamation of good news. Give us the grace and wisdom by Your Holy Spirit that we might faithfully, lovingly and clearly proclaim Your Gospel to those who need to hear. In Jesus' matchless name, Amen.*