

20260913 The Holy Spirit Creates One Church – Duane

Acts 10 and 11:1–18 tell one of the most decisive stories in the New Testament. A devout Roman centurion named Cornelius receives an angelic visit. A day later, the apostle Peter—still operating with a deeply Jewish sense of clean and unclean—sees a vision of a great sheet lowered from heaven filled with animals he had never been allowed to eat. A voice says, **“Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”** Peter protests. The voice answers, **“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”** The vision happens three times.

Then messengers arrive from Cornelius. The Spirit tells Peter to go with them. Peter preaches Jesus in a Gentile home. While he is still speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on the listeners just as He had at Pentecost. They speak in tongues and praise God. Peter baptizes them. When he is later criticised in Jerusalem for eating with uncircumcised men, he simply retells what God did. The church’s response is worship: **“So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”**

1. Confronts our personal beliefs
2. Empowers us to reach out
3. Makes us only family

1. The Holy Spirit Confronts Our Personal Beliefs (vv9-15)

When Peter had his vision, saw the sheet of unclean animals, and heard the voice of the Lord say, **“Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”** His first reaction is honest and revealing: **“Not so, Lord!”** (v14). He had spent his whole life building boundaries of what he thought was right and wrong. Those boundaries felt like faithfulness. However, the vision was not about menu items; it was about people. God was saying, *“The beliefs you have used to keep yourself safe and superior are not My beliefs.”*

We still create boundaries today. We may not talk about clean and unclean animals, but we have our own versions. Our prejudices often disguise themselves as preference or tradition. Whenever we assume our way of singing, preaching, eating, or relating is the “normal” Christian way, we are trying to force our personal preferences on people, and that is not the way it should be.

Just like Peter’s encounter on the rooftop, the Spirit wants to keep lowering the sheet. He keeps whispering in our hearts, **“What God has cleansed you must not call common”** (v15).

2. The Holy Spirit Empowers Us to Reach Out (Acts 10:19-23)

Peter did not stay on the rooftop having a private spiritual experience. The Spirit said, **“Arise therefore, up... go down and go with them, doubting nothing”** (v20). He walked into a Gentile house, opened his mouth and preached Jesus—His life, death, resurrection, and the forgiveness of sins available to everyone who believes. Spirit-empowered outreach is not first a programme or a strategy. It is obedience to a nudge of the Holy Spirit. Cornelius had already been prepared by God. Peter only had to show up and open his mouth.

This same pattern continues. God is already at work in the lives of people who do not look like us, speak like us, or share our background. The Spirit's role is to send us across the city, across the fence, across different cultures with the gospel.

The Spirit still works the same way Peter experienced it. When we follow that quiet leading, we discover that God has already been preparing the other person. Spirit-led outreach is not first about filling a room. It is about showing up for the one the Spirit has already made ready.

3. The Holy Spirit Makes Us One Family (vv44-48)

The climax is not Peter's sermon. It is the interruption. **"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message." (v44).** The Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished. The same gift, the same tongues, the same praise that had marked Pentecost now marked uncircumcised Gentiles. Peter's statement is decisive: ***"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" (Acts 10:47).***

God did not create a second-class church for Gentiles. He poured out the same Spirit. That is why the Jerusalem church, after hearing the whole story, stopped objecting and started glorifying God. The dividing wall came down not by human negotiation but by divine action.

A multicultural congregation is not a collection of separate cultural churches sharing a building. It is one household. The church that lives this way becomes a living parable. In a world that sorts itself by race, class, language, and politics, a congregation that eats together, weeps together, and sends one another across cultural lines is evidence that Jesus really is Lord of all. Diversity is not the goal. The goal is a family so united by the gospel that the old barriers lose their power and we walk together in one heart, one mind, in unity.

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit is still in the business of lowering sheets, sending reluctant messengers, and falling on unexpected households. He is still creating one church. The question for a multicultural congregation is whether we will keep pace with Him—letting Him confront our remaining prejudices, obeying when He sends us across the street, and welcoming new families. When we do, the world sees something it cannot manufacture: a people united not by culture or background but by the gospel and the Spirit who makes us one.