St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, November 15th, 2026
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Door Grace Opens
Proper 28
Acts 10:24-48

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of God to hear his Word.
Jesus Christ is Lord of all.

God shows no partiality; his good news reaches every nation.
Everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness through his name.

Come, let us praise the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
With grateful hearts, we worship the God who welcomes us by grace.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Holy and gracious Father, you are worthy of all our praise. You have made us, sustained us, and opened the way of peace through your Son, Jesus Christ. We come not trusting in our goodness, but resting in your mercy. By your Holy Spirit, gather our scattered thoughts, awaken our faith, and turn our hearts toward you. Receive our worship through Christ, teach us by your Word, and make us ready to obey. Let those who feel far away discover the welcome of your grace, and teach us to welcome one another in his name. To you alone be glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

Call to Confession

Jesus Christ is judge of the living and the dead, and that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness through his name. We need not hide our sin or pretend that we can save ourselves. Trusting in the mercy of our crucified and risen Savior, let us confess our sins together.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful Father, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed. We have trusted our own goodness rather than your grace. We have judged people by their background, guarded our comfortable circles, and withheld the welcome we ourselves have received. We have neglected your Word and failed to speak of Jesus with courage and love. Forgive us for the sake of your Son, who died for sinners and rose again. By your Holy Spirit, turn us from sin, renew our faith, and teach us to love our neighbors. Open our hearts and homes, that our lives may bear witness to your mercy. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news from Acts 10:43: "To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." To all who turn from sin and trust in Jesus Christ, this promise is sure: your forgiveness rests in him, not in your own merit. In Christ, you are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Children's Hymn #348: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" (V 1,2,5)

Tell me the stories of Jesus I love to hear;
Things I would ask Him to tell me
If He were here –
Scenes by the wayside,
Tales of the sea,
Stories of Jesus,
Tell them to me.

First let me hear how the children
Stood 'round His knee,
And I shall fancy His blessing
Resting on me;
Words full of kindness,
Deeds full of grace,
All in the love light
Of Jesus' face.

Into the city I'd follow
The children's band,
Waving a branch of the palm tree
High in my hand;
One of His heralds,
Yes, I would sing
Loudest hosannas –
Jesus is King!

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one
For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn #400: "Spirit of the Living God"

Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me
Melt me mold me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me!

Spirit of the Living God, move among us all;
make us one in heart and mind,; make us one in love:
humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
Spirit of the Living God, fill our lives with love!

Responsive Reading

Psalm 100:1–5

1 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
2 Serve the Lord with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
3 Know that the Lord, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
5 For the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

Anthem (Music Ministry): "I Will Keep My Eyes On You

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture

Acts 10:24–48

24 And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. 25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. 26 But Peter lifted him up, saying, 'Stand up; I too am a man.' 27 And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. 28 And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. 29 So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.'

30 And Cornelius said, 'Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing 31 and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God. 32 Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' 33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.'

34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: 'Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 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. 39 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, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 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. 42 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. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 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. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy

Spirit just as we have?’ [48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

Sermon

Most of us know what it feels like to stand outside a circle. People are talking, laughing, remembering things they have done together, and we are wondering whether there is room for us. Sometimes nobody means to shut us out. But we still feel it. We do not know the right people, understand the customs, or have the background everyone else seems to share.

That is what sits underneath the surface of today’s passage: Is there room in God’s family for people who have always been considered outsiders? And if God welcomes them, will his people welcome them too?

Last week, in the first half of this chapter, we saw God preparing Cornelius and Peter for a meeting neither could have arranged. Cornelius was told to send for Peter. Peter was given a vision challenging his understanding of what it meant to be clean and unclean. Now the Lord brings them together. But God is doing more than just introducing two men. He is making it clear that Gentiles can belong to Christ without first becoming Jews.

As we walk through the Scripture today watch how God leads the way. He prepares the meeting, He supplies the message, and He gives the Spirit. Salvation is his gracious work from beginning to end. And that grace changes not only the people hearing the gospel, but also the people bringing it.

Acts 10:24–33

[24] And on the following day they entered Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. [25] When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him. [26] But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I too am a man.’ [27] And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. [28] And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean. [29] So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me.’

[30] And Cornelius said, ‘Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing [31] and said, ‘Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been

remembered before God. [32] Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea.' [33] So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord.'

When Peter reaches Caesarea, Cornelius has gathered his relatives and close friends. He does not want to hear this message alone. Whatever God is about to say, he wants the people he loves to hear it too.

There is a gentle challenge here for each of us. We sometimes think sharing our faith requires the ability to answer to every question someone might have. Cornelius does not have all the answers. He simply opens his home and invites others to listen and learn with him. In that there is a lesson for each of us. You can invite someone to church, read a passage with a friend, or say, 'Would you like to come with me?' You do not need to be an expert on God's Word before you can become an inviter.

However, this meeting begins awkwardly. Cornelius falls at Peter's feet and worships him. Peter immediately lifts him up: 'Stand up; I too am a man'. Whatever Cornelius understands about his gesture, Peter refuses to receive honor that belongs to God alone.

We also need to remember that this is a Roman officer meeting a Jewish apostle. Their backgrounds could easily have kept them apart. Yet Peter does not look down on Cornelius, and at the same time he will not let Cornelius put him on a pedestal. They stand together united as human beings who are in need of God's mercy.

This matters. As a pastor I can help you understand Scripture, pray with you, and walk beside you. But I cannot carry the weight of being your Savior. Neither can your favorite teacher. Faithful ministry keeps pointing beyond the messenger to Jesus, because He alone saves, and that is what Peter does.

Then he walks inside. It sounds simple and ordinary to us, but it is an important step.

Jewish concerns about purity and food had created strong boundaries around fellowship with Gentiles. Peter's word translated 'unlawful' in verse 28 can describe something forbidden by custom, not necessarily a specific command in the law of Moses. Here, Peter plainly names a barrier he has been living with.

God has taught him something that reaches beyond the animals in his vision: He says, 'I should not call any person common or unclean.' Peter realizes he must stop treating a person's Gentile background as a reason to keep the Gospel, or himself, at a distance.

Picture someone saying, ‘You are welcome,’ while keeping the front door almost shut. The words sound kind, but the doorway tells another story. Peter’s obedience opens the door. He enters, speaks, and listens.

Ask yourself where might we need to do the same? Perhaps we are comfortable with people who sound like us, vote like us, or have lived respectable lives like ours. But grace does not give us permission to write off the neighbor whose life is unfamiliar or messy. We can hold firmly to God’s truth without holding people at arm’s length.

Cornelius explains his vision, then says, ‘Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord’.

Take note of what he is saying. Not, ‘Tell us something entertaining,’ but, ‘Tell us what God has said.’ And with hearts ready to listen, Peter turns their attention to the God who has brought them together.

> **Acts 10:34–35**
> **34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.**

Peter is not announcing that God has suddenly become kinder. God’s impartiality was already taught in the Old Testament. Peter is discovering how much more widely that truth reaches than he had understood.

The word behind ‘partiality’ has the idea of receiving or favoring someone’s face. Think of a judge who sees an important name and then quietly changes the verdict. God does not judge by the advantages that impress us. Nationality, money, education, and family connections cannot buy his favor.

Peter continues, ‘But in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’ BE careful not to interpret this verse on its own, it needs to be understood in the flow of the whole passage. Peter is not saying that good and decent people earn salvation, or that every religion brings us to God. In just a few moments he will proclaim forgiveness through faith in Jesus.

This means that Cornelius’s prayers and generosity matter. God has not dismissed them. But those good things cannot be a substitute for Christ. If Cornelius could settle his account with God by being sincere and helpful, there would be no need for Peter’s message.

So, his Gentile background does not disqualify him; and his goodness does not save him. And it is that distinction that helps us understand these verses. He is welcome to hear and receive the same Savior whom Jewish believers need.

True faith teaches us to recognize grace before we congratulate ourselves on our response. God is already at work in this story, awakening concern, arranging encounters, and bringing his Word. We do not climb up to him on a ladder of good intentions. He comes down to us in His great mercy.

Perhaps some of you have grown up around church and quietly assume that gives you a better claim on God. Or perhaps you have stayed away because you think your past puts you beyond his welcome. This passage speaks to both fears and false confidence. Your church background cannot replace faith, and a troubled background cannot prevent you from coming to Christ.

Imagine it like this, two people arrive at a hospital. One is well dressed and knows the staff. The other is embarrassed, alone, and unsure where to go. Both need treatment, in the same way we all need God's mercy. The question is not whether we have the right appearance, but whether we will receive the help we cannot provide for ourselves.

And God's welcome is not vague form of friendliness. It comes to us through a one person, and through what he has done in history. So Peter does not stop with a lesson about inclusion. He tells them about Jesus.

> **Acts 10:36–43**
> **36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 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. 39 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, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 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. 42 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. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'**

Peter describes the ‘good news of peace through Jesus Christ,’ adding, ‘he is Lord of all’. The message came first to Israel, but Israel’s Messiah is not confined to one nation. His authority reaches into this Gentile household, and it reaches into our lives today.

Peace here means more than having a quiet afternoon. Our sin has broken our relationship with God. We cannot repair that relationship by ignoring the problem or promising to try harder. Jesus makes peace by dealing with the sin that separates us from God. And as people who have been reconciled to God are called to live in reconciliation with one another.
Notice how plainly Peter tells the story. Jesus ministered in Galilee and Judea after John’s baptism. God anointed him 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’.

‘Anointed’ recalls the setting apart of someone for God’s service. Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Anointed One. The Spirit’s power is displayed not in self-promotion, but in mercy: people are healed and oppression is overcome. Again, we need to be careful here, we cannot use this verse into a claim that every illness is evidence of personal demonic possession. Peter’s emphasis is on Jesus’ power to rescue, not on giving us a diagnosis for every suffering person.

Instead what we are seeing here is a Savior who moves toward human need. If you wonder what his heart is like, look at his ministry. He does not recoil from the broken. He brings help. His followers should therefore be known not merely for discussing what is wrong with the world, but for doing good within it.

Yet Peter does not leave us with Jesus as an inspiring example. He moves straight to the cross: ‘They put him to death by hanging him on a tree’. The word ‘tree’ recalls the Old Testament connection between hanging on a tree and being under a curse. The cross was a shameful death, but Jesus was bearing judgment that was not his own. The sin was ours; the willing sacrifice was his.

In that is the heart of our hope to this day. Jesus did not come simply to show us how to improve ourselves. He came to stand in the place of sinners. We cannot make yesterday’s wrongs disappear by behaving better tomorrow. But Christ has dealt with our guilt through his death.

Then comes the wonderful contrast: ‘But God raised him on the third day’. Human rejection did not have the final word. Jesus is alive. The resurrection is not merely a picture of optimism or a way of saying his ideas survived. Peter says that the chosen witnesses ‘ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead’. They knew the risen

Jesus in real fellowship. Their testimony concerns a living person, not a comforting memory.

And this risen Jesus is appointed ‘judge of the living and the dead’. We should not hurry past that. Everyone will answer to him. The wrongs nobody saw, the selfishness we excused, the sins we explained away, and the cruelty that escaped earthly justice are not invisible to God. His judgment means nothing in our life that was against His Word will simply be shrugged away.

But listen to the next sentence. The one who will judge us is also the one who offers forgiveness: ‘Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name’. The prophets bear witness to this saving work. God is fulfilling his promises, not abandoning them.
‘Through his name’ means through Jesus himself, through who he is and what he has done. Faith is not a payment we offer. It is trusting the Savior who has paid what we could never pay. Even weak faith receives a strong Christ. Your assurance rests finally in his finished work, not in the strength of your feelings.

This means that you do not have to disguise your guilt before coming to him. Confess it. Turn from it. Entrust yourself to Jesus. He does not promise that sin is unimportant; his cross tells us how serious it is. He promises forgiveness to everyone who believes. And as that promise is spoken in Cornelius’s home, God makes its reach unmistakably clear.

> **Acts 10:44–48**
> **44 While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 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. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 ‘Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.**

‘While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word’. Peter has not finished, yet God acts. The listeners speak in tongues and praise him. The Jewish believers accompanying Peter are amazed: the gift of the Spirit has been poured out on Gentiles too.

The crucial point is not that the meeting has become exciting. God is giving unmistakable evidence that these Gentile believers share in the same salvation. Peter’s words are ‘just

as we have'. They are not second-class Christians waiting to become acceptable through circumcision. They belong to Christ.

Commentators differ over the precise nature of the tongues here. The clear emphasis is that God is being magnified, and Peter recognizes the connection with the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. We should not make this particular sign a test that every believer must pass as some people do. This is a decisive moment in the gospel's advance across a major boundary.

John Calvin points out that God's giving of the Spirit while Peter speaks demonstrates the power of Gospel preaching: God does not send teachers merely to fill the air with words, but works through the message by his Spirit.

This means that we cannot argue someone into new spiritual life or manufacture it with the right atmosphere. But we can speak faithfully, pray earnestly, and trust God to work. His sovereignty does not make witness unnecessary. It gives us hope as we witness. Peter then asks, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' God has welcomed them; the church must recognize that welcome.

Chrysostom, an early church father, noticed the force of this reasoning: the gift of the Spirit supplied Peter with a compelling reason to baptize them. The reality had been given, so the outward sign must not be withheld.

This order also helps us. Baptism does not purchase grace, but neither is it disposable. Peter commands it. These new believers are publicly identified with Jesus and received into his people. God's free gift calls for grateful obedience.

Then the chapter closes quietly: 'Then they asked him to remain for some days'. After visions, a sermon, and the outpouring of the Spirit, there is hospitality. Peter stays with people whose home he once would have avoided. They need further teaching, and their shared life gives practical expression to their shared faith.

That is where this passage meets us. Perhaps your next step is to trust Christ rather than your own goodness. Perhaps it is baptism, or renewed commitment to learning his Word. Perhaps it is opening your home to someone you have welcomed in theory but never included in practice.

We cannot reproduce this remarkable day in Caesarea, and we do not need to. We have the same Gospel to proclaim. The crucified Jesus is risen, forgiveness is offered through his name, and his people must not erect barriers he has removed. So let us come to him

honestly, speak of him gladly, and make room for one another warmly. Jesus calls us the 'Salt of the earth' and the 'Light of the world'. So let our words and deeds bear witness to his grace, that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. The door grace opens is not ours to close.

Let us pray,

Merciful God, all our hope rests in your great mercy. Give us the grace to do what you command, and lead us according to your will. We cannot cleanse our own hearts or make ourselves worthy of your welcome. Thank you for Jesus Christ, who died and rose again, and for the forgiveness you give through his name. Kindle in us love for you and for our neighbors. Where pride has closed our hearts, humble us; where fear has silenced our witness, strengthen us; where we have kept others at a distance, teach us hospitality. By your Spirit, make us faithful hearers and doers of your Word. Keep us resting in Christ and rejoicing in the grace that gathers your people together. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Inspired by Augustine's Confessions

Invitation to Offering

In Acts 10, we hear that Cornelius's prayers and gifts to those in need were remembered before God. Our giving does not purchase his favor; it is a grateful response to his mercy. As we present our offerings, let us support the proclamation of Christ and the care of our neighbors, giving with thankful hearts.

Offering Prayer

Offering Hymn #830: "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow"

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him, all creatures here below:
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Closing Hymn #411: "Stand Up and Bless The Lord" (V 1,2,5)

Stand up and bless the Lord;
God's people now rejoice;
stand up and bless the Lord your God
with heart and soul and voice.

Though high above all praise,
above all blessing high,
who would not fear God's holy name,
and praise and magnify?

Stand up and bless the Lord;
the Lord your God adore;
stand up and bless God's glorious name
henceforth forevermore.

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious Father, thank you for the good news of peace through Jesus Christ. Strengthen your church to proclaim him faithfully and to welcome all who come seeking his mercy.

Give wisdom to those entrusted with leadership, and lead the nations in justice and peace. Draw near to those who are ill, grieving, lonely, anxious, or burdened by need. Sustain caregivers, comfort the bereaved, and show us how to serve with practical compassion.

Bring the good news of Christ to those who have not yet heard, and give us courage to invite others to listen with us. Help us to carry your Word into the week ahead, trusting your grace and walking in obedience.

As we share food and fellowship after this service, we thank you for your provision and for those who have prepared it. Bless this meal to nourish our bodies, and bless our conversation to strengthen our love for one another. Make room at our tables for those who might otherwise stand alone. Keep us in the fellowship of your Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Benediction

May God our Father keep you in his gracious care; may Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord of all, assure you of forgiveness through his name; and may the Holy Spirit strengthen you to walk in faith, bear witness to the gospel, and welcome one another in love. Go in the peace of Christ, resting in his grace and serving him with gladness. **Amen.**