

## Acts 10: 1-20 Peter and Cornelius

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May, Redefining the Boundaries

I'm sometimes asked what it was that led me to become ordained? Or how it was that I ended up taking on a parish in the Lake District? One answer to both these questions is that I happened to be in the wrong place **but** at just the right time. I could say it was simply serendipity but a more honest answer is: 'the Spirit of God blows where it wills' and when it does 'stuff happens'. There were coincidences and unexpected events that when I look back I realise could have taken me in several directions - and yet I now see that God had been there before me preparing the way.

It seems to me that something similar is happening in the story of Peter and Cornelius but of course in a much more dramatic way. God prepares both Peter and Cornelius for their encounter which was to bear much fruit. It led to the baptism of many Gentiles, an event which was completely unexpected and probably couldn't have happened at any other time.

When Peter received the summons from Cornelius, he had only just had the vision through which God told him that nothing he had made was to be thought of as unclean. If the message from Cornelius had arrived just 24 hours before the chances are Peter would have refused to go – he still believed his task was to preach only to the people of Israel. If Cornelius had not sent for Peter when he did, he would have missed the meeting which had an extraordinary impact on both him and the early church.

God was preparing both Peter and Cornelius so that they would be ready for this moment of revelation. Cornelius was ready for something new, some major development in his faith journey. Peter was ready to take a huge risk in his ministry – a risk he had not expected or planned for. When Cornelius and Peter entered the unknown territory of their meeting, they discovered that God had been there before them preparing the way in each other's hearts and minds and was waiting to lead them on in a new direction.

There is encouragement for us in this story. On our journey of faith, God is preparing us all the time for the next stage - our faith grows out of the things we learn, the experiences we have and the people we meet. We may not understand where it's all leading but when we look back along the path we have travelled with its twists and turns all over the place there will be some sort of discernible pattern which shows our lives as an evolving event. Not a series of random and isolated events which have no meaning and certainly not just serendipity!

And as we walk into unknown territory especially at this time of Coronavirus, there will no doubt be unexpected encounters or times when we need to take risks as followers of Christ. But we will find that God has been there before us preparing the way. This walking with God requires faith and commitment on our part. It's a lifetime's work to learn what it means to be closely in tune with God. But it's a lifetime's work with God alongside us, God preparing us, God ahead of us, God waiting for us to join him.

Every Blessing, stay safe, Linda