Sermon Highlights

Breaking Down Walls: God's Call to Overcome Prejudice and Expand the Gospel

Sermon Summary:

Drawing from Acts 10, this sermon examines the pivotal moment when God began expanding the reach of the early church beyond its Jewish boundaries to embrace the Gentile world. Through Peter's rooftop vision and the arrival of messengers from the Roman centurion Cornelius, God confronted Peter's deeply ingrained religious and cultural prejudices. Just as God had originally called Abraham to be a voice to all nations, the church was now being commissioned to fulfill that same universal mission. The sermon draws a direct line between Peter's struggle to obey God's command and the personal prejudices believers carry today, challenging the congregation to honestly examine what predispositions prevent them from fully participating in the Great Commission. Pastor Bruce Gordon openly shares his own experience of racial prejudice and the work of the Holy Spirit in overcoming it, grounding the theological message in personal confession and practical application.

Key Points:

- God's design from the time of Abraham was never limited to one nation but was always intended to reach all peoples of the earth

- Peter's vision of the sheet containing unclean animals was not primarily about dietary law but about God declaring all people reachable by the gospel

- Peter's refusal of God's command illustrates how deeply ingrained prejudice can cause believers to tell God "no," even without realizing it

- Cornelius, a Roman centurion, represented the most despised category of Gentile in Jewish eyes, making his inclusion a radical demonstration of God's impartial grace

- God orchestrated both the vision and the arrival of Cornelius's messengers simultaneously, leaving Peter no avenue of escape from obedience

- Every human being is created in the image of God and therefore possesses equal value in God's sight, regardless of race, class, or background

- Personal prejudice is not merely a social wrong but a sin that must be confessed and repented of

- Heaven will be a unified place of worship with no divisions among its inhabitants, which should shape how believers relate to one another now

- Believers must honestly examine what predispositions in their hearts hinder them from fulfilling the mission of reaching the world for Christ

Scripture Reference:

- Acts 10:9-23, which records Peter's rooftop vision and the arrival of Cornelius's messengers in Joppa

Stories:

- Peter's vision of the great sheet descending from heaven three times, containing animals forbidden under Jewish dietary law, with a voice commanding him to rise, kill, and eat, and Peter refusing each time

- The account of Cornelius sending three men to find Peter in Joppa following an angelic visitation, and Peter inviting them in despite his cultural resistance to associating with Gentiles

- Pastor Bruce Gordon's personal account of delivering newspapers as a child in a rural area, being rebuked by his father for addressing a Black woman respectfully, and the lasting effect that had on his thinking

- Pastor Bruce Gordon's account of a physical altercation with a Black student named Hubert Thomas during school integration in the eighth grade, driven by racial prejudice, and his later reflection on how that young man was himself in an extraordinarily difficult situation

- A reference to the biblical account of Jonah fleeing from God in the same city of Joppa, contrasted with Peter's obedient departure toward Cornelius's house