

The Lord's Message: Grafted In

Date: June 5, 2022

Where: Tilghman United Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Acts 10: 30-36, 44-46

How many of you know the Johnny Appleseed Prayer?

Oh, the Lord is good to me.  
And so I thank the Lord.  
For giving me the things I need,  
the sun, and the rain and the appleseed.  
The Lord is good to me.

Oh, and every seed I sow  
Will grow into a tree.  
And someday there'll be apples there  
for everyone in the world to share.  
The Lord's been good to me.

Of course, this prayer refers to a man named Johnny who went all over the colonies planting apple seeds. The legend is greater than the reality. If Johnny did go all over planting the apple seeds into the ground and apple trees did grow, the apples would be small and not very tasty. Apple trees need to be cross-pollinated. That is why apple trees and other fruit trees are grafted into the rootstock. This produces larger and better tasting fruit.

The Bible talks about grafting. Noah grafted. After the flood, the Bible tells us that Noah planted a vineyard, **Genesis 9:20**. In order for Noah to do this, he must have taken cuttings and put them into a pot and grafted them onto rootstock in order to produce grapevines. Grafting goes back a long time.

Paul talks about a different kind of grafting. In **Romans 11:16-24**, Paul talks about the Gentiles being grafted into the fulfillment of the promise of God to Israel, of the good news of a Messiah. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy, but not all the Israelites accepted Jesus.

Today we are celebrating Pentecost, the birthday of the church. The Pentecost that is referred to in Acts 2 was the first Pentecost. The coming of the promised Holy Spirit to the people of Israel. The people gathered are all Jewish. They have come for the Pentecost worship, the celebration of the first of the harvest.

The Gentile Pentecost does not happen until Peter visits Cornelius' house in **Acts 10**. This is the moment that I suspect many of us believers are grafted into the family of God.

Let us pray.

With your Bibles opened to Acts 10, I want to start with verse 1. We need to define the people involved in this passage of scripture. We have Cornelius, who is a Roman centurion. He is the leader of 100 Roman soldiers of the prestigious Italian Regiment. He did not come from the area of Palestine, but probably Rome or the area around Rome. He came from a very noble family. He was very rich. His job was to maintain order for Rome.

The next verse is very intriguing. He and his whole family is very devout in their worship of God. He gives generously to those in need. He prays regularly to God.

God knows the heart of this man. In verses 3-8, while Cornelius is praying to God, God gives him a vision of an angel bringing a message to seek out Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with Simon the tanner. I find it interesting the Peter is staying with a tanner. God commanded his people not to be around dead animals or people. They would have to go through ceremonial cleansing. Nonetheless, Cornelius sends two of his most trusted servants and a devout soldier to find Peter and convince him to come to Cornelius.

While on their way to Peter, God visits Peter. In verses 9-16, Peter is up on the roof praying and God gives him a vision of a large sheet being let down from heaven. Contained in this sheet is all the animals that are unclean to eat according the dietary laws that God gave Moses in Leviticus 11. God is now telling Peter to eat them. Peter refuses and says, "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." God says to Peter, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This vision appears to Peter three times.

As Peter is trying to understand the meaning of the vision, Cornelius' entourage arrives. The Holy Spirit moves Peter to go downstairs and go with the men. The next day, they leave for Cornelius' house.

They arrive and as Peter enters Cornelius' house, the house is full of Cornelius' friends and family. Peter tells them in verse 28 about his reluctance to come into the house of a Gentile, but God has shown him that this is okay. Peter is still unsure about why God wants him here, verse 29.

Cornelius tells Peter the vision that God gave him, verse 30-33. Peter now understands the purpose of the vision that God gave Cornelius and the vision that God gave to him. Peter replies in verse 34-37. Peter goes on and tells them about Jesus. As Peter is speaking, the

Holy Spirit comes upon the Gentiles in verse 44. Verse 46, gives us the evidence that this is the Holy Spirit. The circumcised believers in verse 45 are the Jewish believers that came along with Peter.

After witnessing the work of the Holy Spirit, Peter can only reply in verse 47-48, let us baptize them with water.

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit when He ascended. The Holy Spirit is available to all, including those that have been grafted in. Let us give our thanks and praise to God for grafting us in. Amen.