

# Building Bridges, Breaking Walls

(Series: Reimagining Church; Message Twenty-Three)

Acts 10

A. We are a nation on edge - impacted by fear, suspicion, distrust, and racism

B. People are afraid of people who are not like them

1. We all possess dark tendencies that build walls and separate us
2. Jesus said, *“Go into the world making disciples of all nations”* (cf. Acts 1:8)

## THE PEOPLE

A. Peter (a disciple of Jesus!) is a prejudiced and self-righteous person

1. Peter was Jewish and “hated” Gentiles
2. When Jesus said, *“Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations,”* the disciples heard *“Go and make disciples of the Jews in every nation”*

B. Then comes Cornelius, a Gentile, a Roman, a military guy

1. He and his family are lost; they don’t know Jesus. That’s sad
2. Even sadder is that no one in the church seemed to care they were lost

C. Peter is staying by Simon the tanner

1. Tanners work with dead animals; so he is perpetually unclean
2. God is already working out His preferred future in Peter’s life

## THE PLAN

A. Peter sees the vision of a large sheet filled with all kinds of creatures

*“About noon the following day as they were on their journey...Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air.”* (Acts 10:9-12)

1. *“Then a voice told him, ‘Get up, Peter. Kill and eat!’”* (Acts 10:13)
  - a. These foods were forbidden in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14
  - b. Peter: *“I’m not eating something unclean!”*
2. God: *“Peter, don’t ever call anything impure that I’ve made clean!”*

B. Then there are three men at the door (10:19)

1. God is the expert at making us face His “preferred future” head on

2. God’s preferred future is a church of bridge-builders rather than wall-builders

C. This bridge God is asking Peter to build will be a costly one...

1. It will cost Peter his pride, self-righteousness, prejudices, and reputation
2. The first step: they spend time together
3. The second step: Peter listens and learns (10:34-35)

*“I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation that fear him and do what is right!”* (10:34-35)

4. The third step: Peter shares the Gospel

*“While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message.”* (Acts 10:44)

5. The final step: Life together

D. This is more about Peter changing than Cornelius coming to Jesus

1. People coming to Jesus is amazing; nations coming to Jesus is incredible
2. Jesus calls us to build bridges instead of walls

## THE PREJUDICES

A. (1) We need to face our prejudices. We need to admit and address them

B. (2) We need to be willing to pay the price to build the necessary bridges

1. Never forget the price it cost Jesus to build a bridge to you (Gentiles)
2. If the walls are not broken, the Church has no Good News

*“I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”* (Luke 2:10b)

C. (3) We need to obey God more than maintain our comfort and traditions

1. What prevents us from sharing the Gospel with those who are not mirror-images of us - but are image bearers of God?

*“In Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ...he has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...reconciling them to God through the cross...”* (Ephesians 2:13,14,16)

2. Christ brought us together through his death; the hostilities have to go
3. This is God’s preferred future for His Church

D. Do we really believe everyone matters to God?