

I Can See Clearly
Acts 10:34-48

Johnny Nash sings: “I can see clearly now, the rain is gone. I can see all obstacles in my way.”

Peter opened his mouth and said: *Truly I understand...*

It would truly be a great thing if we could fully understand our relationship with God, and our relationship with those around us. If could see ourselves clearly, see God clearly, and see our neighbor clearly, all obstacles would be removed. Life would be amazing!

So what did Peter understand that was so important? It began with God giving him a vision. Peter *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 and birds. Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.” “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.” The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.” This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven* (Acts 10:11-16).

God gave Peter this vision to prepare him for an interaction with one of his neighbors. This neighbor was a Roman centurion named Cornelius.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, “Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” Peter went down and said to the men, “I’m

the one you’re looking for. Why have you come?” The men replied, “We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say.” (Acts 10:19-22)

Peter went with them, and when they got to Cornelius’ house, he did something he would not have done before the vision – he went in. Why is that such a big deal? Peter explains: *“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean.”* (Acts 10:28)

Peter went on to tell the house full of people about Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. You heard me read it earlier, so you know what happened when Peter shared this Gospel message. The Holy Spirit did His thing. He worked in the hearts of those who listened.

That’s the main reason we are here on Sunday mornings – to have the Holy Spirit do His thing. We listen to God’s word spoken in the Absolution, read from the lectern and proclaimed from pulpit. We do this believing that God will keep His promise and work through His Word to create and sustain faith and deliver to us the forgiveness of our sins.

We need that forgiveness. Time and time again we show in our thoughts, words, and deeds that we do not clearly see our neighbor the way we should. Instead of seeing each person as created by God, and one for whom Christ went to the cross, we see them as clouds. If they just went away, our

day would be so much brighter and pleasant. There are people we view that way. We wish they would just go away and stay away.

Then there are the people we like and love. We don't want them to go away, at least most of the time. But even they can irritate us, because we make it about us, and not about them.

Jesus came to be the servant of all. He tells us to be the same – to place the wants and needs of others above our own. Man, that's hard.

That's why Jesus did His thing, and why the Holy Spirit does His thing – so we can see clearly.

We can often see our sin clearly. We are familiar with the Law. We live under it daily. Though, I doubt that we fully understand the extent of God's displeasure over our sin. We get a glimpse of it as we look at Jesus bleeding and dying on the cross, and hear His agonizing cry, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* But repentance isn't about how sorry we are for our sins, just that we are sorry for it, and desire forgiveness.

That is something that is not as familiar to us. In fact the message of the Gospel is so foreign to us that we sometimes doubt it, or even forget about it. We do not live in a Gospel state of mind.

Here's a question for you to drive home this point. If you think about your life – the things you think, say, and do, is there any way you can think of yourself as perfect? If you can think of yourself as perfect, raise your hand.

Okay, a few of you. Would you have raised your hand if I hadn't just prompted you to think Gospel? For those of you who didn't raise your hands, think Gospel. Is there any way you can think of yourself as perfect?

Jesus came to make you perfect in His Father's eyes. Because of Jesus' life of obedience and sacrificial death on the cross your sins are forgiven. The Father sees you as His perfect and beloved child because you are clothed in Christ's righteousness.

How might your life be different if you could clearly see yourself that way all the time? ... The Holy Spirit is working in you to make that happen. The Holy Spirit delivers to you the forgiveness of sins and works to open your eyes to the truth of who you are as God's child.

And who else is God's child? Those you like and love, those you have wanted to be like clouds, and even those you don't know. The Holy Spirit is with you and in you to see them more clearly. You are not alone as you battle against your sinful flesh.

You will see little victories now and then as you see yourself more clearly, see your relationship with God more clearly, and see your neighbor more clearly. You will also see little defeats. But Christ has won the victory and gives it to you freely. And so we live as His people – His forgiven, perfect people. Amen.