

ACTS 10:34–38. (EHV)

Then Peter began to speak: “Now I really am beginning to understand that God does not show favoritism, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. He sent his word to the people of Israel, proclaiming the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached. God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the Devil, because God was with him.”

Recently it's been in the news again that our president really wants to our country to get control of Greenland.

China refuses to acknowledge Taiwan as a separate, independent country. Instead China maintains that Taiwan is one of its own inalienable provinces in a state of rebellion.

In 2014, Russia annexed and took control of Crimea, which was then a part of Ukraine, and that action continues to be contested with armed conflict.

I'm not making any political statement about any of these things. I'm simply citing them to note this: People in power tend to want to have power over more.

But Peter reminds us this morning that there has been, continues to be, and will always be only one true Lord of all, Jesus Christ.

The apostle Peter had been going around to visit various gatherings of believers. During a visit to Joppa, a city northwest of Jerusalem along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, he had raised a believer named Tabitha from the dead by God's power. He then stayed for many days with a man named Simon the Tanner, whose house was by the sea in Joppa.

About thirty-eight miles farther north along the coast was the city of Caesarea. A Roman centurion named Cornelius was stationed there. He was a Gentile convert to Judaism, and was known as a God-fearing man who gave generously to the poor.

God used timing and some apparent coincidences to bring these two men together. One day around 3 p.m., an angel of God came to Cornelius in a vision and told him to send men to Simon the Tanner's house in Joppa to bring a man named Peter, who had a message for him. Cornelius immediately sent two of his servants and a soldier who was one of his personal attendants. The next day around noon, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He probably faced Jerusalem out of habit. But he then appears to have spent some time relaxing up there, and we can imagine him doing so against a very beautiful backdrop, with the rays of the noonday sun sparkling on the sea. While he was up there, he fell into a trance and had a vision. Something like a large sheet was let down from heaven to earth by its four corners, and in the sheet were all kinds of four-footed animals and reptiles and birds, including animals labeled as unclean in the law of Moses. When Peter saw the animals, a voice, which Peter recognized as God's, told him to get up, kill, and eat the animals. But Peter said, “Certainly not, Lord, for I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.

But the voice called out again, “What God has made clean, you must not continue to call unclean.”

This vision happened three times before the sheet was taken up to heaven the final time and Peter came out of the trance. While Peter was puzzling over the meaning of his vision, just then Cornelius's men arrived and told Peter that their master, Cornelius the centurion, was directed by a holy angel to send for Peter and to hear what he had to say. Peter invited them in and they stayed with him at the tanner's house the rest of that day and that night. The following morning, Peter and some others set out with the men to go to Caesarea.

When he arrived at the house where Cornelius was staying, he went in and found many people gathered there, since Cornelius had called together his Gentile relatives and close friends. Peter told them, "You understand how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to associate with or visit anyone who is not a Jew. But God showed me that I should no longer continue to call anyone impure or unclean. That is why I came without objection when you sent for me. May I ask why you sent for me?"

Then Cornelius told Peter about his vision of an angel and concluded, "Now then, we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything that the Lord has instructed you to say."

By now, Peter realized what his vision meant and what God wanted him to say. So he stressed that God accepts people in every nation who fear him and do what is right. Peter also realized that his rabbi and master Jesus had exemplified this message and truth, because after he was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power in his baptism, he went around doing good and healing *all* who were oppressed by the Devil. He showed himself to be the Lord of *all*.

On this Baptism of Our Lord Sunday, let's not pass over too quickly how Peter describes Jesus's baptism. He describes it as his being anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. Christ and Messiah mean "the Anointed One." "The Anointed One" could be paraphrased as "the Chosen One" or "the Deliverer," but he was called the Anointed One, because it was prophesied in the Old Testament that the promised Savior would be anointed with the Spirit of the Lord, and because men who were supposed to represent God to his chosen people—prophets, priests, and kings—were all anointed with oil to signify that God had called them into their position. Jesus, who was God's ultimate representative, prophet, priest, and king all in one, was not anointed with oil, but was anointed with the Holy Spirit in his baptism. And he was anointed with power there. Jesus didn't need baptism for forgiveness, as John the Baptist himself recognized (Matthew 3:14). But Jesus, as true man, did desire the Spirit's power given in baptism to do good and to do battle with the devil and his forces. Jesus was able to carry out his saving mission, in part, because he was baptized.

Back to Peter's description of what Jesus then did after he was baptized. Perhaps you recall some of the instances where Jesus made it clear he was the Lord of all. There was the time he conversed with and converted the Samaritan woman at the well, who had been married five times and was now living with a man to whom she was not married (John 4:1–42). There was the time he healed ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan, and in fact that Samaritan was the only one of the ten who came back to thank him (Luke 17:11–19). There was the time Jesus crossed the Sea of Galilee into Gentile territory and healed two men who were possessed by many demons, and commissioned one of the men to remain as a witness to him in that area (Matt. 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20). There was the time Jesus healed a Canaanite woman's daughter who lived in the region of Tyre and Sidon, and commended the woman's faith (Matt. 15:21–28). And

even more applicable to the account in front of us, there was the time when a centurion in Capernaum had a servant who was deathly sick, and he sent some Jewish leaders to ask Jesus to come heal his servant. But when Jesus started going to his house, the centurion sent some friends to tell him he didn't deserve to have Jesus come under his roof. If he would just say the word, his servant would be healed. And Jesus told the crowd around him he had not found such great faith even in Israel (Luke 7:1–10). And then there were all the people who were Jews by blood and by religion, but who were unclean due to their diseases or the sinful lives they had led. And Jesus preached repentance also to them and healed them and ate with them.

Jesus is the Lord of all.

Later Peter also stresses that Jesus died for all, so that, “through his name, *everyone* who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”

Jesus is the Lord of all.

And think of how Jesus has demonstrated that truth in your own life, too. Peter hints at this in a couple different ways.

First of all, by mentioning Jesus's baptism, Peter reminds us of the fact that God has also anointed us with the Holy Spirit and with power in our baptism. He has washed away all our sins, past, present, and future, and has equipped and empowered us to do battle with our own sinful flesh, temptations from the world, and the devil and all his forces. And correct me if I'm wrong, but neither you nor I are descended from Abraham, like Peter was. We live all the way on the other side of the world, and our ancestors came from from many different countries. But Jesus is the Lord of all, so here we are.

Second, Peter also tells us why God anointed us and incorporated us into his people. “God does not show favoritism.” This is probably the best way to translate the Greek here, but it's kind of unfortunate. If we break down the English word *favorite*, we find someone or something who is the object or recipient of someone's favor. And if that's how we understand favoritism, being the object of someone's favor, then God does show favoritism, and we are proof. The reason I am baptized and not this guy or that woman is because God showed me his favor.

But Luke's Greek that captures Peter's speech literally has Peter saying that “God is not a face-taker.” In other words, when God decided from eternity that you and I would be his own and that he would make and keep us as his own through baptism and the hearing of his Word and the receiving of his Son's Supper, he did not take our faces into consideration when doing so. He did not pull up some sort of heavenly digital software and scroll through all the people that would be born and say, “Ooh, that person and that person look nice. I'm going to choose them. Ugh, not him. Not her. Definitely him. Definitely her.” Everything we see when we look into the mirror had absolutely nothing to do with God choosing us—not our looks or build anything about our personality, our intelligence, our ability, our interests, our sense of humor, our level of wealth, you name it. None of it had anything to do with God's choice. It was completely a choice of grace, a choice of favor, on God's part, a choice of undeserved love.

Now that might at first seem to contradict the point Peter is making, that Jesus is the Lord of all, since he chooses some and not others. There certainly is a mystery there that we're not going to fully understand until we get to heaven. But imagine if God choosing any of us did have

something to do with us—if he really liked blonde hair, or a certain laugh or skin color, or if he had a tendency to choose studious and scholarly people. Then you *really* could not say that Jesus is the Lord of all, because he would clearly have preferences.

But that's not how it is. The people he chooses come from all nations and have all sorts of appearances, skin colors, languages, interests, economic statuses, intelligence levels, and generally vary as widely as the east does from the west. Which underscores the truth that Jesus is the Lord of all. He was born for all. He taught for all. He did good for all. He died for all. He wants all to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. He is not a face-taker. He is the Lord of all.

Jesus is, objectively, the Lord of all. You can either acknowledge his lordship gladly or live in a state of rebellion against it. But when he comes to judge all the living and the dead, the truth of this claim will be crystal clear. But when we see how he is Lord of all for our benefit—doing good to us, forgiving us, saving us eternally, and doing all of this without partiality or face-taking—how can we not continue to want to be his glad and willing subjects?

Jesus is the Lord of all. Which means he is your Lord and mine. Amen.