

Bible Study for Sunday 9th May 2021

Preparation

In our Bible Study this week we will be looking at the following lectionary readings set for Sunday 9th May.

- **Acts 10:44-48**
- **Psalm 98**
- **1 John 5:1-6**
- **John 15:9-17**

When exploring this week's readings you may wish to follow the following pattern:

Pray a simple prayer first or remind yourself of these words from **Psalm 98** "Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises."

Read one of the readings.

Pause

Reflect on the reading

You might want to ask yourself

- What does this reading say about belonging to God?
- What is God's love like?
- What does this reading mean to me today?

Try re-reading the passage and see if what you noticed first time becomes clearer or something else emerges for you. You may want to make a note of anything that emerged for you.

After your reflection, you may wish to move on to the other reading, but you don't have to look at them both.

When you have finished your reflections for the day, pray the **final prayer**:

God of love, light and life, we adore you. May the joy of Easter continue opening our hearts to all the people we encounter in our lives. Amen.

If you want to read a short reflection please see next page.

Reflection

As Pentecost approaches we see in the readings (as also last week with the Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch) the message that Christ's resurrection and forgiving love is beginning to be widely shared with the whole world.

In the Acts reading, the line:

"The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out *even* on the Gentiles"

Clearly this was not what the early circumcised believers expected... Even the uncircumcised Gentiles! The thought that the message of Christ, or that the Holy Spirit herself could be received by non-Jewish people (like the Eunuch) was beyond what they had imagined.

Of course what God can imagine (the whole of creation, for example) is both wonderful and beyond us, although it is true the God has given human beings imaginations too, and that is a wonderful gift to be used by God's Holy Spirit for the times we live in.

Two things strike me most about these readings, firstly that God had imagined a more open Gospel than the original Christians had expected and secondly that God still inspires us, by the Holy Spirit, to imagine an ever fuller expression of that grace and love.

For this reason we can never limit God's love and God's grace. It may seem to us that there are people who are beyond the grace of God – like Peter's friends thought about the uncircumcised Greeks or the Jewish people thought about Ethiopian Eunuchs, but the truth of the Holy Spirit is that she blows open doors that we thought had been shut long ago and surprises us with God's love which knows no bounds.

This is relevant at the moment as the Methodist Conference is about to consider the "God in love unites us" report. This report talks about how the church treats people from the LGBTQ+ community.

This Sunday's reading and last Sunday's reading may prompt us to ask with Peter's people "What is the limit of God's love?" We may say that in terms of others – "Can it be that *even* they are included?" Or indeed, it might be that we can say this in terms of our own understanding of God's inclusive love, "Can it be that *even* I am included?"

This reminds me of Charles Wesley's hymn, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood?"

John Wesley's emphasis on all people being given access to God's love is one of the things that defines the people called Methodists. Wesley believed that we are all called into a relationship with God through the love of Christ. This love for all is at the heart of our readings this week.