

# Our Sunday Readings

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES  
10:25-26,34-35,44-48  
PSALM 98:1-4  
I JOHN 4:7-10  
JOHN 15:9-17

## Bearing Fruit

### **ACTS 10:25-26,34-35,44-48**

#### **Reading closely**

1. Who is Cornelius?
2. Why does Cornelius fall at Peter's feet?
3. How do you think Peter felt when Cornelius knelt before him?
4. Who do you think are among those who *fear God and act uprightly*?
5. How do you imagine the Spirit manifesting itself?
6. How might Peter and his companions have reacted at first?
7. Do you think all of Peter's companions were comfortable with what happened?
8. What all might Cornelius and the others who lived with him have felt?
9. How might Peter and his companions have been changed by the time they spent with these Gentiles?

#### **Living the word**

10. Has God ever acted differently from how you thought God should have acted?
11. Do you ever try to contain or control the Spirit?
12. What happens when people try to control God's Spirit?

### **THE FIRST READING**

#### **To the Gentiles**

After showing God fulfilling his promises to the Jews, Luke shows God offering salvation to Gentiles. The story of Cornelius transitions us from the apostles' ministry to the Jews to their mission to Gentiles. Cornelius isn't Jewish, but he is *devout and God-fearing* (10:1-2).

#### **Astounded by the gift**

Peter and the other Jewish apostles didn't know that God planned to offer salvation to everyone. Peter's words reflect his new understanding and acceptance of God's plan (vv.34-35).

The Jewish followers of Jesus are again taken by surprise when the holy Spirit comes upon Cornelius and his household before these Gentiles are baptized. The presence of God's Spirit is an inarguable sign that God accepts these Gentiles who have accepted Jesus.

#### **Becoming one**

When Cornelius and his household are baptized, they become part of a community that fulfills God's promise of peace. Jews, Samaritans, and now Gentiles are unified by the Spirit.

**JOHN 15:9-17**

**Reading closely**

1. How do Jesus' other commandments all flow from the one given here?
2. How has Jesus kept his Father's commandments?
3. Do you think of Jesus as joyful?
4. How is Jesus' relationship with his Father similar to his relationship with his disciples?
5. What all does Jesus want for his disciples?
6. What all does Jesus expect of his disciples?
7. What are all the ways a disciple *bears fruit*?
8. How can disciples know their prayers will be answered?

**Living the word**

9. Would you describe yourself as a joyful person?
10. How is your joy incomplete?
11. Are there things you think Jesus hasn't shared with you?

**THE GOSPEL READING**

**Interconnected**

This passage comes right after the one we heard last Sunday. It continues the theme of remaining in Jesus. The Father's love flows through Jesus to us. Our love for Jesus flows back through him to the Father. Thus, through Jesus, we are all united to God and share in God's love. We only enter into this loving union with God, however, when we strive to love as faithfully as Jesus did.

**Love one another**

The only commandment Jesus gives in John's Gospel is *love one another*. Before giving it, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples (13:1f). He assumes the role of a slave in order to help his followers understand the self-giving love to which he calls them. His startling gesture points ahead to his crucifixion.

The love we are to have for one another is thus all-encompassing. Hopefully we won't face death as we strive to be perfectly loving people, but we will have to set aside our personal preoccupations and embrace the needs and concerns of others.

**No longer slaves**

Slaves couldn't ask why their master was giving them a particular order. They simply had to obey. By taking the time to help his disciples understand his mission, Jesus treats them as those who can now freely and knowingly participate in it.

Jesus revealed God's love and how it is brought into the world. The task of those who believe in him is to bear that same selfless love (*the fruit*) to others. In the end, only this fruit – perfect love and all the good that comes from it – will remain.

**Complete joy**

Earlier in his farewell discourse Jesus promised *peace* to his disciples (14:27). Now he promises them *joy* (v.11). He's about to demonstrate perfect love. Jesus is thus the answer to the longing in people's hearts for lasting peace, joy, and love.

**Fruit of the vine**

In the other three Gospels Jesus tells his disciples during his last meal with them that he won't drink wine again until he drinks it from within the fullness of God's reign (Mark 14:25). Like the references to vines and fruit in John's Gospel, this statement evokes God's promise of an eternal feast enjoyed in the company of friends (Proverbs 9:1-6, Isaiah 25:6, Amos 9:13-15, John 2:1-11).

**PRAYER**

*author unknown*

Lord Jesus,  
 I give you my hands to do your work.  
 I give you my feet to go your way.  
 I give you my eyes to see as you do.  
 I give you my tongue to speak your words.  
 I give you my mind that you may think in me.  
 I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.  
 Above all, I give you my heart  
 that you may love in me  
 your Father and all humankind.  
 I give you my whole self that you may grow in me,  
 so that it is you, Lord Jesus,  
 who live and work and pray in me. Amen.