

Acts 11:1-30 - Bair

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 July 2026

Preacher: Daniel Bair

[0:00] Well, I don't know about you, but I'm the kind of person who skips the recap. You know, the 90 seconds at the top of an episode, the scenes flash by that you've already seen.

And I grab the remote. I don't have time to waste on recaps. Well, today we come to a recap. Acts 11. Here Peter stands up in Jerusalem to tell the story we just heard preached last week.

A lot of it word for word the same. What do we do with this? And the story is so important that the Holy Spirit decided to include it in the book of Acts not once, not twice, but three times.

We'll see this again in Acts 15 at the council. I think the Spirit of God is doing something when he repeats something three times. He's underlining. He's trying to grab your attention and say this is important.

This is not skippable content. This is important. Something going on here that we need to hear. This is not a history lesson. It's more than a history lesson.

[1:05] There's something in this for us to learn today. And I would like to suggest that in this passage, God is trying to show us the people he would add to your life.

And the quiet, respectable ways we tend to use to try to get out of that. So this passage this morning, if you have a front door, this is a message about your front door.

If you have a kitchen table, if you have a lunch table, if you have a baseball game, or if you have a gathering of any kind, this is about your table and who you invite to your table.

So don't skip the recap. It's not a good time for a nap. We'll forgive you if you're jet lagged.

Speaking to one person in particular.

But before we do jump into this passage, I do want to do a previously on Acts up to this point. I have five things, five threads that I think the Spirit is using this chapter to tie together.

[2:04] So previously on Acts, in chapter 2, the Holy Spirit at Pentecost fell. 3,000 were added to the number. Previously on Acts, in chapter 7, Stephen was stoned.

And the church began to bleed. And then previously on Acts, in chapter 8, those believers were scattered like seed thrown from the hand from Jerusalem.

And also in that chapter, on a desert road, we meet a foreigner. No respectable assembly would have had seated. And he looked at water and said, What prevents me from being baptized?

Fourth, previously on Acts, in chapter 9, that man who held the coats at the stoning of Stephen is knocked flat on the Damascus road and made an apostle.

Finally, previously on Acts, in chapter 10, last week, this Roman centurion in Caesarea and this blanket from heaven full of all kinds of good creatures, a good Jew would sooner starve than eat.

[3:14] So these five threads here in chapter 11 are gathered together into one pretty bow. So we'll see that this morning. As we look at this first half of the chapter, I'm going to pause especially at the seams, the part that's different from chapter 10.

Why is this recorded differently here? And hopefully get some things from that. And then in verses 19 through 30, we'll see the recap ends, something new begins. Before we jump in, let's begin with another word of prayer.

Heavenly Fathers, we dive into your scripture this morning. Would your Holy Spirit go before the words that come out of my mouth? And as they did when Peter preached, would you work in the hearts of your saints to bring about the truths you would have us to learn this morning?

We pray in Christ's name, amen. Okay, so the one thing, if you take nothing else, this is the one thing. Take this. God has already welcomed the people we would keep out.

That's the message, the primary message here. He did it before we woke up today. He did it before Peter preached a sermon. We're not asked to begin the welcome.

[4:29] We're asked to stop standing in the way of it. And I think we find that out honestly, not at the door to this church, at the door to our homes.

In this chapter, we'll hear three beats throughout. First, God moves first. Second, get out of the way. Third, set the table.

Okay, so those are the three beats that these five scenes are hammering on. I'm trying to play off of the musical illusion from last week if you were here, so keep that in mind. Now we're playing drums. So verses four through 10, let's start here. This is where God moves. And look how Peter begins his defense. Not with an argument, not with a position paper, not with a vote. He begins in verse five with this vision that we read last week.

A sheet let down from heaven, filled with animals, the law called unclean. And this voice, rise, Peter, kill and eat. But let's go back one verse.

[5:31] Before any of that, Luke says that Peter laid this out in order. The word in order is the same word that Luke uses at the top of his gospel to say, I thought it good to give you an orderly account of things.

I'm laying this out in order. I think what he's saying here is that this is not, this is not Peter sitting around a campfire telling a story. No, this is a testimony.

Peter is testifying to the truth of what he was given. He's laying this out in order to convince, to change people's minds about, well, about these people that God wants in.

And in this section, last week we kind of saw the bird's eye view of it. This week we're hearing the story more from Peter's own skin, from inside his viewpoint.

And I really like verse 8. Peter says no to God from the rooftop. A grown man arguing with heaven about lunch.

[6:34] Good old Peter. I love Peter. We can relate to him. I find that strangely comforting. Okay, Peter. I can't eat that for lunch. But listen to how he puts it the second time.

In chapter 10, he said he's never eaten anything unclean. Here, he takes it a step further. And in verse 8, he says, nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.

He didn't even like taste it and spit it out. No, nothing unclean passes my lips. By no means. And he's talking to these others in Jerusalem who were like him.

Like you guys. Nothing unclean ever entered this mouth of mine. That's what I said to God. I can't eat this. It's unclean. But then look at verse 9.

The voice that answers him. What God, and this is the hinge for the whole chapter. What God has made clean, do not call common.

[7:32] What God has made clean, do not call common. To call common, it's a verb. Do not common it. Don't take what God has scrubbed clean and stamp it profane.

God is not adjusting Peter's diet. He's handing him a verdict. Not about pork, but about people. There's a centurion's house in Caesarea.

And God has already decided about the souls therein. But I think we should pause here for a moment to feel the violence of this to Peter. Peter. These food laws were not fussiness.

They were a fence. This was a fence that God himself had built around Israel. This daily reminder that we're a people set apart for God. Holy.

Not like the nations. The Gentiles. And Peter had kept this fence his whole life. And now God, the one who built it, is tearing a hole in the side of it and saying, Peter, go through.

[8:43] Oh, wait a second. I was trying to think how to illustrate this for us today. The only thing I could think of is the table here.

We fence the table here. And something like, God saying this to Peter would be something like, if Pastor Godoy one Sunday said, we're opening the table to everyone.

Anyone can come to the table. Muslim, atheist, whoever. The table's open to anyone. That's what Peter hears in this. He's like, wait, wait, wait. This is fenced just for us.

Now, we'll come back to the table in a moment and why that would be ludicrous to open the table that way and what it means to fence and welcome at the table. But before we do that, let's keep going here.

I think the bone beneath this whole chapter, beneath our salvation, is that grace is not a thing that we start. While we are still up on the rooftop saying, by no means, the Lord's already let the sheet down.

[9:49] While we were enemies of God, Christ died for us. The welcome is his. It always has been, always will be. So that's scene one. God moves.

Peter doesn't. This is all God. Okay, so what is Peter going to do? This is verses 11 through 14. God has moved. What's Peter going to do? Look at verse 11. At that very moment, at that exact second, the vision's disappeared.

Before he's made it down the stairs, the doorbell rings. At that very moment, this is not lucky timing. This is God.

This is what we call provenance. God steering ordinary moments to arrive at his perfect timing. I'm reminded of, this one's for Owen, I'm reminded of the scene in *The Hobbit* when Gandalf says, a wizard is never late.

He arrives precisely when he intends to. Okay, that's, maybe that's putting it too simply. But God works in such a way that everything works together to come when he intends it.

[10:59] That's God's timing. That's provenance. And the Spirit tells Peter to go with him. Make no distinction. Don't worry about Jew, Gentile thing. Don't worry about that right now.

Go with him. Dave said this before us last week in chapter 10. And with God, there's no partiality. No sorting of nations into the clean and the unclean.

And the God who shows no partiality will not allow his apostle, his disciples, his followers to show any either. So Peter goes. And here's the next scene in chapter 10.

The angel simply told Cornelius to sin for Peter. We're not given anything else about it. But listen to how Peter recounts the angel's words now. He says that this Peter who you sin for will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and your whole household.

The whole household. Salvation. Saved. The whole house. This is not in the first introduction. And Peter's turned this memory over and he's, what was the point of all this?

[12:02] It wasn't about the food. It was about the people in this place. It was a household salvation. So that's scene two. Peter's entire role, the great apostle, the rock upon whom the church would be built, it was not the author of the welcome, but he was called to refuse to block it.

He had nothing to do with the salvation of Cornelius. He did not cleanse him, but he stepped back so the gospel could step in. Scene three is verses 15 through 17.

And watch what happens here because it's fast. There's this kind of immediacy going on here in this story. As I began to speak. He began speaking his message.

And Peter says in verse 15, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. As I began, before the sermon was done, he got through point one maybe.

Before the preacher was ready, before one hand was laid on anyone, the Spirit came. The Spirit fell. There was no button he pushed, no switch to flip.

[13:15] God simply acted directly over the heads of the professionals. If that pattern sounds familiar, it should. We heard it this morning in our first reading in Genesis.

You know, Laban goes out and he's praying for someone to come. And this is his words in verse 45. Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebecca! The grace ran ahead of his prayer.

Well, here, the grace runs ahead of Peter's preaching. This detail is kind of humbling for a preacher. The Spirit does not need my amazing words and inspiring language. The Spirit doesn't need that.

The Spirit needs my obedience.

My second drumbeat is get out of the way. Even something like that can be misheard. Like, well, I got to watch out so God can work. Well, no, it's not so much getting out of the way of God. And it's not even so much getting out of the way of the recipient.

[14:26] It's more getting out of your own way to let the Spirit work. Notice Peter calls this moment the beginning, an arche.

In the beginning. He's not referring to Genesis. He's not even referring to John 1. He's referring to Acts 2. In the beginning of the church, the Pentecost moment when the Spirit fell.

In the beginning. The same Spirit. Not a lesser thing. Not a leftover. Not a secondary spiritual blessing. He says, look at verse 17.

He says, the same gift. An equal gift. To be handed to these people, that they could be cleansed and indwelt by the same Spirit.

They're not coming in a side door. It's not side door salvation. Everyone comes in through the front door. And then, here's another seam here.

[15 : 25] In verse 16, Peter remembers something. He recalls the word of the Lord. He says, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

That's not in chapter 10. But here in 11, he says this. It's as if he wants us to remember that on the rooftop, he wasn't inventing some new doctrine.

He was being reminded of the truth that was there from the beginning. In fact, it was always the truth for Israel to be a nation for the outsiders. The fence was never meant to keep people out. And that brings us to Peter's question. If then, verse 17, God gave them the same Spirit as he gave us, who was I that I could stand in the way of God?

Stand in God's way? Hmm. Okay. I don't usually give the Greek words here, but this is an important one. Okay. Kuluo. Kuluo.

[16 : 39] To hinder. To stand in God's way. To prevent. To dam the stream. That's not a curse word. Just to clarify. I encountered this word last week.

Okay. So, last Sunday, most of you know I wasn't here. I'm sure I was greatly sorely missed. I was last week on Sunday when Dave was preaching on a serpentine river in Indiana on a canoe maneuvering around branches and limbs in the water.

Anyway, as we're going down this river, we come to this natural dam in the water where all these rocks were piled up. But those rocks did not stop the flow of the river.

The river instead found the lowest point and gushed through there and so we all pointed our canoes toward that and we shot through pretty excitingly and speedily and then got out and played in the water and got some leeches.

Ask Boaz about that. But anyway, that's the river did not slow down because of the rocks. The river did not slow down because of the rocks.

[17 : 48] The rocks were not in the river's way. The river quickly made its way around it. No rock can stop the river.

We all have rocks where we can drop our getting in the way of the spirit in the river. But the river is going to find another way around it. Remember the Ethiopian?

On the desert road, the Ethiopian looked at the water and says, what prevents me from being baptized? It's the same word. Kuluo. What hinders me from being baptized?

In Cornelius' house when the spirit fell, Peter asked, can anyone withhold water? Can anyone hinder water? Kuluo, water, from being brought? And then in Jerusalem, who was I to hinder God? Can I Kuluo God? The same word running down the spine of Acts? What hinders me? Can anyone withhold water?

[18 : 54] Who am I to hinder God? The answer is always, no one, nothing. No. You can't. Get out of the way. If God has handed them the gift, then to try to damn the water is not caution, it's rebellion.

I'm actually reminded in this story, I was reading this, of Queen Esther when she was like, oh, I don't want to go. I might die if I go to him. And what does Mordecai say to her?

He says, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place. Okay? If you don't want to do it, God will do it.

Someone else. Through someone else. If Peter refuses, God will use another witness. If Esther keeps silent, deliverance will come from another place. If you refuse to invite others to your seat, the feast will go on, your seat will just be empty.

You don't get in the way. Heaven never cancels delivery, it just reroutes to the destination. Well, and then Mordecai asked the question to Esther, we all remember this, who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

[20 : 10] Don't you want to be part of this? That's the invitation here. And that's scene three. The only power Peter ever held over the grace of God was the power to attempt to obstruct it.

He can't start it, he can't earn it, he can't buy it for Cornelius. The one stone in his hand is the hinder stone. And he throws it on the bank and jumps into the river. Okay, maybe my river metaphor is going too far, but that's all right.

Moving on to the next section. Okay, for this section, we're going to actually go back to the top of the chapter. Maybe you thought I skipped verses one through three. I did, but we're going back. Let's look at verse three because I think this is actually the whole point. What angered Jerusalem? It was not, you preached to the Gentiles. It was not, you let foreigners hear the gospel.

Look at it, verse three. You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. How dare you? You ate with them. Now, to be fair to the men bringing the charge, Luke calls them those of the circumcision.

[21:15] Now, we read that and we instantly think, oh, this is that faction, that party of bigots who are refusing, being very particular about the Jewish customs. Okay, this is not that, not yet. At this point, these are actual believers that have just been Jews their whole life and they don't know what to do with these Gentiles and they're the men of the circumcision.

They're the Jews. They've fought their whole lives to keep the covenant holy and intact. In fact, that's one thing that makes this whole passage a little more searching for us is that the wall is most dangerous not when it's in the hands of evil people, but when it's in the hands of the devout. The people at the door were not the villains, they were us. The scandal that nearly split the early church was not a doctrine, it was dinner.

The offense was not the pulpit, it was the plate. We see that because Peter walked into a Gentile home and sat down and ate with these people and the report of that meal found its way all the way back to Jerusalem faster than any sermon he ever preached.

News travels, right? We know that. And it travels because every soul in that room knew what a shared table meant. A shared table means these are my people now.

[22:37] There's no wall between us anymore. In the world of the Bible to share a table was to share a life. They didn't sit in front of their TVs eating meals.

They didn't eat in their cars as they're driving down the street. None of us have ever done that, but it's an example of the difference that a meal carries in the times of the Bible. Well, we even saw it in our gospel reading this morning.

What was the accusation against the Son of Man? He came eating and drinking and they say he's a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. Well, Jesus is eating with the wrong people.

And they meant it as an attack on him. I think Jesus wore it as a badge. Yes, that's who I am. I'm eating with the wrong people.

He claimed them. And on the night when he was betrayed, he didn't hand us a doctrine to memorize. He handed us a table, a bread and a cup and a welcome.

[23:43] Come and eat. When Peter sat in a Gentile home, he was not breaking ranks. He was following the example Christ set. And so, what does Jerusalem do when Peter finishes in verse 18?

They all fall silent. The prosecution rests and they glorify God saying, then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.

God has given life to the outsiders. And repentance is not, even here we see this doctrine that repentance is not something we do.

It's a gift given to us to repent, to turn. So that's scene four. It's, I think, one of the hardest things for a church to do.

To get out of the way sometimes looks like a room full of people who have come to defend a wall, laying down their arms and worshiping God. Okay.

[24:50] So that's, that's really the setup then for the rest of the chapter. Verses 19 through 30 show what this looks like practically. What is this going to look like in practice? So, so the, the courtroom ends and the kitchen begins here.

Let's, let's read verses 19 through 21 real quick. Now those who were scattered because of the persecution, we talked about that, Stephen's persecution, those who were scattered because of that, traveled up as far as Antioch speaking the word to no one but Jews.

Hmm. But, verse 20, there were some of them who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists, that's the Greeks, that's the outsiders, preaching the Lord, and the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

They went up, the blood that God had permitted shed became the seed he had intended and some of these scattered believers began to preach to the Greeks.

This is what Tad showed us back in chapter 6. This, this bridge between Jerusalem and Antioch has already been built. But consider Antioch.

[26:05] This is the third city of the Roman world after Rome and Alexandria. Half a million souls living along this river. Greeks, Syrian, Jews, Arabs, every tongue, every God in one street.

Not a clean room. This was a riot of nations and right there the gospel jumps in. And Luke says, the hand of the Lord was with them.

The hand of the Lord. This is that Exodus prophetic language for the raw power of God at work. God again, God is ahead of the committee again. And the result's a great number turned to the Lord, believe and turn, repent and follow Christ.

Dave gave us a picture of this in chapter 10, the welcome of the outsider. It ran underneath this counter melody. Always there if you listen to it, but at Antioch, this counter melody becomes the melody.

This is the song that the church starts singing in Antioch and will continue to sing to the end of the earth. The song. Okay, let's read again 22.

[27:17] The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad. Those are both the same root, grace and gladness.

They come from the same root word. It's like grace. When you see grace, you can't help but rejoice and be glad. When he saw it, he was glad and he exhorted them to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose.

For he was a good man, the only man Luke calls good. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

You catch a theme here? A great many people added to the Lord. Lord. Barnabas does something that I think most of us find unimaginable.

He goes, he's like this church planter there and instead of taking the pulpit, he goes and gets someone better than himself. Brings him in. There's a great, there's another sermon here on church leadership.

[28:14] We don't have time for this morning. But he brings this enemy of the church, this former enemy of the church, the one that John talked about. Who would you not want at your church? Well, that guy's coming in the door right now and he's going to be their preacher.

He'd been hunting the church. He walks into Antioch with Barnabas. So Barnabas and Saul are there. They stay a whole year and again, catch that. It's not a weekend conference.

They're there for a year pouring into this church. Patient, side by side, unglamorous labor for the gospel. And then we read in verse 26, in Antioch, the disciples were first called Christians.

I read that, I'm like, it's just like, what's that doing here? It's like a throwaway line in the middle of this, they were called, it's like, okay, so what? So I wrestle with that.

It's the name we wear, Christian, Christianoi, called Christians. What does that mean? Well, this is a name the church didn't choose for itself. It was attached to them by the watching world because they kept hearing them say this name, Christ, Christ, Christ, Christ.

[29:21] That was all these people are talking about. So they're the Christ ones. They're the Christians. But notice the room it was born in. Not Jerusalem. We would expect it to be Jerusalem.

No. In Antioch. Not in the church where everyone looked alike and ate alike. No, Antioch. A church so mixed, Jews and Gentiles eating together at one table.

The old labels no longer worked. Well, these aren't Jewish believers. These aren't Greek believers. There's no Hellenists. There's no Jew. We need a new name that describes who these people are. So they were called Christians. We heard this a little bit in the psalm we read this morning. The psalm's telling this princess to forget your name.

It says, forget your people and your father's house. Forget your old gods. Well, that's Antioch. The outsiders are leaving their old gods, their old ways, their old houses and brought into the king's family.

[30:21] You do not get the name Christian in a room full of people exactly like you. It was coined for the mixed table. Okay, 27 to 30. The last of the chapter.

This is a strange kind of sweet turn of events. This prophet named Agabus foretells a famine. And the disciples at Antioch, these brand new believers, the ink is barely dry on their faith.

What do they do? They take up a collection. For whom? So the disciples determine each one according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

Wait, that's Jerusalem. That's the people that had at first said, oh, you can't eat with these people. The tables have turned and now they're sending relief back to the people who at first did not want to eat with them.

The same road that carried the scandal of this shared meal down from Antioch to Jerusalem now carries relief to the people who need it. You ate with them turns to, they made it so we can eat. [31 : 32] It's an amazing turn of events. So that's scene five, this whole section, 19 through 30 and God's welcome doesn't stop at tolerance.

It doesn't stop at I suppose they may come. It stops at a shared meal on open hand. So these five scenes, God moved, get out of the way, set the table. Antioch made room, Grace ran back down and they shared a table.

But now I have to ask you Peter's question. Turned around and pointed at us. Peter said, who was I that I could hinder God? Well the question is, who are you and where exactly are you standing in the way?

Who are we? Where are we standing in the way? We're not standing in the way here at this church. I think this is a very, maybe, we may be guilty of being a too welcoming place.

Someone walks in the door and before they get to the first row of seats five people have attacked them. Hey, welcome! That's great. That's how we should be. It's a good place to be. So the problem is not here.

[32 : 40] The welcome here is easy. The one that costs us more is the welcome at our own front door. Acts 11 is putting it to us not, the question is not is our church diverse?

To have a diverse church is easily answered with a committee and a photograph, right? Let's be honest. I've had, in my line of work, I work on the south side of Chicago, I've had a lot of people come to me and say, hey, how can we make our church more diverse?

We don't seek diversity for diversity's sake. That's not a table, that's a photograph. God doesn't care about our photographs. He cares about our affections. How do we change our affections?

Well, that deals with whose feet are under your table, not whose bottoms are in your seat at church. And that's what I tell people. You've heard the phrase that Sunday morning is the least diverse hour.

I said, no, I don't know who made that up. That's not. I think Sunday lunch is. If you want your Sunday morning to be diverse, then start with Sunday lunch. But again, the point is not diversity for the sake of diversity.

[33 : 51] The point is that, the point is not that everyone is welcome to come to the table. The point is that anyone is welcome to come to the table if they come to Christ. Okay, this table we fence here, I'd mention this.

The bread and the cup, so are we right to fence it? Shouldn't the fence be torn down? Everyone's welcome? Okay. We don't guard it with the fence.

This kind of person can't come here. We guard it with faith. There's a big difference there. The difference is not that we fence this to keep people out. Again, that was never the case for Israel's fences either.

It wasn't to keep people out. We fence it to protect the table, to invite those in who are part of the community, who are part of the faith. A fence is a faith of obedience.

A wall of likeness is what Christ tore down. Well, they're not like me. Well, that doesn't matter. What matters is the faith.

[34 : 59] And what Christ has torn down, this wall of difference, is not ours to build again. And even if we try, we won't be able to. It's like the rocks in the river. It'll just go around us. But here's the thing with Peter.

I find this fascinating. This table that he opened. It's great, right? Peter, he's opened this table. What an example to follow. Yes, right?

Right? Good example to follow. And then we read in Galatians 2, what do we read? Peter, years later, comes to Antioch. And what does he do at Antioch?

To the same table. He's eating with these Gentiles. These Gentiles. But then some people come and what does he do? Galatians 2, 12. He drew back and separated himself fearing the circumcision party.

This is Peter. He's the one that saw the sheet come down. He's the one that won this battle at Jerusalem, this courtroom trial. This is Peter.

[36 : 02] He forgot. And he didn't fall alone. Remember good Barnabas? Galatians 2 tells us even Barnabas was led astray. These are our guys in Acts 11.

They forgot. Well, there's a warning and a hope here all at once. If Peter can forget, so can we. Grace received on a Sunday is not the same as grace remembered on a Thursday. But it will cost us. It will cost us. Maybe we need someone like Paul in our life who opposed Peter. Said, hey, remember back in Acts 11?

This isn't right. But it will cost you. Peter's meal, put him on trial. A table that crosses a line may cost you something with your own side. People will raise eyebrows. But that's okay. Because who are we to hinder? That's the Greek. Koluo. Who are we to hinder? The one power we hold over the grace of God is to attempt to get in its way.

[37:13] I even hesitate to say that because we really can't get in the way. It'll keep going with or without us. Our power is smaller than it looks. We can't stop the river.

We can try. We can try to block it. We can keep our table small. But when we do that, when we come in what God has cleansed, we won't stop it. We'll only route it around us. Around our table. Around our house. Around us. So the question is not whether the water will flow. The question is whether we'll be in the current when it does or be trying to block it. Okay, so let me conclude by going back to where we started. the recap. The part we skip. And we can even go back further to the very first sermon in Acts.

The Sunday when Dave started with these six things to carry all the way through. He told us the argument running under the whole book of Acts is one question. Will the outsider be let in?

[38:14] He told us the book would not leave our welcome alone. It would press on our paradigm of generosity, hospitality, and belonging. And that's what this passage should do.

It's a word for us to hear right now. These threads all come tight. The outsiders are already in. The question is whether we'll make room at our table for them. The Spirit didn't skip this story. He told it three times because this is an important message. And he doesn't want us to miss this. The walls are down. There are no walls. How many things at church are we going to hold on to? This is how we do it. This is how we have to do it. But, hmm, as long as we're not blocking people from coming in. Remember the verb, what hinders me from being baptized? Can someone hinder water from being brought? Who am I to hinder God? No one. The gospel underneath this.

[39:19] Peter opened the door. door. Jesus said, I am the door. Peter sat at a table that cost him his reputation. Jesus, at the table, shed his blood. He called his cross a baptism.

He went under the water and came up to give us life. If the river of God is running, it'll reach the ends of the earth, we decide where we're going to be at in the flow of that. Saints, jump in. Jump in the river. Be part of the flow. God move first. Get out of the way. Set the table. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would give us the courage, the wisdom, the welcome to invite the stranger in.

To be a place where the outsider feels welcomed and loved and known. Would you do that by your spirit working in us? We pray in Christ's name.

Amen.