

The Hardest Part of Breaking Through Racial Barriers

Breaking Through Series Week 3

Acts 10: Cornelius Focus

March 6, 2016

Welcome/intro/vision

If you're new or just missed the past couple of weeks,

this is our 3rd week in a 4-week series called Breaking Through--in the beginning of the book of Acts Jesus a job to do:

"you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ***-Acts 1:8***

And in order to do this job and be on this mission it was going to require that they break through barriers that had separated people from God and from each other for centuries

whether it's nations or race or class

For 5,000 years of human history, EVERY country, every culture has had these same dividing lines

that have caused untold misery and destruction and pain for people in every culture

And if you look around in our world and in our culture, we've tried everything and we can't seem to fix the problem!

We can't even have the conversation very well, can we?

Scroll through your Facebook news feed or read the newspaper if you're old-school

and on any given day we can illustrations and examples of how much tension and pain and anger there is around these issues

and how hard it is for us to have a reasonable, good, constructive conversations

So Jesus sends his followers out on a mission to build a community that is going to finally offer the world *the* solution to this problem that no one's been able to figure out

He sends his people across racial and ethnic and nationalistic lines to build a community of Jesus followers

to demonstrate to a world that's plagued with pain along these lines that there's a different kind of power and a different kind of healing available through what Jesus has done on the cross

The emphatic proposal of the Scriptures in talking about the problem of divisions between people groups is that its core it is a SPIRITUAL problem that demands at the core a SPIRITUAL solution

We believe as a church that we're participating in this same mission
to be on mission to all of Chatham County and beyond
to BE Chatham COMMUNITY Church, a church for the whole community that works to break down the same walls that plague us and that plagued people back then.

So we're following along in the book of Acts as the early church fumbles their way through trying to follow through on Jesus' call to break through barriers

Quick recap if you're just joining us:

Two weeks ago we saw the church had its first internal challenge and it was along racial lines:

And the apostles do an amazing thing when they hear this complaint: they LISTEN!

They don't get defensive or edgy or ignore it or talk about how hard they're working or how hard they're trying—they LISTEN

This listening is mission-critical to breaking through any sort of barrier between people groups

if we will not LISTEN and cultivate a listening posture, then we will never, ever, ever break through past these barriers

And then last week, we looked at a story where Peter, who's a good Jewish man and who's achieving teacher status, is called by God to go to hang out at a Gentile's house named Cornelius.

In Peter's time and in his Jewish culture you weren't supposed to go to THOSE PEOPLE'S houses, you didn't eat a meal with them, you didn't go to the movies with them

you didn't do ANYTHING of significance socially or relationally with a Gentile!

And we talked last week about how because these divisions between people groups have so much history in every culture

In every culture there are these ingrained patterns of behavior that are like moving walkways that will carry us, without any effort whatsoever, into racialized patterns of behavior

all of us are on multiple moving walkways that without us wanting it or intending it, these moving walkways will separate us along these lines

Someone after the service last week who's family has been here in Chatham for a long time told me that there are two funeral homes in Pittsboro.

One is for the white folks and the other is for the black folks

And as a white family, when someone dies in the family it's not even a question of where we're going to have the funeral, we have it at the white funeral home

That's just what you do—that's a great simple example of how we have these racialized behavior patterns that become normal for all of us

And without any intention at all, we end up maintaining and fortifying a racially divided community—that's the moving walkway effect.

I've had conversations all week about this whole moving walkway thing, let me see if I can help where I didn't explain it very well—here are some signs that you might be on a moving walkway

You might be on the moving walkway if 95% of the people in your phone all look the same, that's the moving walkway effect

You might be on the moving walkway if 90% of the people in your Facebook newsfeed all look the same, that's the moving walkway effect

You might be on the moving walkway if you never have a conversation about race or culture

OR if you only have conversations about race with people who look like you, that's the moving walkway effect

Without taking deliberate steps to step off our moving walkways, that's the life that most of us will have

And so to step OFF the moving walkway requires intentionality: here are some things that we can do to step off our moving walkways:

1. Relationally step across racial or cultural barriers where you can

On my kids soccer teams, there have been opportunities for me to connect with Latino and African-American parents and families.

In many instances, it is EASIER to not to try to do so, because the moving walkway keeps me pointed in the direction of other white people unless I step off of it

But you've got kids and I've got kids and our soccer team stinks—that's a natural touch-point.

Your work place environment might be a place where you've got some natural touch-points

but the moving walkway will often continue to steer us away from meaningful engagement and conversation

so look for ways to engage in a more meaningful dialogue

This past week a white guy here from our church was telling me about how he had a great conversation about race with a Latina woman in his work place

as they were both talking about hiring an African-American woman who is a rock star but who is very young and new in the field and she will likely need support and training

And he's stepping off of his moving walkway to ask more deliberate questions about how can HE as a white guy be an ALLY to helping make sure this very gifted African American woman succeeds.

And he's having that conversation with a Latina woman who's talking very honestly about the challenges she faces as a Latina woman in a field dominated by white men. That's awesome!

You might have neighbors or a neighborhood gathering where all it takes is a little bit of intentionality to step off the moving walkway and step across a barrier at a natural touch-point

Find some ways to relationally and very deliberately step across racial barriers where you can

2. Consider your art & media choices

Art and media is one way that we express what we think it means to be human, how we express our hopes and dreams and process our pain and disappointments in life

For some of you, this is a very, very, very important part of your lives. What if you were intentionally cross-cultural in what kinds of arts and media you worked into your rotation?

We're talking about books, movies, magazine articles, on-line news sources, t.v. shows

What if you occasionally made a deliberate cross-cultural choice that brought you into a conversation or artistic expressions that helped you to enter into a very different experience than you might have had

or that might stretch you to engage with these issues in a different way?

3. See racial issues in the Bible

One guy this past week told me that he was seeing in deeper ways how important racial issues were in the Bible

Here's the reality: the passage that we were in last week and this week, Acts 10, is a major turning point in the history of the church.

And from Acts 10 to the end of Revelation
the most constant and most consistent issue that the church will have to deal with in just about every single book of the rest of the New Testament is the racial issue between Jews and Gentiles

If you grew up in the same kind of church I did, nobody ever talked about it, so you never thought it was in there.

But if we can start to read our Bibles for the fullness of how race and culture are all a part of both the tensions in the Bible and the final redemptive purposes of God in the Bible, then we'll all be reading the Bible a whole lot more faithfully.

When we stand still on these moving walkways we end up participating and reinforcing these barriers between people that Jesus, as a part of his bigger mission, says it's his people's job to break through

So last week we saw how God tells Peter to very intentionally step OFF of his moving walkway as a good Jewish religious guy and to go and visit Cornelius

This morning, we're going to look AGAIN at this story of Peter and Cornelius, because last week Peter showed us some important steps on the journey of breaking through

But Cornelius also has some very important things to teach us about the journey of breaking across barriers

Steve and I were talking this past week and Steve pointed out that Cornelius is a great picture of someone who's already stepped off the moving walkway

And who shows us what it takes to step off and stay off, to continue to move against the current and against the stream and against a system that has plagued humanity since the beginning of time

Let's look again at Acts 10, starting in verse 1:

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. 2 He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.

Throughout the course of my life I have known any number of people who did not know or follow Jesus

But who behaved an awful lot more like Jesus than I did in some area of their lives!

Cornelius here is celebrated for his grand generosity and his disciplined prayer life,
Maybe he prayed more than the Jewish guys he knew, he probably prayed more than you and I do!

Cornelius was a God-fearer. That's a category of people in the New Testament for people who are not Jewish but who follow the Jewish God to some degree.

So that's part of who Cornelius is. But it's important to note that he's a Roman soldier at the same time.

A Roman soldier whose job it was to keep the Romans fully in power OVER the Jewish people that his people are occupying!

He's not just a Roman soldier but a Roman centurion, he's got 100 men under his command. He's got servants, he's got status

And yet he worships the God of the Jewish people that his people have conquered. This is not how it usually works!

Often in ancient times the whole experience of human warfare and conquest was thought of as a reflection of the battles between the various gods

And if my god just beat up YOUR god, then I'm not going to worship your measly little god when my god is clearly superior!

Cornelius's moving walkway as a Roman centurion is to worship the Roman gods who he would have attributed his victories to

But instead somewhere along the way, he's stepped off that moving walkway and embraced the God of the Old Testament Scriptures

And I would like to propose to you that it is precisely this devotion to this God that prepares Cornelius's heart for the call he's going to get
and this is our first take-home for us today as we talk about breaking through barriers

The God that Cornelius is praying to is the same God of the Scriptures who sends his Son to reconcile all people to himself!

Cornelius at this point in the story doesn't yet know the story of Easter
He doesn't know how God sent his son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins for the very purposes of RECONCILING us to himself

But that's the God of Israel, that's the God that he's devoutly praying to!

And so when that God is going to appear to him and call him to do something that's absolutely ridiculous in just a minute, he's a bit surprised but he's not shocked

If we know the God of the Scriptures then we know that he's a reconciling God.

Why should we today care about breaking through barriers? Because if we're following Jesus, then we're God's kids.

And what our Father's work is all about is reconciliation:

reconciling people to himself and ending the feuds and spats between his kids that have caused so much misery to people made in his image that he died for

Breaking through barriers is a spiritual work that starts with our hearts and minds rooted in the God of the Scriptures who has shown himself to be a reconciling God over and over and over again

Cornelius KNOWS this God, is devoted to this God and that's a big part of what prepares him for what comes next:

³One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, "Cornelius!"

⁴Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked.

The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. ⁵Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. ⁶He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea."

⁷When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier ...and sent them to Joppa.

Okay, so the take-home here is if an angel appears to you and tells you to do something, you should definitely do it!

And I don't want to uncork a whole different conversation, but let me at least plant a flag here and say this: Cornelius is a wonderful God-fearer. He prays, he gives to the poor

He does all kinds of things that you would say or think that God would want him to do

He is a GOOD man, in the most natural, basic sense of the word. And in our culture, what so many people WANT to say is that this is all that God wants for us and from us, right?

And the whole Jesus thing might be nice for some people, but some of us don't need Jesus to get to God and to be good people, we can just do what Cornelius does here:
we go to God our own way and we do good stuff, and that's enough!

But here we get the Scripture's answer to our culture's proposal. Cornelius is about as good as anyone gets:

he probably prays more than any of us, he gives money to the poor, we'll find out later that all the Jewish people respect and appreciate him

If ANYONE would have been accepted just as he was, without Jesus, it's this guy!

But when the angel appears, the angel doesn't say, "Cornelius, God has heard you and seen what you're doing—you're good! Just keep it up!"

When the angel appears, the angel AFFIRMS that Cornelius is an absolutely quality human being AND the angel tells him to send for Peter so that Cornelius can get the full story

He is not worshiping God fully in spirit and in truth. Cornelius needs Jesus.

Without Jesus he does not have the full picture of who God is and what God does and how God has made a way for us to fully know him

And he needs Jesus because right now spiritually he's a man in no-man's land. He's given up on the Roman gods but he's not fully accepted into the Jewish community and religious practices

And Jesus has come to reconcile people to God as well as to each other!

To create a new spiritual and yet still very earthly place where it's finally safe for all people to be gathered together in all of our diversity and differences

Where everyone is affirmed and blessed AND everyone is called to repentance, to lay behind old practices and embrace this new life, new king, new kingdom, and new way of being fully human

If you're a Jesus person here today, what do we do in our relationships with people who aren't Jesus followers but who are better Christians than we are?

We tell them about Jesus

And if you're not a Jesus person here today, and if you're a better person than I am, I have no problems blessing you and celebrating you here this morning

just like the angel does! Thanks for living a life that calls me to be a better man!

And yet I've been sent here to tell you that the final and full and most perfect expression of that God that you're seeking and worshipping has made himself known in Jesus Christ

Come and see, come and see, come and see

Come and see what God has done!

He has created a place where ALL people can finally gather together, in spite of our differences, in spite of the history, in spite of the historical mis-trust

Come and see what God has done to bring all people together! And the place where we gather is the most unlikely of places: it's at the foot of the cross

It's at the place where the son of God dies for every man, woman, and child, all of them made in God's image, to reconcile us to God and to each other

Cornelius, a great guy with a heart for God, gets the gift of an angel who sends him to send for a man who will fill out the incomplete picture and understanding that he has of God—go and get Peter

Meanwhile, Peter sees this vision that we looked at last week

where God prepares him for the visit of Cornelius's servants

Because Peter's on his own moving walkway and his moving walkway includes that he should not visit with or associate or eat with Gentiles—people who are not Jewish

So Peter gets this vision and God's Spirit tells him to welcome in this envoy being sent by Cornelius to get him

So when Cornelius's servants arrive, Peter invites them in and then the next day a group of them all leave to go back to Cornelius's house

²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. ²⁶ But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself."

²⁷ While talking with him, Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: "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. ²⁹ So when I was sent for, I came without raising any objection. May I ask why you sent for me?"

³⁰ Cornelius answered: "Three days ago I was in my house praying at this hour... Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me ³¹ and said ...³² Send to Joppa

for Simon who is called Peter...’³³ So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.”

Stepping back and looking at these two guys from a worldly point of view, Cornelius is ridiculously higher on the pecking order than Peter is, right?

In Peter’s world, he’s the leader of the early church, to a typical Roman officer Peter’s just an unemployed fisherman!

“Get a job, Peter!”

And from a this-world point of view, if anyone’s going to do any bowing to the other, it should be Peter bowing before Cornelius, right?

But here, Cornelius shows us how far off the moving walkway he’s come FIRST here as he bows.

And I want to suggest to you that what this tells us about Cornelius’s journey is not only has he gotten off the moving walkway that’s OUT THERE

he’s not only intentionally unhooked from all the natural pulls for him to worship his own gods and despise the Jewish God

He’s not only done OUTSIDE work, he’s done INSIDE work. He’s not only changed his behaviors outwardly and dealt with the racial pressures on the OUTSIDE

He’s dealt with how his heart has been affected and shaped by it on the INSIDE

At every turn in this story, the glimpses that we get of Cornelius’s character are that he’s an outstanding human being

His character has been forged by God to be humble, teachable, responsive, open—he bows when he greets Peter and he closes by saying,

“I know and we know that YOU have something to teach us, mr. unemployed fisherman. You have unique information about God that we don’t have and even though I’m way above you in pay-grade, I’m here to submit myself to you. I’m here to LISTEN.”

Remember we talked about the importance of LISTENING for breaking through barriers, right?

If we’re not willing to listen, there’s no point in getting off the moving walkway.

If Cornelius had gotten off of his moving walkway, called Peter in, and given him a lecture on Roman military tactics, it would not have been a fruitful discussion, would it?

Listening is so mission critical to breaking through barriers!

Cornelius steps off of his moving walkway continues to do so in a posture of listening, of curiosity, of engagement
and even SUBMISSION to this person who is in his culture a despised foreigner who is beneath him

He has every reason to despise the Jewish people and their God for the sake of his gods which had given him victory and authority over the Jews
that is, he had every reason to in modern language be extremely racist in how he treated the Jewish people

Being racist is what was EXPECTED, it's what they taught the Romans—they had conquered the known world because they were flat-out superior to everyone else

And everyone else DESERVED to be under Roman domination and control

But somewhere along the way, Cornelius has BOTH stepped off the moving walkway of his external world and the system around him

AND he's dealt with the racial animosity in his own heart, he's taken a long look at what he's likely imbibed and that's been implanted in him by his racially charged culture

And he's brought it to the surface and in New Testament words he's repented of it. He's released it. He's gone in the opposite direction

He's called it sin

His world and my culture were all telling him that he's better than everyone else because he's a Roman.

But as he started stepping off the moving walkway, however that happened, and as he began to engage with the God of the Old Testament Scriptures

He not only went against the currents of his culture and society that are all around him

HE ALSO dealt with the junk in his own heart, dealt with as much of the racial animosity that he might have on the INSIDE
such that he might do the unthinkable here in this culture and bow to this unemployed Jewish fisherman

Meanwhile, if we look at this duo from a Biblical perspective, what's clear is that from a Biblical perspective, Peter's got the upperhand, right?

He's the one who's hung out with Jesus! He's starting the church! He's doing miracles and cool stuff in Jesus' name!

And for a couple thousand years, it's Peter's people who have received the law and the Scriptures and it's PETER from the Biblical perspective who's in the privileged position

And Peter and most all his people HATE the Romans, I mean HATE them with a passion!

And Peter here is ALSO not only having to get off the moving walkway OUTWARDLY as a good Jewish man

Peter is also, along with Cornelius, is having to deal with how his understanding of his own people as better than everyone else
Has tainted HIS heart as well.

He's got racism woven deeply into his heart. And because God is a reconciling God, God wants Peter to deal with the racism in his heart

And because Jesus wanted his church to be a place to finally solve this problem that all people have had for all time, God wants Peter to lead the charge by dealing with the racism in his heart

We said at the outset of this series that this breaking through work requires a SPIRITUAL solution to match the spiritual problem, here's a large part why.

Cornelius and Peter both go up in the same context. Both of them have been taught their whole lives and their people a greater and better than everyone else.

And both of them are called to repent by the God who is so committed to the people that he made that he dies to set them free from this plague of animosity between people groups that has caused so much pain!

Peter and Cornelius are both called to surface and deal with the racism in their hearts at the foot of the cross. And I want to suggest to you that so are we.

In our politically charged culture, where everyone's defensive and edgy around this conversation

most of us can't acknowledge or admit that we've got stuff in our hearts towards other people that we need forgiveness for and that we need to let go of and turn the other way

And the reason why the foot of the cross is the one place where all peoples can finally come together

Is because it's the one place where we can acknowledge that we've got sin in our hearts and it's not a shock! This is why Jesus had to die!

Here at the foot of the cross I can acknowledge ALL the stuff in my heart that's just not right and know that I'm forgiven and loved anyway.

AND because of Christ I'm finally free from the ways that the sin of prejudice and racism corrupts me and destroys me and cuts me off from God and other people

I've been a Christian since I was 10 years old.

So for about 32 years I've regularly had to admit and ask God to forgive me and help me to leave behind *pride*—in Biblical language that's repentance.

For 32 years I've off and on seen my pride come to the surface, had to name it, and confess it, and ask God to forgive me and take it away—anyone here shocked and appalled by that? Okay, good, I've still got my job.

And I'm regularly tempted to build my life around people's approval and applause,
I started to realize that sometime in college

So for about the past 22 years I've had to regularly admit and ask God to forgive and help me to leave behind or repent of people's approval and applause as a primary motivator

Anyone here shocked or appalled by that? That okay? I'm working through that?

And then sometime in my mid-twenties, I began to realize that these issues of race and reconciling people across racial barriers and breaking through walls, this was a really big deal for God

And I began to realize that it wasn't a big deal to me, I was apathetic about it. And God called me to step into these issues rather than shrug them off

And as I did, I began to realize that the problems were not just all around me, it wasn't just people out there, it wasn't just the culture or the world that had these racial tendencies

I began to realize that I'd internalized some of these things. I began to realize there was stuff inside of me that needed to be dealt with

I began to realize that I'd see something on a newscast about a racial incident and my first thought wasn't

“there's a beloved image bearer, I need to listen to what they might be saying”

Sometimes I'd roll my eyes. Sometimes I'd just shrug my shoulders. Sometimes I'd just be glad that it wasn't me in that situation.

Sometimes I'd get defensive quickly and argue in my head against the person
I began to realize that I had stuff INSIDE of me, attitudes and beliefs and patterns of
thought that I didn't like them or want them
but they were there anyway!

And so I realized that I needed to acknowledge and repent of both my apathy
towards this issue
and then also deal with what has come to the surface that's inside of my heart
as I've engaged and tried to cross barriers

And just like pride and just like people-pleasing keeps cropping up in my life and I
have to re-confess and re-repent of them on a regular basis
Getting rid of racist thoughts and attitudes isn't a one-time event, either

And so I've been regularly repenting of my own racism for probably about the past
15 years because every so often it surfaces again
and I realize again that I've got stuff in me that I need God to forgive me for
and heal me of

In alcoholics anonymous and other recovery programs, the first step is always the
same: admit the problem. If we can't, we won't ever move past the problem

Every major spiritual revival and spiritual awakening in the world began with
prayer
and with people confessing their sins, and the Spirit of God moved in
response to draw people to God and to change whole cultures

In the Wales revival of about a hundred years ago one of the signature events was
that the bitter feud that had been going on for decades between management and
the coal miners union was resolved

The cross had melted all their hearts and brought people together across
ECONOMIC lines

In another revival it went on for so long and had such an impact that issues of theft
and drunkenness and other small crimes dropped dramatically

So they started closing prisons because they were empty. There were whole
shifts in society because people who called on Jesus' name started to pray and
confess their sins to the Lord

Spiritual awakenings have changed whole cultures because when people confess
their sin to a God who is love and who forgives it unleashes a power that can change
the world

In fact, it already has changed the world, and this is our time and our turn in this generation to be a part of it

Nobody is having this conversation well, are they? Anywhere! And yet the world needs it, SOMEBODY'S gotta' figure out a way to break through!

If just the Christians in our country were willing to admit our own problem
To confess and turn away from the prejudice and racial attitudes in our hearts, it would unleash unprecedented spiritual power to heal this brokenness
And it would change the whole conversation in our country, wouldn't it?

And because this is a problem that all cultures, all peoples, all throughout history have dealt with

And because God so loved the world that he sent his son to rescue us all from our sin

And because the cross is the ONE place where all people of all types and all ethnicities can gather and be fully honest with ourselves and with God

And because the cross is the ONE place where all of us are pre-loved, pre-forgiven, and pre-accepted, warts and all

I want to invite you to join me in asking God to deal with and forgive and heal ALL the sin in each of our hearts

But today I want to humbly but boldly ask you to consider sins along racial and ethnic lines particularly
here at the cross and here at this table as we celebrate the Lord's supper.

When Jesus sent his first followers to reach Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth

he intended for his church to bear witness to the power of the cross by how his church had the power to break through barriers and bring people together who had been separated forever

Looking back over the past 2,000 years, how well has the church done in this task at building a unified community across racial and ethnic lines? Not so well.

The racial and ethnic divisions that have plagued all humanity for all time have been mirrored and woven into Jesus's church

I want to suggest to you that at least a part of the reason why we've been ineffective as a church in showing the world the power of the cross

Is the failure of nerve to confess our racial junk in our hearts at the foot of the cross and to allow the Spirit of God to transform our hearts as we offer up our confession to the Lord

This is the spiritual power to cut to cleanse us and is I believe one of the core reasons why the church has not succeeded in achieving the kind of church that Jesus want us to be.

And pray that God might know forgiveness and also pray that as we do this God might unleash a new spiritual power that our world desperately needs

Here, in this bread and this cup, is the power and authority to cleanse each of us and to unleash renewal in our community, breakthrough in our community, healing in our community

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he gathered his closest followers together and took bread and broke it and said this is my body broken for you, eat this in remembrance of me.

And then he took the cup and said this my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. And no one then objected that they had no sins that needed forgiving. They all knew that they did

And here today, I want to invite you to press past any notion that we don't have sins that need forgiving, because we all do

And I want to particularly as we're talking about this topic today invite you to consider that there's some sin in each of our hearts along racial lines
even if it's just apathy and ambivalence

And I want to call all of us to this table, where the power and the permanence of the forgiveness on offer
gives us the courage to be fully honest about how deep the rabbit hole of sin goes in our hearts

We're going to move to a time of worship. This first song is just going to be a song for you to reflect and pray and do whatever business you need to do before the Lord

And then during the second song we'll invite you to come to the tables and receive these elements that communicate the forgiveness available to you in Christ

This morning if you need prayer for anything, the prayer ministers will be in the back and will be glad to pray for you and with you

If you're here this morning and you don't yet know this forgiveness, don't yet know this love, don't yet know this power and this grace and mercy

Then this table is not yet yours but it could be. We believe that Jesus is here now, calling all of us into a relationship with him, into mission with him

And if you've not yet accepted that call, the prayer ministers in the back would love to pray for you and with you

to say YES to the invitation to be reconciled to God and to be a part of God's reconciling mission here on this earth

And then come, and join the celebration of God's grace available to us.

PRAY

**SEMINAR TONIGHT AT 7:30 AT CHATHAM MILLS & REGISTRATION FOR
POVERTY AWARENES DAY NEXT SATURDAY RIGHT AT THE BOOK TABLE**