**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**October 30th 2022**

**Staying Curious**

1. **Introduction**

It’s hard to believe that we are into our last week of the series, “I’ve been meaning to ask…” When I chose this curriculum, I had no idea how many conversations and holy moments would happen by simply asking a question. It has been a gift, and my prayer is, that as a family of faith, we continue to ask these questions.

I’ve been giving a road map of where we’ve been, and I will try to sum it up as briefly as possible. During our first and second weeks, we asked, “Where do you come from” and we had the joy of upholding the beauty of diversity, the connection we all have as children of God, and seeing Christ in places that are often hidden from view.

 In our third and fourth weeks, we dug deeper and asked, “Where does it hurt?” We discovered the possibilities in asking such a vulnerable question, the power of peace when we can authentically be ourselves, and then we looked at systems around us that cause hurt and ways in which we can be part of a radical Christ-led change.

In our fifth and sixth weeks, we asked the powerful question, “What do you need?” We found that asking the question and answering this question is vulnerable and that when one is in need, another may be able to provide.

Last week and this week, we are left to consider the question, “Where do we go from here?” considering all that we’ve asked and all that we’ve learned. Last week we talked about the power of Ruth’s courage and bravery in following Naomi into a culture, religion, and space that she could have never imagined.

Today, we hear a story that isn’t often spoken from the pulpit – an exchange between a man named Cornelius and Simon Peter. At first, it seems unclear why this would be fitting for this Sunday, but as we dig deeper, we see a path emerge. In the Word, we see openness, humility, and hospitality as a way of going forth as the people of God.

1. Openness

Cornelius was a big deal – he was a centurion of the Italian

Cohort, a man of devout faith, and a man with servants. Everything he could have wanted he could have easily laid at his feet, yet he remained open to the Spirit. In a vision, he was told to go find a man named Simon Peter, and in being open to God’s call, he and his men went to find this Simon Peter.

 When he finds Simon Peter, he basically says to him, “God has given you a message, please share it with us.” Simon Peter also had to embrace an openness to the Spirit’s movement. He didn’t know this man, he had a vision, but it still took strength for Simon Peter to step into the unknown in faith.

1. Humility

Another aspect of the text that we can point to as a way forward

is the humility found within both men. Again, Cornelius is a centurion, but he is humble enough to know that God speaks in places that he might have never considered. Beyond that, when he sees Simon Peter, he falls down to the ground to worship him, and Simon Peter tells him to get up, for Simon Peter is only mortal.

 There is something beautiful about Cornelius’ humility. Whenever I speak about humility though, I always try to make it clear that humility and humiliation are two different entities. God never calls us to humiliation, he calls us to humility – and we see that personified well in Cornelius.

1. Hospitality

The final powerful contribution to our learning is the hospitality

we see, where Cornelius opens the door and invites Simon Peter to stay at his home for several days. Cornelius leans in to hear the message, where Simon Peter preaches peace in Jesus Christ. Cornelius also opens the door to others who long to hear the Word, because he understands that his home is not his own, but a place for God’s Word to be heard.

V. Something Changes

 And there we find that in openness, humility, and hospitality, all who heard the Word that day were changed radically – the Holy Spirit fell upon them all. I believe that God will always do this transformational work, whether or not we listen, but look what happens when these men listen – they get to be part of something sacred and holy – something beyond themselves. What a gift – a gift to Cornelius, Simon Peter, and each individual who received the Holy Spirit that day.

 You and I are given a similar invitation. Maybe we see it in a vision, or in a sign, or we feel it in prayer – we are also invited to live together in openness, humility, and hospitality. As we’ve asked these questions, we’ve had to remain open to answers that bring us joy and answers that make us a bit nervous. We’ve had to live with humility, being honest about the hurt and the needs that we have and asking for help. We have been hospitable, continuing to say that all are welcome here, all are valued, whatever perspective we each bring to the table.

 On my desk at home, I have an index card with two simple words as a directive for me each day. It simply says, “Stay Curious.” I encourage us all, as we finish this series, to remain curious. Let us be curious and open, let us be humble and let those questions live on among us, and let us stay hospitable as we bring all of ourselves into this space.

 Where do we go from here? In some ways, time will tell, but if we commit to staying curious with one another, seeking a similar spiritual encounter like Cornelius and Simon Peter, we will find the Spirit alive and actively moving among us. Go from this place and be open to the Spirit, go and stay humble as we seek to learn together, and go and live hospitably being a safe place for these questions to stay alive among us. Amen.