

Mom had a rule. No swimming for an hour after eating. We could cramp. So there we would be on a warm summer day, an unbearably hot summer day, watching the clock tick so slowly as the cooling relief we sought was right before our eyes, so blue, so cool, so wet. “Is it time yet?” “No, you have to wait an hour.” “How about now?” “Not yet.” We were waiting forever until finally, Mom proclaimed good news: “Everybody into the pool.”

Our lesson from Acts has been called “the Gentile Pentecost.” In this pivotal text, God sets aside all the lines they say, “you are in, but we’re going to keep them out.” The good news of Jesus Christ is good news for all. Everybody can get into the pool.

For the children of Israel, and remember that for Peter, James, John, and all the apostles, including Paul, the people of Israel is us. We are the children of Israel; we are the people of God; we are the ones who are “in” on God’s promise.

Gentiles were not.

A “Gentile” is not a Jew. We could be Arab, Asian or Greek; we could be Hispanic, Germanic, or Roman; it didn’t matter. As far as Israel was concerned, we are Gentile, and that is all Israel needs to know. We aren’t “in” on God’s promise. We are out, and our very existence is an offense against God. For those of us who actually seek God, we can come to the Temple but we must remain in the outermost section – The Court of the Gentiles.

Gentiles are forever on the outside looking in, and friends, we are Gentiles, and we were on the outside looking in. But on a glorious day by the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, God erased the boundary between Jew and Gentile. God eradicated the categories that gave Israel special favor and condemned the rest of us. God poured out the Holy Spirit upon Gentiles the same way God poured out the Holy Spirit upon Jews at Pentecost.

God welcomed everybody into the pool.

And Peter (God bless him) got the message with the same kind of spiritual insight that spoke before it thought as when Jesus asked, *Luke 9:20 (NRSV)* ... “*But who do you say that I am?*” Peter answered, “*The Messiah of God.*” Peter got the message and erupted with joy, *Acts 10:47 (NRSV)* “*Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?*”

Peter got the message that God’s new world was at hand and discrimination that allows some in and keeps others out has no place in God’s new world.

Aria’s baptism, like all our baptisms, marks our entry into that new world and it calls us to make that new world a reality; to challenge discrimination wherever we find it, especially within ourselves and within the Church.

God has given the Holy Spirit, and our baptism is a sign of the grace we have received; grace that we are sent to embody in our lives and in our life together so that we will be a sign, foretaste, and instrument of God’s new world.

As Paul will later say to the Corinthians (a church that was far too full of boundaries that discriminate), *2 Corinthians 5:16–17 (NRSV) From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!*

And to the *Galatians 3:28 (NRSV) There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*

Brothers and sisters, my fellow Gentiles: Hear the good news and live the good news. God has given us the Holy Spirit. Everybody into the pool! Amen.