Sermon: **You were a guest in the home of uncircumcised Gentiles, and you even ate with them!** (Acts 11.3)
**Then God has given to the Gentiles also the opportunity to repent and live** (Acts 11.18)

In 1827 in Leeds trustees of a church wanted to install an organ against the wishes of the majority of members. An appeal to Conference led to its installation and a secession. Why? Organ seen as ‘popish’!

Pathetic? Not to the folk at the time. Similarly our reading from Acts 11.1-18. Explain.

I wonder what our issues are, those which seem so important to us, but will seem pathetic in 50 years?

At the heart of the Leeds Organ Case story are two things:

[1] Fixed views

[2] Intolerance

Jews had fixed views on their faith:

1. There is but one God,
2. That God has revealed himself in the Torah,
3. Israel is God’s chosen people called to live by the Torah in obedience to God.

This includes non-table fellowship with non-Jews and circumcision.

The early church was frequently bothered by table fellowship & circumcision, Eg Galatians 2.11-14, 5.2-6

In our story, through experience, Peter recognised that neither is important to God after all, and the wonder of the story is that the Jerusalem church agreed! Fixed views, yes, but also tolerance.

Think what fixed views you might have. They might be towards groups of people: Muslims, homosexuals, unmarried mothers. Or towards how church should be run: music style, autonomy of local church, relationship between presbyter and lay people.

Nothing wrong with views, but when they create walls…

Take Church A: Invited Muslims to take part in an act of worship.

Take Church B: removed organ and replaced with loud band, with repetitious songs.

Think how the TEXTs might be rewritten for these situations.

Could it be that God reveals himself in these situations, to combat the intolerant attitudes that often come from fixed ideas? TEXTs. We’re not called to build walls but to hold hands with strangers in fellowship.