

Devotion from the past ... 2003

[Read Acts 10:34-38 \(ESV\)](#)

Play Favorites

I think I was teacher's favorite once. That was the year I shocked my parents by getting my first B on a report card. Most of the time, my grades were below C level. (I thought this could qualify me as a submariner.) (When the groaning—or nausea—subsides, continue reading.)

Peter must have thought that God played favorites. Today's Bible reading reveals his confession that God accepts believers regardless of background. This might not surprise us, but it was a difficult concept for Peter. He knew the Old Testament well, even before it was given the name "old." He understood God's promises and blessings to be reserved for the people of Israel.

Before we apply a loud "tsk, tsk," to Peter, we need to examine ourselves. Head knowledge easily convinces us that Jesus came for people of all nations, and people of all nations are among believers. Yet, we're limited in the way we think about Jesus. Or perhaps it's safer to say that we've been acculturated to picture Jesus from a limited perspective.

A recent issue of *Popular Mechanics* (yes, [Popular Mechanics, December 2002](#)) carried a cover article claiming to have a reasonably accurate visual perception of Jesus (yes, Jesus, December 0030!). It was based on computer models of how a man of his background in his era would have appeared. Some readers took this pretty seriously, including some who were outraged that Jesus didn't resemble artists' popular renditions.

So what did Jesus look like? And what does it matter? Perhaps people would like Him to resemble their ethnic or denominational background—something to which they can relate. The real danger in doing this is that we might become like Peter in days prior to his revelation in Acts. We might be tempted to keep Jesus for ourselves—an exclusive Savior.

Not so, you say? Oh, Satan makes it possible—as if we couldn't do it by ourselves. Sin may tempt us to think that Jesus was Lutheran. Unless we're some other denomination. Not that we intellectually exclude the possibility of salvation for non Lutherans, but we might sometimes act that way. Such a slip can be especially damaging in a classroom.

Many Lutheran school classrooms have more non Lutherans than Lutherans. While we can and should be bold in teaching from a Lutheran standpoint, we must take care not to be arrogant or give the impression that non Lutheran Christians are condemned or inferior in the sight of God. They too know the "good news of peace through Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:36).

A greater challenge comes when we teach those who do not confess Jesus Christ as their Savior. They too might be in our classrooms. (They may even be disguised as Christians!) Perhaps they should become our favorites. They have a special need to hear us teach the Gospel. They have a special need to hear us in earnest and confident prayer. They have these needs because they are doomed to hell.

So go ahead. Break the long-established “teacher rule.” Play favorites. Lavish the love of Christ both on believers and unbelievers. Let them know how you talk to God and how they can do the same thing. Tell them how God has overcome the power of the devil through Jesus Christ.

Prayer Thought: Pray for those who don’t believe in Jesus. If some of your students don’t know Jesus as their Savior, ask the Holy Spirit to work through you as you work through the Word.

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To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)