

FOR ALL PEOPLES

JOHN 17:1-11

Down at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Steve Jacobs, the rabbi of Temple Emanu-El was always a big hit with the students. I listened one day after class as he chatted with students. One bright young lady asked shyly, "Rabbi Jacobs, I really have been interested in the things you say, would I be allowed to come to your synagogue for services?"

Steve turned to the young woman and smiled. "At the top of our building," he said, "it is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.'"

"Uh, yes," she said, "I understand, but I'm a Christian, you see, and I didn't know, I mean, is it okay, can I come to your synagogue?"

Steve grinned and explained very carefully: "The synagogue is on South Highland Street. At the top of the building it is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples,' it's from the prophet Isaiah."

The young woman stood very still. Everyone was quiet for a moment. You could tell from the confused look on her face that she hadn't a clue as to what Steve was saying. Here she was, asking an honest, polite question and he wouldn't give her a straight answer. Then it sank in and you could see her imagination rearranging the furniture of her faith. Great, ancient walls were crumbling inside her. "Oh," she whispered, "and Jesus said that too, didn't he? 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.'"

She smiled, nodded her head, and walked away, and as she went, I heard her say once more, just to herself, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

May we hear words of truth and keep them in our hearts always. Jesus prays for you and me that we might live our faith with the sure and certain knowledge that our hope and strength come from the Lord.

God bless,
Pastor Barbara