

God's Gracious Power in Dorcas

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Bible Text: Acts 9:32-43

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Our Scripture reading this morning is found in the book of Acts chapter nine. Let us turn together to Acts chapter nine. We will start reading at verse 32 and read to the end of the chapter.

Let us hear God's Word.

And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.¹

Our text is verses 36 through 42 about what the Lord did in Dorcas.

¹ Acts 9:32-43.

Dear congregation, the question can sometimes rise: What will it take to make people join the church or for unbelievers to come to believe and people to turn to the Lord? In the passage we read we see that it was, first of all, a healing in Lydda and a resurrection to life in Joppa that had such an effect.

What we have in our passage before us this morning is—if I am not mistaken—the only resurrection that is described after the Lord Jesus' resurrection. You can correct me if I am wrong after, but we have here then a very unique event in the book of Acts, a resurrection from the dead. And the uniqueness conveys many questions, can't it? Why Dorcas? Why was she raised? Why her and not others raised from the dead? Why? What is the purpose?

Well, let us listen prayerfully to God's gracious power in Dorcas. First, power in her loving service; secondly, power at her death; and, thirdly, power in her resurrection. God's gracious power in Dorcas, in her loving service, at her death, in her resurrection.

This text before us this morning brings us to Joppa. Joppa was a coastal city along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and, therefore, it was an important harbor town. It was around 60 kilometers from Jerusalem. It is the current Japha or Tell Aviv. Solomon, when he needed lumber from Lebanon he made it float down the Mediterranean Sea to Joppa and then he brought it in land from that harbor to Jerusalem. And Jonah when he wanted to flee, where did he go? He went to Joppa and from Joppa he sailed away. And so Joppa was an important harbor and as an important harbor it also had a mixed population of Jews and of Greeks and of others who were there in that trading center.

We have also reason to believe that Philip passed through Joppa as he went on a preaching tour along the coast, Acts eight verse 40. It speaks of how he went from one place in the South and he went up the coast to Caesarea, north of Joppa. And so it is very likely that he also passed through Joppa and what we do know of certain is that God had shown his power there in Joppa by turning sinners to him and making them disciples of Christ.

One of them was Dorcas. Notice she is called Tabitha. That is Aramaic, a form of Hebrew. And she is also called Dorcas and that is a Greek name. More often in those days where there was a mixed population people would have both a Greek name and an Aramaic or Hebrew sounding name. And both of those names mean the same thing. They mean gazelle, that deer like animal that can run so gracefully.

She is described in a beautiful way, isn't she? We don't read whether she was married or not, whether she had children or not, whether she was educated or not, whether she lived in a big or a small house or all those other questions that we may have. We are not told about them. We are simply told that she was a disciple and in verse 36 we read that she was full of good works and alms deeds which she did. She showed she was a disciple, a follower by her life. She did alms deeds, literally she did mercies, works of mercy, especially involving giving to the needy. And later we are told that she especially helped the widows.

Now think of it. There you are in Joppa. It is a port city and what did many men do then? They were sailors. And what happened so often when those men went out sailing and storms arose and the ships were tossed about? People fell overboard and drowned or ships wrecked on the rocks and those men would drown. And so there was eventually the news would come back and the messenger would have to go to this home and that home and announce: Your husband is dead. And what a grief and what a loss, what a pain and what poverty it brought about when your husband was no longer able to provide for you and you had to raise a family on your own.

And then there would come that knock on the door and in would come this lady called Dorcas to sit beside you, to weep with you, to speak with you and also to show you tokens of love by giving you clothing and other things. How beautiful. She must have been a woman of some means to be able to provide that clothing and yet when it indicates that she had made these garments, shows that she wasn't so rich that she would just go and buy a whole stack of them. No, she was busy making them. And that took time. It took effort, stitch by stitch by stitch. And as she is making those garments she is thinking of those people. Beautiful, isn't it, when you are busy making things for others, thinking about them.

It says she was doing her alms. She did them. It is I Greek it is an imperfect tense. That means it wasn't just a one time thing. It was a regular thing she was doing. She was habitually practicing it, helping hands to those in need, offering gifts to those who lacked, being there to comfort those in distress, not just something now and then, but it was a regular part of her life. She saw it as her life's calling to do so. And that is why we read she was not just ... did a good work, but she was full of good works.

And so it is not just about giving tithes consistently and every week checking off I have given my tithe, as good as that is. She didn't just do a duty now and then, but she gave herself for others. She lived for others. And in that way she was full of good works.

Isn't that important for you and me as well? Whether we are young or old, we also would be filled with good works and have a heart for others. Isn't that actually what we confess in the catechism, Lord's day 21, when we speak about the communion of the saints? That involves that every one must know it to be his duty readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts for the advantage and salvation of other members. No one is excluded. It says everyone. And not just forced, but readily and cheerfully to use his gifts, whatever they may be. And for the one it is different than another. One has different opportunities than another and yet to ask what does the Lord enable me to do for others out of love?

And so now Galatians six tells us:

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.²

To do so in an organized way, through organizations, through societies, through committees on the Church, of the Church through organized ways in that of providing help to others. Also in that personal, private, spontaneous way, giving ourselves to others and begins, doesn't it, at home, your family, there for them to help them, support them, care.

And it doesn't stay with the family, does it? Also the congregation. You are there for others. It can be good even to look through the directory sometimes and ask: How can I do something, be someone for those names? Do you ever do that? Sometimes we forget people.

Not only in the congregation, but also beyond. When it speaks of these widows, I don't think those widows were only in the congregation, but also I the community, others beyond our local congregation.

She has focused especially on the widows, because they were ones who suffered in a special way, especially in that society. Also today the widows, the sick, the shut in, the elderly, also those who may be overwhelmed who are younger. So those in spiritual need and those who are depressed or distressed, whatever it may be.

Not everyone is called to sew like Dorcas was. At Lord's day 21, again, it speaks of using the gift that God has given and the opportunities God gives. So easily we can say I lack gifts and I lack opportunities. Is that really the problem? Or can it be something else? What made her full of good works? Was it not that she was full of love? The only way to be full of good works is to be full of love. Love is a fulfilling of the law. The summary of the law is to love God above all else and your neighbor as yourself. Works without love are vain.

1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that even though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned, but I have not charity, I have not love, it profits me nothing. At the heart of it is love. Without love we can be pleased with all the good things that we do, but if it is not out of love then all those things we do are but shining sins. Good works are done in love to God and love to the neighbor, 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us.

Dorcas was full of good works, because she was full of love. Love moves you to give yourself, to sacrifice your own ease in the service of others. Use your time to sow for others. Lose some sleep to help others. And when love fails you, then, no effort is too much or sacrifice too great. Disappointment or lack of appreciation doesn't extinguish your life and make you stop doing good. Love makes you content not simply with the bare minimum, but spontaneously seeks opportunities to help and to serve. Love is

² Galatians 6:9-10.

inventive. It finds ways and even those little ways when they come out of love can mean more than big things without love. Little ways to show care, to show concern, even a phone call.

Congregation, must love not characterize us? How can we go through life without this love? Isn't that the best way to live, to walk in love?

Dorcas was full of good works because she was filled, moved by love. But now we go a step further. How can we be moved by love?

Then we see that Dorcas was a disciple of Christ. Faith works by love, Galatians five says. When we hear being full of good works and we hear about good works we can be very quick to say we have to be careful when we talk about good works because soon enough people are going to begin to pride themselves in the good works that they do and they are going to become self righteous and there is only one work that can be pleasing to God and that is the work of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. That is all very true, very true. It is something we need to learn.

But what happens when the Lord leads you to be pleased with no other work than the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and you find all your salvation and all your acceptance with God not in what you have done, but in what he has done? What happens? That faith and that grace leads you to desire to walk in good works. It can't be otherwise. Anything else and all you have is a dead faith. True faith that looks to Christ alone for salvation also stirs up love to desire to live for him and to live for the other. Faith unites to Christ who is filled with self sacrificing compassion to the needy. And when you learn to know him and his love, his love which cannot be compared to any other love, his love which moved him to give himself not for kind people and pleasant people and nice, people, but give himself even for enemies and for rebels and for those who slap him in the face and for those who even after he has shown grace continue to be so ungrateful and so wayward. By faith you see his love.

Doesn't that make you ... doesn't it stir up that love in your heart? And when you see his compassion of those in need, especially for the poor and the suffering and the despised and the hurting and that he came for the brokenhearted and the mourning, for sinners and the lost, for sick and afflicted, for lepers and blind and widows and lame, you are a disciple of him, what does that involve? Doesn't it involve following after him in that compassion for others?

And he gives his Spirit to renew you and to conform you to himself, to follow after him as a disciple, to walk in his way of love. That is a power in Dorcas, the grace, the power, the Holy Spirit in Dorcas which made her a disciple, which gave her love, which showed itself in these alms deeds which she did. And ultimately Dorcas was only an instrument through which the Lord himself was showing compassion and care for those in need there in Joppa. She was only a means. And it was God's compassion flowing into her and through her that reached also others in need in that city.

Is this the God you know, the Christ you know, that you are a disciple of Christ who has learned to deny yourself to follow him? Not my will, but thine. Not my honor, but thy honor. Let me experience his grace and let me be a means through which that grace flows and reaches also others. Let thy mercy flow into me and also through me. I am weak. Thou dost use weak means to show thy mercy. What a blessing it is when that is your confession and that is your desire, when the power of that grace changes your heart and mind.

That was certainly a great blessing there in Joppa. And yet we see, secondly, God's gracious power at her death. You see Dorcas going through the streets. She stops here. She stops there. And wherever she comes she is appreciated. She is valued. And maybe sometimes those widows say, "What would we do without Dorcas?" And then one day it became clear she was not doing well. And she was not seen on the streets because she was sick in bed. She was very sick. Did prayers arise to God for her healing? Did love move them to plead him to spare her and to give her recovery? We can be sure they prayed. Oh, Lord, have mercy. And the answer was so different. She died.

Her hands could no longer sew. Her eyes could no longer see need. Her heart no longer beat with love. She was dead. She went the way of all flesh. She was full of good works, but that did not spare her from death. Death comes to all, godly and ungodly, rich and poor, young and old. Death comes. Dust to dust the mortal dies, both the foolish and the wise we sing.

And then questions arise. Why her? Why her? Why did the Lord take her away who was such a means of blessing in Joppa and why does he leave a harlot there in the city alive? Why did he take her away and why did he leave that other woman who is so selfish and who expects everyone to do everything for her but has no care of anyone else? Why did he take Dorcas away and why does he leave that kind old lady there in Joppa who cannot do anything anymore and is filled with such pain? And yet the Lord spares her and takes away Dorcas. Why? Well, it is going to be painful questions at death, especially of those who are relatively young and active.

Where shall we go with those questions? Is there not only one place and that is to the feet of the Lord himself? He is king. He is sovereign. None can hold back his hand and stop him from doing what he is pleased to do and everything he is pleased to do is wise, is good, is right. Do I see it? Do I understand it? Can I explain why he takes one person out of our midst who is younger and another spares to be very old? Yet what the Lord reveals about himself cannot be wrong.

When it says all his ways are holy and all his works are righteous and good, it is to bow before. It is a view of God's utter sovereignty, goodness and wisdom that quiets that murmuring and that resistance when the Lord takes one away. But the pain of loss can still be there. You see it in that room. There they are. They aren't hired weepers who are paid to mourn at a funeral as they would do sometimes. These are genuine weepers who cannot restrain their tears because they will so miss her, not simply because of the tunic or the dress, but because of her love. There it becomes clear how much she meant to

them as they gather there weeping her loss. That happens, more often, doesn't it, when loved one is taken away. Then you begin to realize how much you had in that person and received from that person and that person meant to you. It is especially when that person is taken away.

And how many have regretted that they did not show appreciation and gratitude more while the person was alive? Let that be a lesson.

Here at her death their love to her becomes apparent because she had lived for others and given to others. She also received their love. It is a great loss when a Dorcas passes away, when a godly man or woman is taken from the Church here below. Those who are people of prayer, something flows from them, the grace of God. When they are taken and others are left. It is painful.

Charles Simeon the preacher of the 1800s he said, "The tears of the godly and lamentations of the poor are the noblest monuments that the departed can have." You can have all kinds of decorations and nice eulogies, but this is something greater than it all. That is why he continues and says, "Let us take care that the survivors may have substantial proofs of our piety to exhibit."

Proverbs speaks of how the memory of the just is blessed. The name of the wicked shall rot.

Congregation, would we be missed if we passed away tomorrow? Some can feel neglected and think I would hardly be missed, but then your focus is on what others do for you or fail to do for you. Of course they may be at fault, but the question this morning is: What about you? Does a love characterize your life and show in your concern for others in an interest in others and a desire to be a means in the hand of God for the good of others whether you are younger or older?

Here it wasn't just a close family members who grieve, but it is the whole congregation there in Joppa who grieves, because of what she meant for the congregation for the city. It is because the power of God grace shone through her to others. And that is what they felt at her death. That is what they will miss. How is it with us?

Also in relation to others, not how they relate to us, but how we relate to others. There she lies, dead. And dead is dead and what grief that was. And yet there are several things that are striking when we read this passage and the first is that they wash her body... but we don't read of her body being wrapped up or embalmed or anointed. It was a common practice in those days to wash the body of one who passed away that you still do so today. But why did they not do more? Was it because they had a certain hope?

And the second thing we note is that she lies there in an upper room and is not buried right away and with a hot climate it was customary to bury a person the same day or maybe the next day, but certainly not three or four or five days like we may. And yet they don't bury her immediately. Why not?

The third thing we notice is that they send these two men to Peter. Why? Is it for Peter to lead her funeral service? We don't read that. Was it to ask him to perform a miracle? Was it because they heard he was there in Lydda and they had also heard about how he healed that paralyzed man who had been paralyzed for eight years and that that had stirred up the hope in them that if that could happen, then maybe even she could be raised from the dead? We don't read that explicitly. We simply find these two men going to Lydda which was around a three hour walk, finding Peter, urgently and politely calling him to come to Joppa.

What went through Peter's mind as he heard that request and he spent those hours walking with these two men? They must not have been able to hide their grief. They must have said something of Dorcas and her death, but what was Peter to do?

He entered that upper room and he saw grief written upon every face. Widows say to him, "You see the dress I am wearing? Dorcas made it for me." And another, "Do you see the clothes that my children are wearing? Dorcas came the other day and she brought them." And then another says, "You see the veil that I... Dorcas made that long ago. And she still came and saw me."

Why did they send him? Why was Peter there? What was he to do in the midst of that grief? Was he simply to pray with them and commend them to the Lord and plead the Lord to sanctify this death to their souls? Was he to preach to them that only comfort and life and death and that though God takes away one means of care he will give another means of care and to point them to that only comfort in life and death and exhort them to follow Dorcas' example? All those things are good. Or was there more? Were they expecting him to raise her from the dead? Had the Lord by his almighty power been working in them in expectation that he would raise her from the dead? Was God's mighty Spirit at work in their hearts giving that expectation? Death is death. {?} is force. He is saying, "Who can in death's dark hour escape the grave with all its ruinous power?" Once you are I death, who can come out again?

And yet those eyes looked to Peter. What would he do? That question rises. What warrants did Peter have to believe that God would raise her? We don't read of the Lord Jesus promising that the apostles would raise the dead after he ascended. In Mark 16 verse 17 and 18 we read about how these signs would follow them that believe.

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.³

There is no mention there of raising the dead. Now the Lord Jesus he rose, he raised the dead. Remember the son of the widow of Nain? Remember Lazarus? Remember the daughter of Jairus? He raised the dead. And also Peter had likely raised the dead. In

³ Mark 16:17-18.

Matthew 10 we read of how Jesus sent the 12 forth and commanded them saying, “Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and as you go preach saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick. Cleanse the lepers. Raise the dead. Cast out devils.”

And so they had gone out at that time even raising the dead. Would the Lord have him do so again? Peter is constrained to desire to be alone. When the Lord Jesus entered the home of Jairus he sent out all those people except for the three disciples, including Peter. And now Peter sends again. He sends them all out of that room to be alone, alone to pray. The Lord Jesus has said, hasn't he, when you pray, shut the door. Enter into your closet and pray in secret.

Do you not have those times when you need to be alone and you need to be away from everyone and you need to bring your need before the Lord? Prayer is laying before the Lord all the impossibilities from our side and appealing to his power. It is laying before the Lord all the riddles and all the questions and all the uncertainties and yielding all to him. That can be a wrestling. There can be a struggle in prayer. It can also involve laying before the Lord that question, because there is uncertainty whether you have a basis to believe that the Lord will... and fill it in what that issue is in your life. It can be that struggle. Do you have a particular promise in the Word of God for you in that situation that you are in? You can know that he has the power. Peter knew he had the power to raise every person from the dead, but would God do so? And with those type of questions the best place to go is to the Lord in prayer, wrestling in prayer with that hope that the Lord has power, that the Lord desires to glorify his name, that the Lord is the helper and the Savior. {?}

We see power not only at her death, but power to receive the power of God driving and drive these people out to the Lord in the midst of death.

Finally, we see the power at her resurrection. Peter prays to God. He lays before him all the need and he looks to the power and wisdom and grace of God revealed in his Word and as he does so, the Lord gives him light and points out the way that he is to go and he receives faith to believe that God would raise this woman from the dead. He knew that Christ had power and he became convinced that Christ would show that power also here even over death. Peter knew that in the mighty name of Jesus Christ there was power not only to heal a lame man and not only to open the eyes of a blind man and not only to enable a man who had been paralyzed for eight years to walk, but also to raise the very dead.

And he knew and he became convinced that Christ would also show that power here in this room. And so he went to Talitha. Was she ether? Wasn't she dead already? Wasn't it only her body that was there? He goes to her. He speaks to her. He commands her, “Tabitha, arise.”

Tabitha is her Aramaic name. He would have said in Aramaic, “Tabitha, cumi.” That is actually only one letter difference than what the Lord Jesus said there to the daughter of Jairus. He said. “Talitha, cumi.”

As Peter spoke did he also think of how he was in that room with the Lord Jesus and how the Lord Jesus had also said something so similar, “Talitha, cumi.” Little girl, arise. And now he echoes the words of his master. And he actually speaks with the authority of his master. And would she listen? She opens her eyes. Life returns to her. She sat up and showed that she received strength.

He gave her his hand to welcome her. She stands up. What is this? Is it not the power of Jesus’ name and his voice? His Word even through the mouth of Peter who is weak and helpless in himself. It comes with such power that it raises the very dead. That is who he is. There she sits. And they walk towards the door. And Peter says, “Come in, everyone.” And they come through that doorway and they see Dorcas alive.

I think the tears again began to flow when they saw that. Don’t you think tears of amazement, tears of joy, tears of gratitude? But she was there. Friends were comforted with her presence again. The Lord had given her back to them and widows and saints rejoiced and saw God’s gift to them in their needs. And the poor again would benefit from her love and received an instrument through which the Lord himself continued to care for them.

We can have many questions about whether Dorcas remember where she was when she was dead and whether she didn’t regret that she was raised again because it meant she wasn’t in heaven anymore. We can have all those thoughts, but one thing we can be sure of that she arose with the same heart that she had while she lived and that was a heart changed by God. It had filled with love and that she then sought to redeem the time that the Lord again gave her also in service to him and to others.

And so the saints were encouraged. It wasn’t just about receiving a few more garments. It was the display of the power of God that he performs wonders of grace to those who cry to him in their need and pain and distress. But he is a living God. And that is why we read many believed. They didn’t fall down before Peter as a miracle worker. They didn’t carry him on their shoulders through the streets. No we read they believed in the Lord. They realized this is nothing less than the power of the Lord himself. He is the one who has raised her from the dead. He is the one who has overcome death. He is the risen, conquering King. He is the one who truly cares for his followers and so they believed in the Lord. And they turned to him in repentance and faith.

It is a beautiful ending. Maybe as you sit here you wonder why doesn’t the Lord do so still today. Maybe, as you know, it is a strange thought, but you say, “Why didn’t the Lord raise my loved one to life again or that other godly person who was such a blessing to have? Why didn’t the Lord raise him to life again?”

And if only the Lord would do things like this again today, then the world would see and believe that he is the conqueror of death.

Those thoughts are understandable. But ask yourself, again. What is the message of this work of God? Did Christ not perform this to display his power as the Son of God, as the victor over death, as a glorious King? And is that not who he is still today? Does this act not show that he has conquered death? That he has the power to raise the dead? And the moment he wills to raise them it happens because he has all power.

Why, then, does not he bring his people back to life again and make them a blessing here in the church again? Why does he not raise them? Congregation, he will. He will bring every one of them out of the grave into the fullness of life, not life here on earth which is with its sorrows and with its misery and with its sin, but he will raise them up on the other side. He will raise them to life forevermore. None of his people will remain in the grip of death. The day is coming when that greater miracle yet will occur, when the dust will arise.

John five the Lord Jesus says:

“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth.”⁴

What a reality to see. When the godly die you say, “Why doesn’t Christ raise them back to this life?” Instead you are to look forward to that day when he will raise them from death and with body and soul they shall be with him forever to serve him day and night. Perfect love. What a reality. If you as a child of God are growing weaker and death is approaching you need not expect that after you have died the Lord will bring you back into this life, that the Lord will raise you to life with him, that he will watch over your grave as the one who says, “I am the resurrection and the life.” The glory.

And yet is it not painful to see the godly taken away? When that heart stops beating there is one less heart of love to God beating on earth. And when those eyes there is one less pair of eyes that is moved to see the need around them. And there is one less pair of hands that is folded to pray for others and labor for others. And there is one less mouth to speak of him and to speak a word in season. And it seems as if faith and love and hope lie there in {?}. But then that question presses: Who will take the place of the Dorcas who dies? Is that what you desire to be, like that teenager who said to me before when at the funeral of her godly grandmother that she had such a desire to take the place of that godly grandmother. Grace {?} to thy saints, that grace revealed to me. Is that your desire?

We haven't died physically and raised... been raised again, but our life is preserved. And that is also a wonder of God's power. Why are we spared. Did not {?} to redeem the time, to work while it is day? Paul's desire in Philippians 1:2, to remain here, to be of use. Or do you still live for yourself? You describe by Philippians two. All men mind their own things and not the things of Christ, wasting what God has given you for yourself.

⁴ John 5:28-29.

Christ's grace is to make zealous of good works. Titus two says... speaks of him who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

What a sad thing when that zeal for good works fades in the Church, when that love cools and when that communion of the saints does not function and when compassion for sheep without a shepherd is not noticeable and it seems to lie there in a casket.

It is sad when this world bleeds from a thousand wounds and the church can coldly pass it by like that Levite and priest in the parable. How sad when we can have all our right theological reasons for suffering and yet not be moved by it. Is that a problem in the Church? And does it bypass us as a congregation? And you, child of God, will be the first to admit that it is so lacking, that love, that zeal, that being full of good works in yourself. And what about if that love and faith is missing all together? What a dreadful condition to be in. Then you are dead, dead spiritually. And what a dreadful condition. It is a million times worse than Dorcas lying there dead in a casket or dying there... lying there dead in that upper room to be dead spiritually.

And with that problem, look again at this passage. Do you see it? The power of God's Word to restore to life and to revive again. The Lord hears and the Lord works with gracious power. He says, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live." He speaks, "Tabitha, arise." He speaks also this morning, "Awake thou that sleepest and rise from the dead and Christ shall give you life." There is power in the voice of Christ this morning to raise you who are still dead to live, to know him, to follow him, to love him, to love others.

He uses servants who are powerless, as powerless as Peter. And yet he uses them to call, "Arise, you who sleepeth," to proclaim, "Hear him." He will hear him. To proclaim, "Flee to him." And that very call leads to flee to him and that command, follow him, and he gives the power to do what he commands. There is power in his call.

This is a living Savior which we preach, the one who gives spiritual, the one who revives it time and again so that our hearts would be filled with his love and love to him and love to others. What a glorious message that is. However poor, however helpless you may be, that you can find that can't be a doer of the Word, there is power in that Word to make you a doer and therefore rather than simply complain, our call is to bow before God like Peter did, realizing that he could not make that person live, but he bowed before the Lord confessing and pleading. What a reason to confess, when we feel the power of spiritual death, that lack of love in the heart, that lack of sight to be moved with {?} around us, that lack of feet to run, to help, to flee to God, to enliven. And that is actually a greater display of the gracious power of God than the {?} if God would come and raise someone among us who had died some time ago. It is the power of Christ is displayed in that spiritual life in the midst of the congregation which shows itself in a love to God and a love for others. And when Christ shows his power in this way, then the Church is a witness and then others see and believe that there is, indeed, a living God who changes hearts and lives.

We don't need Christ to raise people from physical death. We need to know his resurrection power in our hearts and in our lives filling us with love, filling us with good works to heed that call. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Amen.