

**Acts 9:36-42.**

*<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!" <sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. <sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.*

**Celebrate Godly Christian Women!**

- 1. Hold up their faith filled deeds of love!**
- 2. Learn of Christ from their example of love!**

She never stepped foot in a pulpit. She never stood before a group of people and delivered a powerful sermon with stirring words of instruction and application. She never called people to repentance with passionate pleas. However, as she stood next to Peter who had done all those things, the focus was on her. As she see stood before those gathered outside that upper room, many people were about to come to faith in Jesus Christ because of her life of faith and her deeds of love.

Tabitha was not a preacher or a teacher. It does not appear that she held any significant public position in the early Christian church. Instead, she is described simply as a dear Christian woman. Even her name is given as evidence to help describe what a fine Christian women this was. Tabitha (in the Aramaic) or Dorcas (in the Greek) both meant deer or gazelle. She was a woman full of God's grace and kind activity. Her faith was the motivating force that led her to spring into action so often. And her deeds of love were a natural display of God's kindness and love that were now in her through faith Jesus. Scripture makes it clear that she believed in her Lord Jesus and that impacted how she lived. The Bible says that her faith in Christ generously produced fruits of faith and deeds of love in her life. We are told that Tabitha was always doing good and helping the poor and the widowed. She apparently made garments and clothes and robes for others, especially for those less fortunate. She used the God-given gifts and abilities that she had been given to serve and help and display the faith and love that Christ had placed into her

heart. She was a woman of faith and God would reward her faith and put it up on display for all to see when he allowed Peter to raise her from the dead!

In the last few weeks we have talked about the importance of a fruits of faith that God produces in the lives of his believers for the benefit of the church and all people. We were reminded of the blessing that the Good Shepherd gives to his church in the shepherd or a pastor, who has the love of God in his heart. The week after that we said that fruits of faith are important as faith in Jesus produces such wonderful and practical results in our lives. Today, this is an account that is a celebration of specific fruits of faith in the life of a specific believer. This is one example, one case study, out of many, describing what God can do in the lives of everyday people who believe in him. Tabitha is an example of how faith in God can lead his people to express a genuine love for others.

Those that knew Tabitha knew what kind of woman she was. Her charity and kindness, her love for others was so well known that when she died it was no surprise that she was treated with kindness in her death. We can imagine that it was with great care they washed and prepared her body for her funeral. Gladly they showed such care and charity to the one who in life had been so giving and so loving. No doubt, with a gentle touch and hurting hearts they placed her body in that upper room, gathered around her, and went through the proper preparations. And when it became known that the apostle Peter was in a nearby town it was only natural that they would ask Peter to come and see and learn of the faith of this fine Christian woman.

Was there ever any intention of going to Peter to arrange a resurrection? We are not told the exact intentions of these two men who went out to fetch Peter. More likely than a resurrection plea they simply wanted to share Tabitha's life with Peter, they wanted to celebrate her deeds of kindness and love. They wanted Peter to know about her and her faith so that maybe he could share the tales of her deeds of love with the rest of Christendom. Notice that when Peter came they were so eager to hold up the things that she had made. They presented him with the abounding evidence of her love that so impacted their lives.

Likewise let us celebrate the impact of godly Christian women and their deeds of love! They might not be in the pulpit preaching on Sunday, but each day such believing women can teach us about Christ in how they live. They "preach" impactful "visual sermons" in the way they serve and help and assist in love. As those who mourned for Tabitha were so quick to hold up evidence of her faith let us hold up the fruits of faith and those deeds of love done by those faithful women among us. Appreciate and hold up what they do in faith in Christ and out of love for others!

Godly women in this congregation take the time to decorate this church, to put up and take down decorations and banners. They make and send out cards and letters to our members to express thoughts of love and sympathy and appreciation. Women from our congregation sing in the choir and serve as musicians. We have been blessed with active Ladies Aid that supports and funds projects in this church and throughout the synod. The impact of faithful Christian women is felt in our special events that would be more than a little less special if they were not involved. The meals and the snacks, the desserts and the

fellowship events are arranged and prepared and served by-in-large by faithful Christian women putting their faith into action. They act in love and respond to the needs of others and they are a blessing to their fellow believers by simply using their gifts to benefit the congregation.

But the impact of faithful Christian women in our midst goes far beyond these walls. Those that serve in the congregation often serve in the community. Those same dear women who do so much behind the scenes at church have their place in the community too. There are women among us who are active and involved in the community and shine as those filled with the love and grace of God as they gracefully and actively make an impact on the community on top of faithfully carrying out their responsibilities in their personal lives. There are also young women in our midst who are busy taking on the role of being Christian mothers and they daily put their faith on display in the way that they carry out this important vocation. These are everyday Christian people filling their everyday roles and yet in all of this we know that it more than the mundane carrying out of tasks, but because these tasks are done in faith this is the light of Christ that shines through these Christian women.

Today, on this Mother's Day, what a fitting day it is, to celebrate the God-fearing Christian women among us! As we meditate on the example of Tabitha let us celebrate the goodness of God in providing our congregation with an ample supply of Tabitha type women, who put their faith on display in the various ways that they use their God-given talents to serve their Lord and to show love to their neighbor!

It's important to take time to celebrate such gifts of faithful fellow believers, because in our sinfulness how do we often treat such treasures? We overlook their importance. We take them for granted. At times we might even speak poorly of them. Because of jealousy or envy or overall sinfulness we speak of their deeds with suspicion and mistrust. Too often instead of being the source of thanksgiving and praise, such women are perhaps the object of gossip and slander. *Who are they trying to impress? What makes them so special?* Instead of speaking and acting with such sinful disdain let us give thanks for the gifts, the talents, and the energy which the Lord has given to them and be motivated by their examples of faith. Let us put away any sinful thoughts, empty words of jealousy, and actions of mistrust and ask our Lord to help us follow these examples of Christian love that he has placed before us. Just as those early believers recognized how blessed they were by having Tabitha and her deeds of love and faith among them, let us also celebrate the blessing of having faithful God-fearing Christian women among us!

Tabitha was a good woman; but she was such a wonderful example because she was a woman of great faith! She was a good Christian woman! Her faith was on display in her deeds of love. We would do well to learn from her example!

We would also do well to consider what our lives are saying about our faith? It also might be beneficial to consider how we might be remembered if today was the day that our Lord called us home? Fellow believers, let's live our lives in such a way that when friends speak of your impact, when old friends sit around the card table or buddies go out on a fishing trip and talk about their friend they will not speak only of wild nights and

questionable deeds; they will not just talk about fun or not so fun stories, but they will know and remember the love of Christ that was displayed in your life.

As sinners, we are not always that good at loving others, instead we would prefer to be selfish and unloving; but the love of Christ changes us. To know that he laid down his life for me daily cleanses me from selfish ways. His unconditional love breaks down the conditions, the limits, and the barriers that we put on our love. His love empties us of that which rips others down and hurts others and we are instead filled with that which helps and restores and heals because Jesus did not come to condemn us but to save us. He came to forgive us, restore us, to heal us. Jesus our Savior came to wrap his arms around us and call us his friends. Jesus has changed our lives so that we can be a good friend, a good neighbor, toward others.

You may never step foot in a pulpit. You might never deliver a powerful sermon, with carefully written and passionate words, but each day you have opportunity to let the love of Christ be seen in your deeds of love. You can be a good neighbor, a good friend. You can help each other in your time of need. You can even be kind to those who have been unkind to you. The Lord Jesus has called you for this purpose. You did not choose him, but he chose you so that you may go out and bear much fruit. This fruit will not only benefit you, but it will serve as an example for others to remember and follow, and it may just lead others to know their Savior.

The Lord Jesus wants all people, men and women, to know his love and so he laid down his life for us. In love he laid down his life for you so that you would know his love and be saved by his love. He died and rose from the dead and now he gives you new life and a wonderful directive and mandate as you live each day: Love each other as I have loved you.

Today we celebrate dear Christian women who have shown such Christ-like love to others. Today, we celebrate the deeds of love, the lives of love, of faithful Christian women; those who have left their mark on Christianity, on this congregation's history, and those who are currently in our midst. And on this Mother's Day we thank God for loving Christian mothers; we honor those among us, and remember with great fondness those who lived lives of love before they died in faith.

We celebrate them, because more than just being good people, they are examples that direct our eyes to the ultimate example of love in Jesus. And finally we pray that the Lord Jesus may lay love of Christ before us through the lives of good Christian men and women in order to compel us to live our lives in a way that makes our Savior known. Dear friends, you have been called by Christ to bring forth and produce deeds of faith and love. So love each other as Christ has loved you. Amen.