

WORSHIP SERVICE - 7.27.2025

PART 25 - JESUS AT WORK

I. INTRODUCTION

- Jesus, the resurrected king, is powerfully at work right now in this world around you and in your life.
- Jesus is at work all around us! He is at work doing great and mighty things in this world. Often we don't see where he's working. Sometimes we forget that he is.
- Sometimes we look at the economy or politics, or at evil that has become pervasively commonplace in our society and we get so focused on the troubles around us or in our society that we don't have eyes to see what the Lord is doing around us or among us.
- Or perhaps we're blinded by our comfort zones, failing to look out and see what the Lord is doing. Sometimes we're so caught up in our problems, or our pain, or our drama, that we start to wonder, is Jesus at work? Does he care?
- Be filled with hope, that Jesus is at work, and he's working powerfully, even now, even in your life, even if you can't see it, maybe even if you don't expect it.
- Our passage today reflects the stories of how Jesus was at work in the lives of two individuals, Aeneas and Tabitha. One was suffering year after year. The other was living a life of service and dedication when she suddenly died.
- And we'll see that Jesus was powerfully at work in their lives and even though we might miss it, he is still powerfully at work in this world, even today, working personally, provisioning, powerfully and persistently to build up his church.
- MAIN POINT: Even though we might miss it, Jesus is still powerfully at work in this world, working personally, provisionally, and persistently to build up his church.

Acts 9:32-43

32 Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. **33** There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. **34** And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose. **35** And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas.^[d] She was full of good works and acts of charity. **37** In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. **38** Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, "Please come to us without delay." **39** So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. **40** But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, "Tabitha,

arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. **41** And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. **42** And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. **43** And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

II. JESUS AT WORK PERSONALLY

- Since chapter 6 of Acts, Luke has mostly focused on characters other than Peter.
- In the first part of chapter 9 last week we looked at the conversion of Saul and the wonder of the irresistible grace shown to him by Christ, who changed him from a man who opposed the gospel to arguably one of the biggest proponents of the gospel.
- But now we transition back to the Apostle Peter for the next couple of chapters and then after that we won't hear much about him.
- The current context for this work which we saw at the end of last week's passage in Acts 9:31, is that “the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.”
- That is such a beautiful, wonderful, encouraging depiction of this early church. Having experienced a great persecution, being dragged from their homes, arrested, killed, chased, and scattered as we saw in the beginning of chapter 8 - Now Saul has joined the Christians and is working to advance the gospel, no longer against it, and the church is flourishing.
- The church is no longer just in Jerusalem but there are churches now throughout Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria. Precisely the areas where the Lord had commissioned the Gospel to be taken in Acts 1 - the areas the apostles were to be Jesus' witnesses to.
- And that apostolic work is precisely what we now see Peter doing. He is going here and there among these little pockets of believers, these little churches which are now not just in Jerusalem, but also in the areas around it.
- Peter is acting as an ambassador of Jesus Christ just as Christ called him to do. To build his church.
- And isn't that exactly what Peter is doing here as goes in and out among these believers in the area. He's busy feeding and tending to the flock of God.
- And now we see that as he does this, he comes to a group of believers who lived at Lydda, a city also known in the Old Testament as Lod.
- Lydda is 25 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and about 11 miles southeast of Joppa where we'll see Dorcas in a bit. Lydda was an important commercial and military city as it was at a major 4 way intersection. The road from Egypt to Babylon went through one way, and the road from Jerusalem to Joppa, a major seaport on the Mediterranean, went through the other way, so it was a major hub of commerce.
- And Peter comes to these dear believers in Lydda, ready to feed and tend to the household of faith, and among them he finds “a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.” - Vs 33
- If you recall all the way back to April, we looked at the account of Peter and John in Acts chapter 3 when they encountered the lame man laying at the gate to the temple as they went to pray.
- And as significant and famous as that account was, you might note that we were not given that man's name. He was just known as the lame man.
- But in both these accounts of resurrection healing today, we're given their names. Aeneas and Tabitha.
- They weren't nameless because they were both part of the household of faith. Aeneas we're not told that specifically about, but we see he was

found among the saints at Lydda and we note that Luke includes his name.

- And he is an afflicted man, living with a history of 8 years of suffering and pain.
- He hadn't been this way his whole life, he hadn't been born this way. He probably knew what it was like to run and climb and move about. But something tragic had happened that rendered his body paralyzed for the past 8 years.
- And Peter says to this paralyzed, bedridden man: "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed."
- He's saying here "Jesus Christ is healing you." "Jesus Christ is making you whole". This isn't by the power of Peter; this is the work of and the power of the resurrected Jesus Christ! The only one who can make us whole!
- And because it's Jesus Christ who is healing you Aeneas, get up and make your bed! Because it's Jesus Christ healing you, you won't be confined to it anymore!
- And it says "And immediately he rose."
- After 8 years of bedridden paralysis, he gets up, and folds up his mat. He doesn't need that old thing anymore, because Jesus Christ has made him whole.
- The resurrected, risen savior, having triumphed over sin and death, and having ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high wasn't far off from this afflicted man.
- He works personally and specifically in his life at the appointed time, with power and authority, transforming him and restoring him as only God can do!
- The power of the resurrection and the work of the king is spreading and Aeneas is a personal recipient of the goodness of God in his life.

Jesus at Work in Aeneas' Life

- Now, this is a short narrative we have on Aeneas, but I want you to notice that his healing is really two-fold here.
- In the first sense, Aeneas had already been made whole. He was numbered among the saints, he's been washed by the blood of Christ. He's been brought into the household of God, his sins forgiven, his debt erased, his heart of stone replaced with a heart of flesh, and a new spirit and a new identity in Christ.
- But yet, he has had this area of his life which wasn't yet completely whole. In this case it was physical. An area of his life which needed to be made whole by the power of the resurrected Christ.
- And so Jesus had made him whole and Jesus is making him whole. This is what sanctification is.
- Christians who have been saved by faith in the risen savior have been made whole, been made right with God, all the debt of our sin erased. But we all come with the baggage from our sin.
- We all come with pain, or burdens, issues with our character, issues with our morals, tendencies towards comfort or selfishness.
- But we are being made whole. That's sanctification. Being conformed to the image of Christ. Being relieved of burdens we've carried for years as the Holy Spirit works in our hearts.
- Being freed to walk in newness of life, being transformed by the renewal of our minds, our desires being conformed to please and obey our savior.
- Because Jesus is at work in our lives, the pain or the struggle that you face today isn't an absolute for the rest of your life! Jesus is at work in your life! He is conforming you more and more to be like himself!
- So look to him! Trust and rely that the good work which he began in you he will bring to completion at the day of Jesus Christ! Phil 1:6

- Aeneas had lived with this burden 8 long years, but Jesus Christ had made him whole, and was making him whole that day, and we can trust he has and is doing the same for us.
- Maybe not physically, though we know he can. We have confidence we will ultimately receive new sinless, painless bodies in heaven, though we're not promised physical healing here on earth.
- But we do know that he is sanctifying us, actively at work in our lives, so that we might rise, and make our bed, and have no need of it any more.
- Jesus was at work in Aeneas' life, and the evidence it gave to those who saw him resulted in them turning to the Lord. That's old testament repentance language there, they turned to the Lord!
- They recognized the miracle was not the work of man, but of God, and they turned to him!
- Not just in Lydda, but in Sharon in the surrounding area too. The praise doesn't go to Peter, though he was faithful in his service to the Lord and compassionate in his care for this man, but the praise and worship go to the Lord.

III. JESUS AT WORK PROVISIONALLY

- So while Peter is in Lydda, about 12 miles northwest of him is the city of Joppa on the edge of the mediterranean sea.
- And in this city is a church, where there was a group of believers there, among whom was a disciple named Tabitha, which is aramaic, or also known as Dorcas, which is greek.
- Either way, her name means "Gazelle" which was quite a fitting name for her as she was a woman who was active, graceful, and energetic in her service to the saints in Joppa.
- She's a disciple, a learner and follower of Christ, she's graceful and energetic in service, she is full of good works.
- She was living a selfless life, not a selfish life.

Care of the Saints Through Good Works and Charity

- Many Christians get good works wrong because they have been so twisted by catholicism or other religions which falsely base salvation upon good works.
- Good works without Christ are as filthy rags - they aren't achieving anything!
- But, for the Christian, for those who have been saved by faith, our good works are to be the evidence of the transformation within our hearts and the outworking of the spirit who works in us to will and to work for his good pleasure.
- Jesus gave us an example of a life lived full of good works, didn't he? Tabitha was following his example.
- He cared for the poor, the sick, the needy. He showed compassion to the lost. He encouraged the weak. He came not to be served, but to serve.
- In John 10 when the Jews wanted to stone him, "32 Jesus answered them, "I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?"
- Tabitha likewise was full of good works. She was a disciple following the example of her savior.
- The new testament is full of exhortations and even commands for us to be engaged in doing good works.
- We were created for good works - Eph 2:10 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God

prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

- We are his workmanship. Before we were saved, we were dead in sin. There was no good coming from us. But now those of us who are in Christ, good works can come from our lives and should come from our lives. We were not saved by our good works but we were saved for good works, that we should walk in them.
- We are to abound in good works - 2 Cor 9:8 “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”
- How often do you think we should be doing good works in order for someone to say we are abounding in them? How often was Tabitha doing good to others for scripture to say she was full of good works?
- Often enough that it characterizes us. It's a lifestyle, it's an automatic action or reaction when we see a need, when we see someone hurting or in pain.
- When compassionate and loving care is warranted, it's our automatic and default tendency.
- That doesn't come naturally from our sin nature. Doesn't come naturally from ourselves.
- But it does come from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our good works are natural fruit, born from walking with the Lord.
- This is why our good works are not to be a legalistic burden. They aren't from our old nature, but the outpouring of a new spirit filled heart.
- Good works are fruit of the Spirit - Col 1:10 tells us that when we are living lives in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, then our lives will be characterized with bearing fruit in every good work.
- Our Good Works are evidence of our faith - James chapter 2. Faith without works is dead. Our good works are the evidence of the faith that is within us.
- Good works are to be encouraged - Heb 10:24 “24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,”
- We are to stir up one another to love and good works. To encourage one another in doing good to others and for others.
- We are Devoted to Good Works - Titus 3:14 “14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.”
- Good works are something to learn. Something to practice. Something to set an example for others. Follow the example of others. Older men - set an example for the younger men. Not just how to meet a need, but also set an example in your devotion.
- Younger ones - you can set an example to the older ones who will be encouraged in their devotion as they see you bearing fruit as you meet the needs of others.
- Our example in this is Christ - when was he ever too tired, too busy, too preoccupied, that he couldn't show care and compassion to those around him?
- Tabitha was full of good works. And acts of charity too. They go hand in hand. We are to be charitable to others, and especially to the household of faith.
- We are to generously give of our time, our talents, and our treasure to others, to bless them, to care for them, because that is how Christ has given to us, holding nothing back.
- We are recipients of the charity of God - it's called his grace! He gave us salvation, the single greatest act of charity in the history of the universal!
- But yet, often we let opportunities to show charity pass us by. We see a need and assume that someone else will step up. Or we hear about someone's need, and we say we'll pray for them, when we have the ability to meet it!
- We can show charity in giving our time or using our skills for others. If you know how to fix cars, and someone has a problem with their engine,

step up!

- If you see a mother overwhelmed and you know that cleaning her home would bless her, step up!
- Tabitha was a woman who stepped up. She was full of good works and full of charity.
- Jesus was at work in this early church, personally caring for the saints there through the good works and charity of this faithful woman.
- And Jesus works in our church in the same way now. How is he using you in that work? How are you stepping up in your care of your fellow saints?
- Tabitha's life was well lived in this regard, it was impactful. And in verse 37 we're told "In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room."
- You can imagine the immense impact the passing of this dearly beloved saint had on the church. This was a heartfelt death for them.
- Having the funeral in a home was standard funeral practices at this time; they didn't have funeral parlours or funeral homes back then, but they would perform the funeral service in the home, and the friends and family would come there to mourn and celebrate the life of the one who had passed.
- And so the disciples in Joppa, members of Tabitha's church, send a message to Peter, urging him to "please come to us without delay."
- They send not one, but two men with this message. You have to think of just how high this servant of the Lord was regarded by this church, that after her death they sent 2 men to a city 12 miles away for Peter.
- She was dearly loved by this church, dearly valued.
- Peter rose and went with them up to Joppa. And when they get there, they take him up the stairs to this upper room where this wonderful servant of the Lord lay.
- And there around him are all the widows. All the widows that she had showed charity to. And they are weeping and mourning her passing. She was a dearly beloved sister to these women.

Care For Widows

- They showed Peter the evidence of her charity - tunics and other garments that Tabitha had sewn for them. They told him of how she had cared for and blessed the widows.
- This was a good work that Tabitha was engaged in, caring for widows. We have some dear sisters here who are widows that we as a church help care for.
- You'd be surprised at the amount of scripture passages that address the care of widows. They are clearly a group that God has deep love and compassion for.
- Scripture contains commands regarding widows all the way back to Exodus 22 where we're told not to mistreat widows.
- In the new testament we're told to honor widows who are truly widows, those who are alone without family to care for them.
- But clearest of all is what we read in James 1:27: "27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."
- To live your life pleasing to the Lord is to care for the orphans and widows, and keep oneself unstained from the world. This is what it means to walk the walk, to have your religion pure and undefiled before God the Father - and that is to care for those who have no means to repay, no means to contribute back to you, but you care for them and love them because God the Father loves them!
- That is the care that Tabitha gave these women! She visited them. Cared for them. Sewed clothes for them as they likely couldn't afford them.

- And these widows loved Tabitha and were mourning her passing.

IV. JESUS AT WORK POWERFULLY

- Peter arrives and he turns this upper room into a place of prayer, of intercession to the Lord on behalf of this woman.
- He calls upon Jesus to work miraculously in this woman to do what no person on this earth could do. To work in her body and restore her to life in a way that only Jesus could. To work in a way that no one would expect.
- Isn't that how Jesus works? He was always surprising people with how he worked in their lives!
- This Jesus, the one who works powerfully, the one who by resurrection power has transformed lives and continues to transform lives - this is the Jesus that Peter now calls upon!
- And then he turns to the body, and says "Tabitha, arise." That is resurrection language there! And she opens her eyes, looks around, and when she sees Peter, she sits up.
- Her body, just moments ago dead in the grave, has now been brought back to life and the power of the resurrection is shown! She is alive again! Jesus worked in her body what only he could do!
- And Peter gives her his hand, and helps her to her feet. This was a chivalrous gesture on Peter's part, a sign of respect for this godly servant of the Lord whose life had been well spent in service to the saints. And so he offers her his hand in a courteous manner.
- And like Aenaeas, this powerful example of the resurrected Christ at work in this woman's life was observed by the people in Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.
- This woman was raised and able to continue her good works and charity. The widows continued to be cared for and blessed. And the people of the city believed in the risen Christ, turned in repentance and faith to him, and the church grew and was strengthened.

V. JESUS AT WORK PERSISTENTLY

Two Resurrection Miracles Part of Jesus' Persistent Work

- Sometimes we read examples like these miracles which show Jesus' resurrection power, or we see evidence of how he took action in the lives of the people in the New Testament, in the early church, and we're encouraged by seeing his power at work.
- But we might wonder - was that just then? Was that just an early church thing? Where is he working here and now in this time and in this place?
- Church, if that's you today, I want to remind you now that Jesus wasn't just at work then. Those weren't one off examples. Jesus was at work building his church and working in the lives of his people when he was on earth, it continued after the resurrection, and it persists now and until he comes!
- Just consider how these two examples, these two miracles, are just a part of his persistent work:
- Both miracles followed Jesus' example
- If you recall from our community group study in Mark, in Mark chapter 2 Jesus healed a paralytic man in Capernaum. And what did he say to that man? "11 "I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home."
- In that same way we see that Peter told this paralytic man "rise, and make your bed". The paralytic man was healed by Jesus, and Peter

followed the example Jesus set as he said to Aeneas “rise, pick up your bed.”

- In Mark chapter 5 we saw Jesus was urgently called to Jairus’ house, as Peter was urgently called for Tabitha. They both arrived and found a dead body surrounded by mourners.
- And Jesus sent everyone out. And Peter sent everyone out, again, following the example of his Lord. Even down to what he said!
- There was just one letter different in what they spoke. In Aramaic, Jesus said Talitha kum! and Peter said Tabitha kum!
- These things speak to the fact that it wasn’t Peter performing these two miracles, it was Jesus! Just as he has done before!
- Both miracles here were done by the power of Jesus, not Peter
- For Aeneas - Peter says “Jesus Christ Heals you” - he tells the man who it is that is healing him.
- For Tabitha - She’s dead, she can’t hear him, but Peter gets down on his knees and prays, recognizing that it is Jesus who has the power to raise the dead, that it’s Jesus who can restore her to life.
- Both miracles displayed the power of the resurrection
- Get Up! is said to both Aeneas and Tabitha, which was possible only by the power of the resurrection! And by them getting up, it served as evidence of that power!
- Both miracles resulted in the glory of God
- When Aeneas was healed, all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord it says.
- When Tabitha was healed, many believed in the lord.
- These miracles weren’t just “one offs”. They were a part of the personal, provisional, powerful, and persistent work of our Lord.

Jesus’ work isn’t predictable, but it continues and persists even today

- Jesus was at work then, and he continues to persist in his work today.
- We can be encouraged that he is doing great and wonderful things in our world even now!
- We may not see his timing. Aeneas was paralyzed 8 years before it was the right time for his healing. I’m sure 7.5 years in, he probably thought he’d be that way the rest of his life.
- He didn’t expect his healing, but his life was transformed by the risen Lord at the appointed time.
- Some of us might wonder the same about things in our own lives. Maybe with ongoing struggles we face. Extended trials. Difficulties. Pain.
- But don’t give up hope. Be reminded and be encouraged that Jesus is alive, and powerfully at work!
- We are encouraged when we see that evidence. But like Aeneas, there may be years where we don’t visibly see it. There may be tragedy, such as how those widows viewed the loss of their beloved friend, that we may not see in that moment how it’s part of what Jesus is doing.
- Jesus is at work here and now! In your life! In my life! In such a time as this! Don’t give in to a spirit of fatalism as you view your struggles, as you view the problems in our society, Jesus is at work!
- How he works isn’t predictable. It’s not in the timing we wish for or expect. But be encouraged today: Jesus is at work, in your life, and mine, and in this world, as he builds his kingdom, advances the gospel, and cares for and encourages his people.
- You and I are to be engaged in that work. To care for one another. To care for the household of God. To be filled with good works and charity. To care for the orphans and widows.
- And we are also recipients of the work of Jesus. He has saved us. He has called us with a holy calling, not of our own works but of his.
- And he is sanctifying us, changing us, working in our hearts and our lives to conform us further to righteousness and holiness.

- As we recognize the powerful work of Jesus, may our lives reflect him, may we be engaged as members of his work, that like the communities of Lydda and Joppa, the people around us may also see Jesus powerfully at work, and may many turn to him and believe

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?