

Motherly Act

Acts of Hope: Part 3 “Motherly Act”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 1, 2022

4th Sunday of Easter – Mother’s Day

Readings: Acts 9:36-43

Reflection: Psalm 113

Greeting: Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. Praise the Lord! (*Isaiah 12:2*)

Prayer: Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we who celebrate our Lord’s resurrection, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 113

Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord. Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 113 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 113 and hear of praise for the Lord from all. That the Lord should be praised for all things, for nobody is like God. That God supports us and turns our sorrow into joy. How does Christ strengthen you in your everyday life? How have others shared God’s great love with you? Who do you think of when you think of compassion? How do you show compassion to others? How do we share in the joy of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our rainbow, our dove, and our promised land: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your ark. Protect us from storms, and ferry us to your welcoming shore. Help us with our doubts and fears and strengthen us in love as we come before you in prayer. May you guide us in all things; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Acts chapter 9 verses 36 through 43.

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas). Her life overflowed with good works and compassionate acts on behalf of those in need. About that time, though, she became so ill that she died. After they washed her body, they laid her in an upstairs room. Since Lydda was near Joppa, when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two people to Peter. They urged, "Please come right away!" Peter went with them. Upon his arrival, he was taken to the upstairs room. All the widows stood beside him, crying as they showed the tunics and other clothing Dorcas made when she was alive. Peter sent everyone out of the room, then knelt and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes, saw Peter, and sat up. He gave her his hand and raised her up. Then he called God's holy people, including the widows, and presented her alive to them. The news spread throughout Joppa, and many put their faith in the Lord. Peter stayed for some time in Joppa with a certain tanner named Simon. (Acts 9:36-43 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

I was thinking of Mother's Day as I was looking at the reading for this week. The reading we have from Acts stood out to me in a different way than how I've read the story before. And one of the reasons was that Tabitha, in Greek Dorcas, is very much a mother to her community. We see it in the way that everyone responds to her death. In Acts they say that her "life overflowed with good works and compassionate acts on behalf of those in need." And so, when they hear Peter is nearby, they call for him. Peter comes to them and something special happens when he gets there. Peter shows up and all the widows are there, and they are crying. But then they bear witness to Tabitha's life. They show off the clothing and the tunics that she had made. And there was something about the witness that her life gave and the people who then bore witness to Peter, that really made me think about what Mother's Day reminds me of personally. Because for me, I think about all of the women in my life that have been a mother figure to me. And there are many of you out there. But it of course reminds me of my own mom. And the reason for that is that my mom was very much a community mom. She wasn't just a mom to her kids. She's always been a mom to anybody who happens to need one. Because I can remember summers where everybody would be gathered at our house because mom was reading. They knew that if they came that she would be reading to all of us, and everybody wanted to know what happened next. Everyone was welcome. There was something special about that because in those moments she was everybody's mom.

I saw that reflected in the reading today. One might notice that it was widows and not children. But the thing is, she was caring for them in the same way a mother would. She was

looking after people with compassion. That when there was a need, she was there. This made me think about the many different women that have been mothers to me at various times in my life, and that's the common thread. They were always willing to show compassion for those in need. They were always willing to care and to love. When we see this account in Acts, we see the way a whole community is moved by one person's compassion and the loss of that leadership. And we see the impact of Peter's actions in restoring this "mother" to her community. When Peter raises her the news spreads. And people put their faith in the Lord. But it made me realize Peter wouldn't have had that opportunity if Tabitha hadn't been there overflowing with good works in the first place. The call wouldn't have gone out without the need. But the community witnesses to Peter and Peter gives witness to the community. And it all stems from the kindness and compassion in Tabitha.

This interaction also reminded me of all of the mothers I have known in that we have a reciprocal relationship. That I can bear witness to the experiences of my life in the ways that I have been shaped by the way they have loved me. The way they have shared their experiences with me. So that I can be here today to bear witness to you. They have strengthened me with me their experience, their knowledge, their love, their compassion, and their grace. But I have to give credit where credit is due. I think of my mom. Mother-in-laws, aunts, grandmas, the mom of a friend, because of that motherly love and compassion that flows from them all. I think of them all on Mother's Day. Because it reminds me of the faith that was instilled into me. Knowing that someone was there to listen to me, it made me want to be able to listen. Knowing that somebody shared with me, it made me want to be able to share with others. Knowing that I had been shown compassion, it made me want to be compassionate. Showing how generous they could be with their love made me want to be generous with my love. And it still drives me to this day.

Our story today is not driven by Peter's actions. Though it tends to be the focus because of the miracle involved, it is driven by a motherly act from Tabitha. Because she cares for the people around her. Because she's a role model. Because she is filled with love. Just as Christ is filled with love. She wanted to help those in need and to show them compassion, just as God shows us compassion. And the witness that those people bear after she falls ill, and passes is a witness to the impact that she had on so many lives. Even though she was just one person her love and compassion spreads to those around her. It becomes an act of witness to the love of those she impacted. It becomes an act of faith through Peter when he is impacted by the great love they have of Tabitha. Peter is moved by the amount of love that they have and the gratefulness they have for everything Tabitha did. Peter brings healing through Christ as a response to their call, and they are in turn moved to faith in God because of Peter's response. But it all goes back to Tabitha and her care for her community. I was reminded of just how much one person can impact our lives. How much one person can make the difference when they show that they care.

And so, I dedicate this day to all the mothers that I know. To my mom, to the mom's who have had many children related by blood or by choice, to the grandmas and all the greats that go with it, to the aunts, to the mothers of my friends, to all those women who have been there for me, because even when they might not see themselves as a mom, I do see them as one. I say thank you because without all of you I wouldn't be where I am today. To all of my church moms, I say thank you because you have been there for me and helped me to become stronger in my faith. You have been there in my time of need, and I am thankful. All of you have time and again reminded me of all of the moms in my life. Reminding me what kindness really is. Reminding me how deep love can be. Reminding me of what compassion looks like when it is compassion in action. Reminding me of care really looks like. And I have seen Christ's love in action in so many ways through so many moms that I will forever be grateful for the way that they have all opened me up to Christ's love, the way that you have all helped me to grow in trusting that things will be alright, and the way that you have shown me what community truly can be. But especially for the reminder that even if I felt alone that I was not alone. Thank you for being a reflection of God's forgiveness, Lord knows I've needed it. Thank you for being a reflection of Christ's love. Thank you for being a reminder of the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for being a mom to me and a mom to others. May we all yearn for the grace and the love that Christ has for us. And may we all learn from each other to know just how much an act of love can move a community. Happy Mother's Day. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Acts of Hope

Our current series will be looking at the Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season, with each week bringing a new act for us to look at.

April 24th – Act of Witness – Acts 5:17-32

May 1st – Act of Change – Acts 9:1-20

May 8th – Motherly Act – Acts 9:36-43

May 15th – Act of Acceptance – Acts 11:1-18

May 22nd – Called to Act – Acts 16:9-15

May 29th – Unexpected Act – Acts 16:16-34

June 5th – Act of the Spirit – Acts 2:1-21

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart
Ronnie Winstead	Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gable
Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland	Ruth Ann Finley	Jodie Bunch
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Judy McCellan	Rosie Chancellor
Susie Callahan	Kenny Holmes	Ted Marrs	Darrell Quick
Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Mammoser Family	Family of Albert White
Gary Pearce	Neal Ryan Family	Jackie Potter	
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Greg Williams	Family of Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte			

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