

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

And so is Tabitha, (no, not the mischievous daughter on *Bewitched*)

Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, was a seamstress in Joppa on the Mediterranean coast, making clothes and sharing the proceeds of her business with the poor.

She was a disciple, Acts tells us, a follower of Jesus, and she had gotten sick and died.

Her friends and family had just prepared her for burial the next day, when they heard the apostle Peter was in a nearby town.

The Bible doesn't tell us exactly why they sent for Peter,

perhaps because he was known to be a leader of the church;

perhaps because they knew of miracles he had performed;

perhaps because they knew him to be close to Jesus.

Whatever the reason, they asked Peter to come, and he came, and he raised Dorcas from the dead.

And so many came to believe in Jesus.

Peter did not act in his own name, to gain glory or fame – he acted in the name of Jesus, to give glory to God.

It would do nobody any good to place faith in the apostle, for he could do nothing on his own power.

But for people to see the power of the risen Lord Jesus at work in him? That could lead them to salvation.

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When Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room after his resurrection, he showed them his wounded hands and feet and side.

This was to demonstrate that he is the same person who was crucified on Good Friday.

When he revealed himself to the disciples in the breaking of the bread, it was to demonstrate that he is the same Lord Jesus who broke the bread of the last supper, telling them “This is my body, given for you.”

In a similar way, Peter is doing the same actions as Jesus did, to show the ongoing presence of the risen Lord among his people.

In raising Dorcas, Peter is showing people that Jesus Christ is the real deal – the living God who cares about them

-- and that putting their faith in Jesus as Lord is the way to live.

And many did, Acts tells us.

But not *all* of those many were there to see Dorcas rise from the dead.

Most of them believed *after hearing about it*. As the Bible puts it: “*This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.*”

Those who had seen it first-hand told others about it

– the news spread by word-of-mouth

--and that was enough to draw many to faith in Jesus.

What’s even more amazing about this story is that in that time, there were many magicians, sorcerers, and illusionists making money from their tricks and claiming it as the power of God.

Just a short time before going to Joppa, Peter went toe to toe with a fellow named Simon Magus,

who tried to buy the power of laying on hands to give the Holy Spirit as though it were a parlor trick.

The power of laying on hands is no trick – it is the work of God.

As people began to see and hear about the effects of the apostles' teaching and healing, they began to distinguish truth from deceit,

and many were baptized by the apostles with water and the Holy Spirit. The church began to grow.

Jesus risen from the dead was present among the apostles

and his eternal life was passed on through baptism to those who placed their trust in Jesus.

Dear people of God, is this not how you and I have come to be here today?

- Whether from Bible stories on Grandma's knees or
- whether from going to Sunday School or
- whether from attending worship on Sundays, or
- whether from watching on social media or listening to the radio –

We have heard of the mighty acts of God in raising Jesus from the dead and giving life to people like Dorcas and Peter and Paul and the many others who came to follow Jesus.

We heard and have come to know Jesus as our Lord,

who baptizes us into his death and resurrection

and who lays his hands on us to pour out the Holy Spirit on us.

Like the first disciples, we have dedicated our lives to following Jesus and telling others what we have seen and heard and experienced of his presence in our lives.

So, let's tell some of our stories of how we have experienced Jesus:

The pandemic has been hard on all of us. I had the joy of seeing Jesus give new life to people who had been away from the church for several years as they received Holy Communion at Easter.

Other stories....

I have seen the joy on a young child's face as he learns about "Jesus loves you water" in the baptismal font.

I have seen Jesus wipe the tears from the faces of those grieving, even as he wipes his own tears.

I have seen Jesus walk alongside believers who have questions about their faith, who are not sure what they believe, and patiently teach them.

I have seen Jesus handing out food to those who hunger and giving clothing to those in need.

We have plenty to share with others of how Jesus continues to be present and to give life to the world.

May it be said of us – and the news of this spread throughout York, and many came to believe in the Lord.

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