

Hello everyone. Hope you have a good week. Don't forget bible study wed night carry in meal at 6 study at 7pm. hope you can come. God bless you!

Pastor Don

9:31-43 "Miracles Reveals Christ's Love" Acts
April 21, 2013

An Amish father and son made their 1st visit to a huge downtown dept store. They were amazed by everything they saw, especially these two shiny, silver walls that could move apart and back together again. The boy asked his father, "What is this, Father?" The father responded, "I don't know son, I have never seen anything like this before." While the boy and his father were watching wide-eyed an old lady in a wheel chair rolled up to the moving walls and pressed a button. The walls opened and the lady rolled between them into a small room. The walls closed and the boy and his father watched small circles of lights with numbers above the walls light up. They continued to watch the circles light up in the reverse direction. The walls opened up again and a beautiful 24 year old woman stepped out. The father said to his son, "Go get your Mother."

An unchurched teenager spent the weekend at a Christian friend's house. They went to worship on Sunday morning. When he returned home, his father asked how his weekend went. He said it was fun and that they all went to Sunday morning worship. The father asked what the sermon was about. The teen replied it was about the Egyptian army chasing the Jews and trapping them at the Red Sea. What happened the father asked? The teen replied they quickly build a bridge and safely crossed the Red Sea and then blew up the bridge with the whole Egyptian army in the middle of it. Are you sure that's the way the pastor told it the father asked? Not exactly replied the teen, but if I told you what he told us, you'd never believe it.

A faithful man was on top of his roof during a great flood. A man in a boat came by said "get in!" The faithful man replied, "no I have faith in God, he will grant me a miracle." Later with the water up to his waist, another boat came by and the guy tells him to get in again. He responds that he has faith that God will give him a miracle. When the water reached his chin, a helicopter threw down a ladder and said climb up to us, but again he turns down the request for help because he has faith that God will save him. He drowns and arrives in heaven with broken

faith. He asked God why didn't you grand me a miracle? God says "I sent you 2 boats and a helicopter, what did you expect?"

What kind of things do we expect from God? Somebody once said "Miracles sometimes happen, but many a life has been wasted waiting for one." Miracles are God's choice not ours. If we never experience a tangible miracle, let us be happy knowing that we have the miracle of His presence in our life, both in this earthly life and the heavenly life to come.

Miracles happen everyday, do we notice them? In 1967 an archaeologist named Bargil Pixner and a Benedictine monk found the lost city of Bethsaida. The area was not actively explored though until 20 years later. A lot of Christ's ministry happened around Bethsaida. It began to die out by the last half of the 1st century and was totally wiped out by an earthquake in 115 A.D. In Matthew 11:21 Jesus called Bethsaida a city of woe because they witnessed a lot of His miracles but still refused to repent and believe. When ever Christ is rejected death is sure to follow. The fate of Bethsaida takes place in human hearts when they too ignore the miracles of Christ. Do we ignore God's miracles or do we praise and thank Him and tell others about them? Miracles are one way God expresses His love to us. They are to bring God glory. Part of the glory comes by us telling others about them. Do we share God's miracles? (Pray)

(31) After Paul's conversion, the church had a period of rest, peace & growth. There are 2 major reasons for this; Paul stopped being a persecutor & became a preacher and Roman Emperor Tiberius died. God has ways of working things out. Do we trust Him?

Now Luke changes gears and starts telling us about Peter's ministry. (32-35).

Peter was on a missionary journey throughout Judea. He came to the town of Lydda were through the power of Jesus Christ, he heals a man named Aeneas. Through this healing, many people came to the LORD. Miracles demonstrate the power and love of God. Miracles bring us to Christ. (36-43)

Lydda was 10 miles southeast of Joppa. Joppa is a sea port city in the tribe of Dan on the shore of the Mediterranean Sea. This is the same town where Jonah went to board a ship headed for Tarshish, when he ran from God's call upon his life. Tabitha was a believer who lived in Joppa. Tabitha was her Hebrew name, It is translated Dorcas in the Greek. Her name means gazelle. She was a very loving and caring woman. She had a giving ministry. She would sew clothes and coats and give them to the poor, but mainly to the widows. The widows were the main focus of her giving ministry.

Widows were among the most needy and powerless group in bible times. There was no social security in those days. No retirement or pension plans. They basically had to depend on friends and loved ones to care for them. This is why, in Acts chapter 6,

7 deacons were chosen to take care of widows and orphans.

Tabitha showed her faith by her good works. She was filled with good works.

What are we filled with? Do we show our faith by our good works?

She suddenly became sick and died. They sent 2 men to Lydda to implore Peter to come at once to Joppa. And Peter did come right away. They took him to the upper room where Tabitha was lying in state awaiting her burial. The widows showed him all the things Tabitha had made for them. Then Peter cleared the room and knelt down to pray.

Clearing the room would take away any distractions and avert any interruptions while Peter prayed and sought the will of God.

Do we seek God's will before we make important decisions in our lives?

When he finished praying, Peter turned to the body and called out her name. Tabitha arise he said. Tabitha then opened her eyes and sat up. Peter offered her his hand and helped her get up. Then he called everyone back into the room and presented her alive and well to them all. The resurrection of Tabitha was soon known through out Joppa. It helped many believe in Jesus.

Christians need to do good and charitable works in the name of Jesus when ever we can. Jesus said the poor we have with us always and we are free to help them at any time. He said when we do good for the less fortunate; it is the same as if we did it unto him. Isaiah 58:7 tells us to share our bread with the hungry and cover the naked. James tells us a similar thing in James 2:15-16 "If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled', but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?" Then he tells us that faith with out works is dead. Tabitha's faith was alive and well, is our? Tabitha's faith produced much fruit, does ours? Do our charitable works help people believe in Jesus?

Tabitha used the gifts and talents God gave her to help others. She sewed and shared.

Are we sharing our God given talents? Are we using them to bring Him glory?

Peter stayed many days in Joppa. He resided at the home of Simon the tanner. Being a tanner was not an acceptable job to the Jewish person. Taking hides from dead animals and turning them into usable leather was not only hard, smelly work, it was considered unclean by the Jews. By staying at Simon's house by the sea, Peter was beginning to tear down barriers between Jewish and non Jewish believers.

Christianity is mixture of all kinds of different people from all walks of life. It is hard to overcome prejudice and bias but through faith in Jesus, we realize that we are all equal; that we each have our own talents and ministries to perform. Jesus loves each of us. Peter will follow his stay at Simon's house with a visit to Cornelius, a centurion who feared God. Cornelius prayed always and was very generous with his giving. He sent men to ask Peter to come to his house. Again Peter went. This story is in chapter 10. Your homework is to read chapter 10 this week as next week we will be reading Peters account of this experience in chapter 11.

How obliging are we when people ask us to do things for them? Do we try to explain the gospel to any and all who ask us questions about it? Are there people we won't tell about Jesus because we think they won't listen or that they would not be interested?

Do we judge people based on the way they look or dress? Do we discriminate based upon their jobs or background? Just how open are we when it comes to sharing our faith? Our Talents? Our resources?

Tabitha shared hers. She used what God gave her. She did not waste her time wishing she had some other gifts. Are we good stewards of our gifts? Are we jealous of other people's gifts? Do we work at our ministry and pray for others in their ministry?

Tabitha is a good example of the Brethren motto for "the glory of God and our neighbors good." What are we an example of?

This story is a good example for Christians. It teaches us several things. First, we need to be responsive to the needs of others. Peter did not hesitate when called to come to Joppa. He went immediately. Tabitha did not hesitate to give away the clothing that she had made. Her brothers and sisters in Christ did not hesitate to send for Peter when she took sick nor did they hesitate to tend to her when she died.

Second we learn to pray to discern God's will for our lives. Someone once said that prayer is the key to the morning and the bolt of the evening.

We need to always remember that a day hemmed in prayer is less likely to unravel. How is our prayer life?

Third we see how important it is to extend the right hand of fellowship. Peter offered his hand to Tabitha after she came back to life. Why? She was no longer weak or ill. She did not need his help to get up, but Peter is a gentleman and a gentleman always offers his hand to help a lady rise or be seated. But it's more than that. His offering her his hand was a sign that welcomed to her once again into the fellowship of believers. Do we offer our hand to new believers? To we offer a helping hand to those in need? Are we accepting of all believers? Peter stayed with Simon the tanner. This shows us that there is no room in Christianity for prejudice. Are we truly willing to hold out our hands to all believers?

The 4th thing we learn is to examine our motives for helping others. Tabitha was motivated purely by her love for Jesus. What motivates us to give and help?

5thly, we see that many believed upon Jesus because of this miracle. Works of faith, be they miracles or some other random act of kindness, should produce faith in non believers and strengthen faith in fellow believers. Do our works of faith and love produce faith in others? Does it increase the faith of others? Do we share the miracles that we have seen? Miracles are the power and love of God on display. They reveal Christ's love for us. They prove Jesus is alive and has authority over death, disease and sin.

6thly we see that just because we are a Christian and living rightly for God, does not mean that our life will be problem free. Tabitha took sick and then she died. She was living and working for God, yet she had this deadly disease.

All Christians have a job to do. As long as we are alive, God has a plan and a purpose for us. We each have a ministry to perform. What God calls us to do He will equip us to do. We each have our own ministry. We are not all called to be preachers like Peter and Paul, but we are all called to be witnesses. Peter and Paul witnessed with their words and the miracles God performed through them. Tabitha witnessed by her acts of kindness and giving. She was known as a woman full of good works and charitable deeds. Doing good works and charitable deeds for those in need will eventually lead us to a point when we can tell those in need about their greatest need, eternal salvation and how to get it through Jesus Christ.

Every individual is special to God. He loves all his children. We each have a purpose because God did not make any junk. When we complete our tasks, God rewards us with a home in heaven and eternal life with him. We are not promised tomorrow any where in the bible. All God's promises are for today. Are we living for him today? Are we working for him today? Are we trusting him today?

Tabitha had a good reputation. Lastly we see that Christians should have a good reputation. Rev. 14:13 says "Blessed are the dead who die in the LORD from now on. Yes says the Spirit, that they may have rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Christians represent Jesus; Christ like persons. When people see us, they are seeing a reflection of Jesus Himself. Our life is the only bible some people will ever read. Are we a good reflection of Jesus? Would our mourners want us back? Is our life marked by good deeds, alms and random acts of kindness? Do we have a good reputation?

The only way to live a good Christian life and have a good reputation is to trust and obey God. Tabitha did. Do we? Do we remember that we have promised to serve him to the end? Do we remember that he has promised to never leave us nor forsake us? Do we remember that he is our friend as well as our master? If we remember these things, then we too can be his faithful loyal servants; full of good works and alms; leading many lost souls to Jesus. After praying, Peter turned and said Tabitha arise.

Let us all arise and serve God very day of our lives. Let us show the world His good works which reveal His love. Let us share His miracles because they prove His love.

Do our lives reveal the love of Christ? Amen, let's pray.