

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Morning.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Welcome to our daily service of Morning Prayers here in the Appleton Chapel of our Memorial Church. I invite you please to rise and join in saying our responsorial Psalm, which is number 121 in your black psalter.

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

Congregation:

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Congregation:

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

The Lord is my keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Congregation:

The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

Congregation:

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

(singing)

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

This is a reading from the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, beginning at the 36th verse.

"Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time, she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them, and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs, all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Tabitha had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said,

"Tabitha, get up." And she opened her eyes. And seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa and many there believed in the Lord." Here ends the lesson.

Today in our Church calendar is the Feast of Tabitha, of Joppa, who we hear about in this passage. This is the only time she's mentioned in the New Testament. The only record of her we have, and this is why she has this place in our calendar. Tabitha was a widow. To be a widow was an especially precarious situation in the ancient world. Many widows were impoverished and destitute, but in some cases, especially if you had had a wealthy husband, sometimes widows had wealth. We think probably given what Tabitha was doing, that she was a widow who was not in such a precarious situation that she probably had some wealth. And we know based upon this passage that she spent her time serving the poor, especially sewing clothes for the poor.

Joppa, where she is from, is now called Jaffa. It's part of Tel Aviv. The original house that Peter is meant to have gone into is said still to be there. You can visit the house. It claims that anyway. And her second burial place after her first burial place, I guess after her second death is there in Jaffa as well.

Peter raises her from the dead. They talked about this death in the second death. And I think it's a distraction, honestly. I mean, it's an important part of this passage. It's a big thing to raise someone from the dead. But I do think it distracts us or it distracts me from what I really need to hear from this passage today. This passage comes from the Book of Acts, which is written by the same author as the Book of Luke, the Gospel of Luke. They're kind of like two volumes of the same book. Luke recounts Jesus' ministry with his disciples and in Galilee and Judea, and then Acts recounts the disciples' ministry after He leaves them.

And Luke is a distinctive gospel. Last week at Communion, I preached upon St. Luke who was a history stay. Just as a sign of how Luke is distinct from the other gospels, at the end of the sermon on the plain, he says something in Matthew at the end of the sermon. In Matthews, Jesus says, "Be perfect as God is perfect." At the end of the sermon in Luke, Jesus says, "Not be perfect, but be compassionate as God is compassionate." And in Luke, we have all these examples of that compassion, material that is unique to Luke showing Jesus being compassionate, consoling the prisoner on the Cross with him, consoling the women of Jerusalem and countless other examples of His compassion.

So what's going on in Acts is that this example of compassion is being carried forward this time not by Jesus, but by those who follow Jesus, the disciples. And in the Book of Acts, the disciples go around being compassionate, doing the things that Jesus did, carrying forward His ministry. And that is what Peter is doing today. Peter is raising the dead as Jesus raised the dead. Peter is continuing the work. Peter is being compassionate as Jesus was compassionate.

But today is about Tabitha, not Peter. And Tabitha, I think raises a different question for us. How can we be compassionate like God when we are not like God? Or to put it differently, what about those of us who can't raise the dead? Tabitha continues Jesus' ministry too, where she does so with less miraculous tools. There's that moment, it's a really touching moment in the passage when all the widows are gathered around in the upper room and they're showing Peter the tunics and the clothes that she made for all of them. Tabitha had less miraculous things, but what she had was the wealth of her house and the skill of her hands, and she gave them.

I feel profoundly helpless listening to the news yesterday and the rising death toll in Gaza, the nothing I can do about it, except despair and pray and make statements and go to vigils, but it doesn't reduce to deaths and none of my prayers or statements or anything else brings any of those hostages home. There's so much we cannot do. We cannot raise the dead, which is what is needed and we cannot do it. Our example this morning is not Peter, because we can't do that. Our example is Tabitha who uses all

the wealth of her house and all the skills of her hands to do the little good that she can do, and which to the widows in that upper room makes all the difference. I invite you please to rise for the prayers. The Lord be with you.

Congregation:

And also with you.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us pray. Most holy, God, your servant Tabitha dedicated the wealth of her house and the skill of her hands to serving the poor. Grant unto us, your grace that aided by Tabitha's prayers, an example, we may also be given a new life in you to do works pleasing in your sight. Through Jesus Christ, your son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

And now we pray the words Jesus taught us, saying: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

Please join in singing our concluding hymn number 370.

(singing)

I have a couple of announcements before I dismiss you this morning. One member of this Morning Prayers congregation, Ellen Williams, runs a foundation called the Kisoro Children's Foundation, which supports young girls and women in Kisoro, Uganda. And she is collecting baby clothes, infant clothes, sizes three months to one year, to take there to help young mothers. And we are helping her collect those things and specifically our church school is helping collect those things. So you'll see bins out front here in the sanctuary and downstairs. We'll be doing this for the whole month of November. So as you're walking in some mornings for Morning Prayer, drop some lightly used or new baby clothes into the bin to support the Kisoro Children's Foundation.

Also, as always, MemCafé downstairs after this service in the undercroft and Communion here in this chapel tonight at 5:15.

Now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and remain with you always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

The Rev. Matthew Potts:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

This transcript was exported on Oct 25, 2023 - view latest version [here](#).

Thanks be to God.