

Acts 9:36-43
May 12, 2019

“Get Up Tabitha!”

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This past week I read a story that was published a few years ago, it is about a new gadget to help people who have trouble waking up in the morning. The article is titled, “The Ejector Bed Which Makes Sure You Get up.”

Without question, some people have a hard time getting up in the morning, I remember a college roommate who had a soccer ball alarm clock. The interesting thing about this clock was the best way to turn it off was to get out of bed and kick it across the room, if it hit the opposite wall hard enough, the noisy alarm turned off. We may know people for whom alarm clocks or belting out “You Are My Sunshine,” does not always get them going. Well if you are a heavy sleeper I have just the item for you. Inventor Colin Furze has solved your problems. His latest invention is the high-voltage ejector bed.

From the maker of the toasting knife and other unusual items, this bed throws stubborn snoozers out of it when the alarm goes off. If you watch the accompanying video, you can see as Furze turns up the power during various test runs, the bed ejects him further into the room until he's practically hitting the other wall. Whatever will they think of next!

As we look at the book of Acts, we hear Peter singing a “get up” song to Tabitha. The book of Acts was written by the same person who wrote the gospel of Luke. In this way the author builds upon the telling of Jesus’ life in the gospel, by, sharing through the book of Acts, how Jesus’ life shaped Peter and Paul to preach and teach the good news far and wide. So the Acts of the Apostles is sort of, “the rest of the story,” telling about the disciples ministry and the growth of the early church after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

So today we meet Peter and Tabitha and several widows. Tabitha, the name, means “Gazelle.” A Thompson’s gazelle has been clocked at speeds in excess of 50 miles an hour and they are known for being able to sustain high speeds over a long period of time. True to her name Tabitha had ministered tirelessly and faithfully over the long haul. She had given all she had to care for, nurture and build relationships with widows and others who had very basic needs. Tabitha, in this story, becomes the only person in the new testament who is described using the feminine form of the Greek word for “disciple.” But now it seems death has stopped this ministry Gazelle in her tracks.

Peter comes to her side, arrives upstairs and finds a room packed with friends and family; a room lined wall to wall with widows for whom Tabitha had made clothes, and to whom she had repeatedly given her listening ear and caring heart. So, peter sings his “get up” song; and, Tabitha opens her eyes and sits up.

We see the Truth of Easter. God’s final word is life, not death.

Not long ago I gathered with one of the clergy groups I sometimes attend. It became apparent very quickly that many in the group were stressed and tired. If you want to talk about a most “UN-fun” gathering, go to a meeting with clergy who are stressed and tired. We have a magnificent way of running each other down the rabbit hole of despair into a most grouchy state of being. Though I am confident this happens in other professional circles as well.

Suddenly, just as we were sinking deep in despair, someone asked a beautiful, inspiring question, “Where is the moment of Grace for you right now?” The tone of the group started to change. The body language of the group started to change. The facial expressions of the group began to improve.

Our stories of God’s grace began crashing like refreshing waves washing away our pity party. One pastor spoke of a marvelous afternoon she shared, just she and her daughter with no pressures tugging at her. Nothing but precious Mom and daughter time. Another spoke about an adult child who got their first job and it was one the family was very excited about. Another told about just taking a sunny afternoon drive along a country road, with no destination in mind. As each story poured out, the group improved. It was like each of these stories were a “get up” story.

We don’t need ejector beds, but... We do need get up stories and get up songs.

So I ask you this morning, are you weary? Are you tired? Are you stressed? Well, where in the middle of it all do you experienced God’s grace? When did something dead within you; like a passion, or a relationship, or a hobby, or an idea, come back to life? That can be the work of Christ’s resurrection in us. These can become our Get up stories.

The Easter Promise of life is not a guarantee set for a certain date on a calendar. We may not experience any joy on Easter day. Still, Easter is God’s decisive promise that God’s joy and grace, and healing, and forgiveness, and inspiration, are there... at work... growing like a seed in spring.

I hope you choose a “get up” song, perhaps a “get up” song will choose you? Because as we look around it is so easy to get down. Shootings and Fires where does it end? Illnesses and accidents why? Children and Parents still lost from each other. Puerto Rico nearly 2 years after the Hurricane, still requires significant rebuilding, it just goes on and on.

We need to feel the pain of those around us and extend our compassion, like Tabitha. We need to acknowledge the dead spaces inside of us and turn them over to God in prayer as Peter did at Tabitha’s bedside. As we do, it is by the Spirit of God that Peter is here this morning and every day. He is preaching the resurrection, “get up” and join in the chorus, sing your “get up” songs into every gloomy, desperate, hopeless, oppressed, dry, dreary, and dead place in life.

We are Christ’s family and we are to join in resurrection ministry; holding hands, singing songs of hope, making clothes, serving meals, lending an attentive ear. We can all be

“Tabitha’s” as we trust in the words Paul wrote to the early Christians in Rome, “ If we live, we live with the Lord; and if we die, we die with the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to God.”

Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, each of us is called to become living reminders that God’s final word is never despair and death, The Still Speaking God isn’t done until there is: Life... Abundant, Triumphant, and Eternal... Life.

Amen