

Jesus is still working on earth through His people to bring wholeness and peace to a broken world.

Luke wrote part 1 and part 2 of the story of Jesus. The first book starts before He is born and the second one continues on until long after He physically ascended to heaven, but the work of Jesus permeates throughout both books.

Through His birth the 2nd person of the Trinity took on a human body,¹ and then He used that body to work, to walk from town to town, to heal, to teach, to touch, and then ultimately to suffer and die, and then to rise (in that same body) from the grave, and then 40 days later to ascend to heaven in that same body.

Luke ends his first book (and starts the second book) with Jesus' bodily ascension - but then masterfully shows us that the work of Jesus continues on earth, through the body of Christ - which is now the church.

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus **began** to do and teach," (Acts 1:1)

Last week we saw as Jesus confronts Saul of Tarsus with the news that He is so connected to His followers that to persecute them is to "persecute Me"

As the church grows, both in size and in health, Jesus is at work amongst its members, strengthening them to go out into the world and bring wholeness to those who are shattered, and peace to those in turmoil.

v31 Jesus works through ordinary churches

A season of blessing comes to the church after a period of persecution.

1. The church had **peace**

1. an amazing side-effect of Saul of Tarsus' conversion is that without him at the helm of the the campaign, a lot of it trickled away. What a testimony to how involved and instrumental and motivated he must have been.
2. This doesn't necessarily mean that there was a complete stop of persecution, however, it could mean that they had peace in the midst of persecution,
 1. which also fits in the pattern of how God acts at times. Sometimes He calms the storms, sometimes He gives us peace in the midst of the storm.

2. The church was **being built up**

1. literally "edified" architectural term "edifice" it means that it was built, or built up. growing in size and strength. the structural elements were being put in place and it was being built. Filling the skyline. (New buildings in Cork)

3. The church was **walking in the fear of the Lord**

1. an awareness of His presence and the seriousness of what it means to live Coram Deo "before the face of God"

4. The church was walking in **the comfort of the Holy Spirit**

1. In such a time of discomfort and uncertainty, to know the stability and strength of God the Holy Spirit during this time was certainly valuable.
2. (same word as in John 14:16) "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,"

¹ The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, ¹ took upon himself true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, ² through the working of the Holy Spirit. ³ Thus he is also the true seed of David, ⁴ and like his brothers in every respect, ⁵ yet without sin. ⁶ - Heidelberg Catechism Q 35

5. The church was **multiplying**

1. not just added to, but multiplied - this isn't necessarily one more thing (5th in the list) but perhaps when you have the previous 4, this is the inevitable result.

1. (Israelite slaves multiplied while under persecution in Egypt)

[one of many summary statements about the expanding church in Acts: 2:46-47, 4:4, 4:32, 5:12-14]

Secondly we see Jesus works through the extraordinary miracles of Peter v32-42

Peter is travelling - somewhat new. At first those in need of ministry came from outside Jerusalem to them "The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed." (Acts 5:16, ESV)

in acts 8 there was a specific incident that needed his attention.

Here it just seems that he's just *cruising around*

He ends up in Lydda- a fairly large commercial town in the centre of the intersection of highways connecting Egypt to Syria and Joppa to Jerusalem.

lots of different cultures are mixing together, influences that are far more diverse than just Israelite culture and language and DNA.

It is a town that has "saints" living in it, which means that there was a christian church in the city. How did they get there? Philip passed through and preached the gospel there on his way from Azotus to Caesarea 8:40 so it is possible that they heard the good news about Jesus from Philip the evangelist.

Or its possible that they were Jerusalem based Christians who fled the violent persecution back home,(Acts 8:1) so they headed 25 miles west, away from Jerusalem and settled there.

Peter checks in on them and meets a man that we presume was a member of the church in Lydda, a man named Aeneas; who is crippled by an unnamed disability.

Healing the body 32-35

Aeneas was in bed for 8 years [events of April 2009] and today was his last day in that condition.

Peter is not interested in pretending that the power to heal is his to dispense.

It is Jesus who does the healing. Peter merely does the asking.

The words of Peter – "**Arise and make your bed**" – ² were perhaps consciously an imitation of Jesus' healing of the paralytic man in [Mark 2:10-12](#).

"*But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins*"—he said to the paralytic— "*I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.*" (Mark 2:10–11)

Jesus is at work in the world through Peter bringing wholeness to Aeneas' broken body.

Many "turned to the Lord" - Jesus is at work, bringing His wholeness and peace to the world. By bringing wholeness to this man, and his body, it pointed the community towards the Lord, and brings peace to their troubled souls.

Raising the dead 36-43

A beloved member of the church in Joppa had passed away, and they sent for Peter to come.

They don't say why:

maybe to perform the funeral,

maybe to comfort and counsel those that are weeping,

² Get up and make your bed - some parents ask their children this every morning and it never happens!

or maybe *to do something else*.

Her body is laid out : similar to an Irish wake. So for some of us, that isn't that unusual to picture, but remember, this isn't Ireland, this is the **hot** seaside mediterranean, where burials take place immediately. So the preservation of the body, placing it in a public place and postponing burial are maybe hints that they are hoping that Peter isn't coming to *perform* a funeral, but that he's coming to *cancel* her funeral.

As he climbs the steps of the upper room, and sees Dorcas' body laid out, there are others accompanying him. (v39) Weeping and showing him the clothing that Dorcas made for them during her life.

I can't help but remember my own grandmother's funeral 2 years ago. Casket, hole is dug next to her husband who preceded her in death by nearly 2 decades, and a table with some photographs and some of the baby blankets that she made in her lifetime. she made thousands of them and donated them all to a local hospital, so that newborns would come home with a hand-knitted baby blanket to welcome them into the world.

A tangible reminder of the effort and work that she put into simple acts of love to babies and to their parents.

There are many of us willing to do great and mighty things for the Lord,
but only a few of us willing to do small and obscure things for Him. — D. L. Moody

Dorcas was one of those who was willing to serve God by serving people. Jesus said (matt 25) that whatever we do in the service of "the least of these" we do it unto Him.

Dorcas made Jesus "tunics and other garments" v39 Jesus would say to her one day "I was naked and you clothed me" and if she were to ask, when were you naked and I clothed you? "As much as you have done it to the least of my brethren you have done it unto Me"

So Tabitha / Dorcas is serving Jesus as she is serving the needy in her life ... but not only that... Jesus is serving the needy through Tabitha. As she knits and embroiders and sews, in these simple loving acts **Jesus is still working on earth through His people to bring wholeness and peace to a broken world**. Even through the simple thoughtful act of giving someone a garment.

We who are believers in Jesus are also called to be co-labourers with Him. Joining with Him in what He is doing on planet earth. We can see what He was doing : "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." (Acts 10:38, ESV) so now, we His people, we His body, are called to be people who **do good**.

"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Galatians 6:10, ESV)

"The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people." (Titus 3:8, ESV)

1 timothy 2, the church in general, and women in particular are encouraged not to worry about adorning themselves with only outward beauty but to adorn themselves with good works.

As we **join with Jesus in bringing wholeness and peace to a broken world**, it is going to involve us rolling up our sleeves and getting to work. For some that will mean travelling to Uganda with Water of Life for the installation of wells or the construction of kitchens (and we will hear a report about that next Sunday) - it can mean working with those struggling

with addictions and dependencies - and as we see here, it can be by knitting clothing. Love is made practical, love is made tangible, love is made **wearable**.

When its all **said and done**, sometimes **what is done** is a lot more important than **what was said**.

The world isn't in need merely of more good words,
what it needs is more good works.

Its always necessary after emphasising the importance of good works in the life of the Christian to make the important reminder that we are not saved by our good works, but we are saved for the purpose of good works.

God doesn't need our good works, but our neighbour sure does. - Martin Luther

Tabitha, a noteworthy, exemplary woman of God and disciple of Jesus, who had a true and undefiled religion, looking after widows and orphans in their distress, had become sick and died. Peter comes into that room, and walks into that situation full of pain and weeping and sadness. And there he is led by God to do something unusual; something that he had never done before, and we have no record of him ever doing it again.

He sends everyone out of the room, gets on his knees and prays. At the conclusion he turns to the body and speaks (v40) **after addressing the living God, he addresses the dead woman**. "Tabitha Arise"

Imitating Christ as He raised Jairus' daughter in Mark 5
dismisses the crowd that was in the room (5:40)
taking her by the hand (5:41)
Talitha, cumi : little girl, arise (5:41)

In a clever turn of phrase, Peter changes one letter of the Aramiac utterance of Jesus so that it suits this situation. Talitha becomes Tabitha.

Peter is following Jesus.

Long gone are the days when Peter tries to boss Jesus around - when Peter would rebuke or correct Jesus... Now here, a humble and faith filled Peter is instead depending on Jesus and following His lead.

Jesus is still working on earth through His people (through men like Peter) to bring wholeness and peace to a broken world. Peter follows Jesus, and good things happen. All heaven breaks loose!

Dorcas wasn't raised for her own sake. She would have enjoyed heaven better! She was raised for
1) her testimony to others v42 She was a living witness of the ongoing power of Jesus (her every day of life was a continual reminder of the life-giving power of Jesus)

2) for the sake of her ministry to others,
which is the same reason we have *passed from death into life* ([John 5:24](#)). We are called to witness and to serve

And as we witness with our lives, our words and our deeds, we know that Jesus will work in Cork, through the members of Calvary Cork, to bring wholeness and peace to a broken city and a broken world.

Benediction:

"Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, ESV)