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⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

Witness the Power of Christ's Resurrection

1. Power to live a Godly life
2. Power to overcome death

“For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” Paul wrote. Isn’t that a beautiful motto to live by? Paul saw every moment of his life on earth as an opportunity to live for Christ, the one who died for him. And he wasn’t afraid of death. He looked forward to it. He couldn’t wait for that day when his Savior welcomed him home to heaven with open arms.

“To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” The only reason Paul could say those words – and the only reason we can say those words with him – is because of the power of Christ’s resurrection. On our own, living for Christ is an impossibility. On our own, death is defeat. We needed something powerful enough to change that.

Christ’s resurrection is that powerful. It’s been six weeks since Easter – and 2000 years since Christ rose from the dead – but I hope the resurrection is still fresh in your minds, today and every day, because it has lasting power for our lives. This morning, we get to see that power on display in the life of a woman named Tabitha: It’s power to live a Godly life, and power to overcome death.

1. Power to live a Godly life

The bible doesn’t tell us anything about Tabitha other than what we read here. Luke writes, ³⁶ **In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor.** Later on, we’re told specifically what she did for the poor: She was good with a needle and thread. She made clothes for those who couldn’t afford them. She dedicated her life to helping the less fortunate around her.

We might be tempted to skip over these details and focus on the incredible miracle that God worked through Peter in the second part of the lesson. Tabitha got sick and died, and God through Peter brought her back to life.

But from what this first verse tells us about her, a miracle has already taken place. She’s already been raised to life, and it happened by the power of Christ’s resurrection when God brought her to faith.

Keep in mind that what Tabitha is doing here – **always doing good** – that’s an absolute impossibility for her, for us, and for any human being on our own. The bible tells us that in lots of different ways – we’re all born spiritually dead, spiritually blind, God’s enemies. We’re born under

the dominion of sin, and by nature, all we can do is sin. The bible calls Satan the “ruler of this world,” and that’s a fitting name for him, because every human being born into this world by nature only serves Satan.

Tabitha didn’t have the power to change that, and neither did we. But God does. And he did change that when he brought us to faith. For Tabitha, and for some of us, it happened by God’s spoken Word – and for the rest of us, it happened by God’s Word at our baptisms. Either way, what Paul says applies: “We were therefore buried with [Christ] through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

Did you know that for years the early church baptized groups of people on the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday?. My baby niece was baptized on that day just a few weeks ago. They did it as a vivid reminder of what Paul says here: When the Holy Spirit brought us to faith, God united us to Christ in his death and resurrection.

What does that mean for us? Paul says we actually died with him. Did you ever stop to think about that? When God brought you to faith, you died. Your sinful nature was nailed to the cross and died with Christ. You were forgiven and declared innocent for Jesus’ sake. That means that sin no longer has any power over you. The life of slavery to sin and Satan that you were born into – God broke the chains and set you free.

And, by the power of Christ’s resurrection, you were raised to a new life. God made you a new creation, a new person who loves what God loves, and looks for ways to reflect God’s love by serving him and the people around us.

You can think of it this way. Christ’s resurrection is the power source for new, spiritual life. When God brought you to faith, he connected you to that power source, and your new life began. God keeps you connected through the means of grace – his word, the Lord’s Supper, and the baptism you can return to every day to be reminded of God’s love and forgiveness. The power source will never dry up – Christ’s resurrection empowers you to live a Godly life, today and every day.

What does that new life look like? You could describe it in one word: Fruitful. The power of Christ’s resurrection produces fruit in our lives. Like you heard last Sunday, we’re connected to Christ, the vine, and that means we produce fruit – good works.

Tabitha gives us a great example. Her life was dedicated to doing what Jesus says in the gospel today: “Love each other, as I have loved you.” She had a God-given gift – with needle and thread – and so she looked for every opportunity she could find to serve God by serving others with it. She wasn’t in it for herself. She helped people who couldn’t help her back. She didn’t do it for glory. She did it to glorify God.

Is that what our lives look like? God has given us all gifts – talents and treasures. Is the first question we ask: “How can I show my love to God and my neighbor with these gifts?” Don’t get the wrong idea. Don’t think that God expects you to empty your bank account, and spend all your time and money helping the church or the poor. God wants you to take care of your family, plan for the future, even to do things for yourself.

God’s concerned about the heart, isn’t he? He tells us to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and he’ll take care of the rest. And that means that we all have to stop and examine our motives. We have to admit we don’t always have that “seek first God’s kingdom” attitude. Sometimes, our motives are more self-centered. We take God’s gifts and think first of ourselves, and make God a “side-project.” Sometimes we’re too concerned with our wants to recognize other people’s needs.

Take those sins, and follow Jesus. Follow him to the cross, where he suffered the full punishment for those sins in your place - and where your sinful flesh was crucified with him. Follow him to the empty tomb. That’s where Jesus rose from the dead as proof that your sins are forgiven, and where God raised you to your new spiritual life. Then, stay by the empty tomb. Live your new, holy life there, in the joy and power of Christ’s resurrection.

II. Power to overcome death

We've seen the power of Christ's resurrection for our lives; and now, God gives us a beautiful reminder in these verses of his power over death. For Tabitha, her death wasn't the end of the story. And because of Christ's resurrection, death won't be the end of our story, either.

About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

Peter knew that God had the power to raise the dead. He had seen Jesus do it three times in his ministry – the daughter of Jairus, the widow at Nain's son, and Lazarus. With a word, Jesus commanded life to return to the body, and it did.

And he had seen the ultimate display of God's power over death – he had seen the risen Christ on Easter Sunday.

The question wasn't *could* God raise her, but *would* he? What was his will? **⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed.** From what happens next, you know what God's answer was. **Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up.**

By the same power that God had raised Christ from the dead, he raised Tabitha from the dead through Peter.

And by that same power, he'll raise you and me from the dead. You see, we already know what God's will for us when we die is, don't we? God tells us in his Word. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." Christ's resurrection guarantees that. He's the "firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," Paul says. His victory over death is your victory over death. When the stone was rolled away from his tomb, the stone was rolled away from yours.

We'll close our eyes for a brief moment in the sleep of death, and then we'll wake up on the Last Day to the trumpet call of God. We'll be given a new, glorious body – a perfect body, without a sinful nature - and we'll be ushered into heaven with all the other believers. Our new, resurrection life of praising God for what he's done for us that began on this earth will continue in perfection into eternity.

So, where does that leave us? Because of Easter, we're in a win-win situation. In our time on earth, Christ's resurrection empowers us to live our life for him who died for us. And when we die, Christ's resurrection guarantees us an eternity with him in heaven. Paul really hit the nail on the head when he said, "To live is Christ, and to die is gain." Amen.