

## May 19, 2019 Meditation and Resources

### Young-at-Heart

Have you known someone who was very generous and kind? How did it feel to be around them/

How does it feel to be kind and generous to others?

*Tabitha showed God's love to everyone! **Imagine a circle of love going all the way around the world. Who/how are some people you can show love?** Let's make a list together of things we could do as a church community to help people in our local community and the world who need our help.*

### Reflection: Showing Up

*We are called to rise up, to live, to seek the welfare of others, and offer words and deeds that are life-giving. This is the Jesus way.*

Some years ago now, one of my Profs at CCS in circle conversation shared bits of the wisdom in ministry he had learnt. He passed on to us the importance of simply "showing up". When he first shared this, my response was that this was pretty mundane advice – but over the years I noticed how important 'showing up' really is in our lives, for others, and in the life of our faith community and the larger communities.

Today we encounter a beautiful model of discipleship that is expressed in compassionate words and deeds. Tabitha is a model of Love lived - expressed – in the doing. The story of Tabitha brings together that important bit of wisdom that ministry is done when we see a need and show up to offer a caring response. This story is one of many examples of the early followers of the Christ way, seeking together how to be and live love with one another. They sought to live out by the Spirit's power within them what they had come to know and understand God was to them: love unbounded!

The life of the early church followers was shared in community. People showed up (in a rather volatile time) to worship, sing, pray, share meals,

caring for one another within small cluster groups called house churches. Yet, throughout the early church examples we notice that these small clusters didn't confine themselves within a room or a building. They went out to transform the world seeking to live the way of justice and equality as they had seen and known in Jesus when he was with them.

Tabitha was a model of love and service. Here was a woman devoted to the transformation of her community, leaving on her deathbed a legacy of caring. Her ministry of care was symbolized in the many pieces of clothing held by the mourning women as they gathered in her home.

Tabitha held a title given to no other person in the New Testament: *mathetria*, the feminine form of the Greek word for 'disciple'. She played a significant role of leadership in the early church, along with Elizabeth, Mary, the women who ministered to Jesus, the women who kept vigil at the cross; later came Lydia and Priscilla. Strong committed women who left a legacy of loving care and leadership in the church of their time – a time when women's lives were ignored, kept in the shadows of society. She no doubt used her tailoring skills to make a living in the economy of Rome, but she also resisted the hierarchy and its exclusive domination by ministering to women routinely overlooked. Her acts were life giving. Tabitha's ministry was holy work, held up as model for so many others. Treating the widows, the vulnerable of society in her time with kindness and justice. She clothes them – hands-on ministry! Many early Christians would have been inspired, encouraged, and strengthened by Tabitha's example. But now, Tabitha has died and grief engulfs the small gathered community. Was her stand in a Roman, patriarchal, dominated world for naught? Who will now stand up for the widows, the poor, the oppressed?

It is into this grief that Peter enters. Drawing on the power he had come to know of the Resurrected Christ, he calls forth Tabitha and in this calling, he continues to witness to resurrection compassion and resistance. *Tabitha, rise up!* And life-giving acts of love rose once more!

Peter too engages in holy work as he addresses the concerns of the small group of followers. He turns to Tabitha with words, similar to Jesus' earlier raising of a little girl: *Tabitha, get up!* Tabitha, rise up! I hear in these simple words the churches' call, yours and mine - to "get up" – rise and live out the calling we have. The ministry that was happening in Tabitha's and Peter's time continues to call us today – a ministry that pushed boundaries wider and wider as that church moves beyond Jerusalem and into the neighboring areas. Baptisms happened of Ethiopian officials and men like Saul – always the church is being nudged into a greater inclusivity as a step forward – as part of the call to rise up and go forth!

Peter makes one leap of faith after another in Acts among those he had no idea he would be asked to witness to – crossing cultural, gender, religious and racial boundaries. *What cultural, gender, religious and racial boundaries are we being nudged to move beyond today? Tabitha cared in ordinary meaningful ways and her story reminds us that showing up with everyday acts of love, compassion, kindness has power to lift people to life. Who are the vulnerable today that you and I are asked to care for?*

How open are we to acts of service and love so desperately needed. *What acts of service – communal and individual – might we encourage and lift up here in this place? Tabitha devoted her life to the transformation of her community. Peter lifts her up as a model of service to others! Consider how are we, personally and as a faith community, are a model of living faith and a resurrection identity. A few minutes ago in our Call to Worship we celebrated the various ministries we offer here in this place. These ministries express our ongoing work, move us forward and invite us to keep exploring the many possibilities of service waiting for volunteers! Do the things we do reveal a church identity that is dynamic, in motion and moving beyond our walls on behalf of God's justice? Where might we be called to 'show up' for? How are we being called into greater inclusive acts of loving kindness and transformative healing? And how might we too be transformed in this 'showing up'?*

A Song of Faith expresses the ongoing, transformative work we as the faith communities of today are invited to be part of.

*We sing of a church  
seeking to continue the story of Jesus  
by embodying Christ's presence in the world.  
We are called together by Christ  
as a community ...  
loving what he loved,  
living what he taught,  
striving to be faithful servants of God  
in our time and place.  
Our ancestors in faith  
bequeath to us experiences of their faithful living;  
upon their lives our lives are built.  
Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints,  
experiencing the fulfillment of God's reign  
even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new  
earth.*

Resurrection is not a one-time event but a daily 'rising' to the Spirit at work within and through us for the sake of others. We have many witnesses to the way of Jesus left by those who have come before us. The Christ Presence – understood as the Spirit known in and through Jesus – is always present, near at hand, within us – drawing us forward and into new ways of loving in the world. You might say that the Spirit of Christ is that relationship of self-giving love, one for another, and particularly those most in need. While Jesus has left us, we are never alone. By the Spirit, Christ presence is lived in and through each one of us, and together, in the very act of love itself.

Envision this faith community's rising up by the power of the risen Christ within. Envision us taking a lead in loving service in the communities in which we live, in becoming Christ to one another, in becoming with the power of the Spirit what God is: love unbounded. Through our acts of self-giving service, kindness, and friendship we continue God's example of caring for others in our community.

Let's rise up, dynamic, life giving and transformed here in our community. Let's show up for the sake of the larger community so that the Spirit can move us beyond our walls and buildings! Be love in the world.