



Amazing Conversions 6

City of Joppa: Prepared by a Godly Example

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A Christian. What do non-Christians think of you? What do they think of us? I'm sure you've heard it ain't all that good. They don't think too highly of you. They use words like narrow-minded and arrogant and, of course, hypocritical. That's a popular one. They don't think highly of you and they use a lot of words that are very ugly words to describe the bride of Christ. And while I know it's not entirely true what they say about you, I know it is their assessment and it is our reputation and that makes it really hard when we think about what we've been studying in the book of Acts. I mean, why would anyone want to join our group when they think that we are this group of narrow-minded and arrogant and hypocritical people? I mean, who really would want to be converted to Christ then have to come here and be a part of this thing when they think so poorly about us and see us in such ugly terms?

That's a good question, and if you ponder that question, you might... well you can do a couple of things. One is you can just get really discouraged, like, "Well, I don't know. And that's why I don't even try. I don't try. I'm not interested in talking about my Christianity with anyone because it's always a bad thing. And they have all these misconceptions about us and we just give up." Or you get like ensconced in your bitterness, like they think that we're an ugly group and you become kind of ugly in your attitude about it all. "Well, that's them. They're lost and they don't get it." And that's what you do. It's a negative, pessimistic kind of perspective.

I'd like to remind you that that's not Christ's perspective. He had a different approach to all of this. Matter of fact, he had an ingredient that, if rightly employed, could really overcome it. It's not an insurmountable problem, the problem of our bad reputation. And it's not that there's something that we can immediately do that will overturn the entire culture's reputation of the church. But we can overturn that reputation like one person at a time, one coworker at a time, one neighbor at a time. That can happen. But we have to be optimistically engaged in what Christ said would fix the problem.

In churches, it seems that God often puts people in churches, outstanding people who make that point, that demonstrate this ingredient in a way that becomes an ingredient in the conversion of other people who say, "I want to join that group." And I'm not saying that in the passage we're about to study, it's the only ingredient. I mean, the passage that we're studying today at the end of Chapter 9 in the book of Acts, it really couples with the passage we just studied last time we were together, when we looked at what was going on in Lydda and we saw that demonstration of God's power, a paralytic was healed. And you can see something even more remarkable in this passage.

But there is a new ingredient added in this passage and it is a key ingredient. Where the passage ends, much like in Lydda, there was a mass conversion of people in the town and there will be a mass conversion in this town about 12 miles to the west on the Mediterranean coast in a town called Joppa. And that town is going to have a massive outbreak of new Christians. And there is a character in the center of all this who becomes the object not only



of this great miracle, but is a testament to something that Christ said if you have this, if you work at this, if you demonstrate this, you know what? People can start to change their opinion about who we are. One person at a time, one coworker at a time, one neighbor at a time.

So I want you to look at this text and find in it a solution for us as we think about our Christian lives. And we know that right now we are besmirched, we are ridiculed, we are slandered. And most people, if you were to lead with, "Hi, my name is Mike. I'm a Christian. I follow Christ, I read the Bible, I stand for the Scriptures," that you know what's going to come with that. Now, I just want to say I think we should lead maybe with not that identical sentence, but we should lead with the fact that we are followers of Christ. I mean, they need to know that right upfront. People should get that sense in a lot of things, but particularly with the words that come out of your mouth, your association with the church. Just like, you know, all these people in Joppa, you know, had their, you know, Joppa Bible Church sticker on the back of their donkeys, right? They were clearly identifying themselves with the church.

But this one person that I want you to look at as we get to the bottom of the chapters, starting in verse 36, I want us to see her as a template for what you and I need to work on. Because not only is it a key ingredient in the continued growth in church-planting efforts at this church, but it is something as you look back at your testimony, and I'll challenge you to do this in your small groups this week, if you look back in your testimony, there was someone like her that I'm sure was there in your testimony. Rarely you just kind of think Christians are a bunch of jerks, but you go in the closet, find a Bible and become a Christian. God uses people and he uses people as a bridge, as a tool to change your thinking about God, about Christ, about the realities that we're talking about in our doctrine. But the life speaks loudly as well.

And so let me introduce you to this gal. I'm sure you've read about her before if you know your Bibles, but let's read it. I'll read it for you in the English Standard Version in verses 36 through 43. "Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas." We wouldn't want to call her that today I'm sure. It's not in any of the baby book names, you know. You know, she's going to be mercilessly criticized in junior high for that. Tabitha, by the way, is Hebrew, it's the Aramaic version of the Hebrew language. Dorcas is the Greek word that is the same word as Tabitha in Greek, also Latin, identical. We'll get to that in a minute.

But here's the description of her, "She was full of good works and acts of charity." Full of good works and acts of charity. The demonstration which she has that we want to drill deeper into this morning is something Jesus said when he says, "You know I'm great, you know I'm king, you know I'm all together what everyone should want," and he says, "you know, you'll make a difference in this culture," Mike Fabarez paraphrase. "They'll know you're my disciples. They'll know that you're connected with something good if you have love." Love for one another, and that love should spill out outside of the church as well, which is what that phrase "acts of charity" is really pointing to.

Well, of course, there's going to be a demonstration of power and we looked at it last week, and you should go back and listen to that message if you weren't here, because we're not

going to take time to emphasize that, at least in the application to determine in the way we did last week. But the idea is that she is going to die and be resurrected, which is a huge demonstration of God's power. "In those days," versus 37, "she became ill and died, and when they had washed her," which they traditionally did before they usually wrapped them in spices and put them in a crypt or a tomb or in the ground, "they laid her instead in an upper room."

"Since Lydda," where we were last week, about 11 to 12 miles away, "was near Joppa." Right? And today, by the way, Lod is where the airport is, Ben Gurion Airport and we go about 11 miles to Tel Aviv. These are the modern-day cities. If you go with us to Israel next time we go, next summer, God willing. It was nearby. "The disciples, hearing that Peter was there." Peter is the senior pastor of the megachurch in Jerusalem, also an apostle. He was also there as a part of Jesus' ministry. I mean, he's a big, big guy, big gun. They said, well, we got the big gun here, and he's just a few hours away. "They sent two men, urging him, 'Please come to us without delay.'" We got a body, a corpse in an upper room and she's dead and we'd like you to come.

So it's going to take a few hours to get there. It's going to take a few hours to get back on foot. But would you come right now for the third night? "So Peter rose and he went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and they were showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and he knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, 'Tabitha, arise.' And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up." Verse 41, "And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive."

Mind-boggling, mind-blowing, the only resurrection we have of Peter. Only two in Acts and this is huge, it's a big deal. These are really rare in the Bible, less than 10. This is a big, big deal, obviously, right? "And it became known," as it would become known if we had a resurrection at a funeral here, "it became known all throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." That word, by the way, think back to where we ended the last pericope, that last historical reference to what was going on in Lod or in Lydda. It talked about people "Epistrepo," turning to the Lord. We talk about repentance and faith around here all the time. Those are the two commands in response to the gospel. And that little pericope ended with that idea that they turn to the Lord, a ton of people in Lydda.

Now we have "believed" they believed in the Lord. It is great. This is meant to be read together. As matter of fact, it's also read to be an echo of what Christ did in telling that paralytic in his ministry, "Take up your mat and walk," and then pulled... cleaned all those people out of that room. Remember when you had that Jairus' daughter, that 12-year-old who had died and the same thing, "Little girl, arise." And she did. He presents her alive to those who were watching. "So Peter stays in Joppa," this town, "for many days with one Simon, a tanner." Don't get that confused as Simon is his name to Simon Peter, but Simon is a different guy, a tanner here. We'll talk more about that. That's a transitional verse into where we're going to go after this series of sermon breaks that I told you about.



All right, these go together, we talked about the power of God, we talked about the demonstration of the power of God in the modern era. We talked about how we do that in the church since the second century. Go back and review all that. But the added ingredient here is a gal who the people love so much in their church, they thought if there's any chance that that apostle there, the senior pastor down there in that huge church and that person who hung out with Christ, could come and do something that Christ did, we want her back. And so they rushed to get him. He comes back and she's risen from the dead.

But I want to talk about this gal and what she had that I have to think played into this whole narrative of a town turning to the Lord. That they were ready for this demonstration of the power of God, and they were apt to hear it because they had a life that was demonstrating this love that Christ kept saying would be a demonstration and a characteristic of a real transformative virtue in your life that would change people's opinion of you guys. "Oh, well, the power of God is going to change their opinion." Well, that's true, right? But this whole group of people is prepared by this life.

This life, by the way, I talk about the word Tabitha and the word Dorcas, they both translate the word, if you haven't looked in your reference Bible there already, it translates the word "Gazelle," the gazelle, the gazelle. You know, we don't grow up in the country here, but gazelle, you know, is this very graceful looking animal, deer-looking animal. And it's known in Scripture, it's usually employed verbally in Scripture to demonstrate something beautiful, something graceful.

In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, Solomon talks about his bride's body, and I won't get any more specific than that, you can look it up, as a gazelle. She's a beautiful and graceful woman. It's an act of beauty. Well, there's something beautiful about Tabitha. Now when Tabitha was given the name by her parents, I'm sure her parents didn't know what kind of form or shapeliness or beautiful hair or face that she would have. But the good news is that when they named her this animal that was known for beauty and grace, she ends up growing up to be a beautiful woman. Although Luke gives us no description of what she looked like, we know she's beautiful in some very specific biblical way. A category of Scripture that I'm saying to you, there was probably someone in your past who demonstrated this kind of beauty. And you know how beautiful this kind of life is and how impactful that beauty can be.

And I want to look at those two words here, these two phrases and just show you what that is, to drill down. Instead of saying just be a beautiful person, what are we talking about? Look back up in verse 36. Right? We have Dorcas, the gazelle, Tabitha, gazelle. Right? In Aramaic or in Greek. She was full of these two things, "good works and acts of charity." Good works and acts of charity. That phrase good works, usually used to describe the way we interact with one another. It can be used outside of the church as well. But the love that we have and the demonstration of the work that we show to one another in good and positive ways. We come together and we spur one another on, the writer of Hebrews says, to love and good deeds, good works.



I mean, that great. We want people in our church to maximize the fruitfulness. We want them to bear that kind of fruit, you know, 30- 60- 100-fold. And there's also that sense then of that expression of that working love that is demonstrated outside of the church, "acts of charity." I don't know what you're thinking, "Well, she gave a lot of excess furniture to Salvation Army." No, that's not what she did. Look down where we go to see some examples of it. It says there in verse 39, "When he arrived, he was taken up to the upper room and all the widows," again those are gals in need, they don't have husbands anymore, "stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them."

So she is giving of herself, not just giving them a Kohl's card and saying, "Hey, here's twenty-five bucks, go buy yourself a blouse." But she's sitting there with the weaver's spindle and she's making clothing for people. I mean, that is an amazing thing. Someone's in need. She meets that need and she's working. I even like that phrase. Not good deeds, but good works. Right? She's working to show this kind of love within the church. She's showing that love outside of the church. I'm just saying that's a foundational thing and it's a beautiful thing.

You need to see, if you're taking notes, number one, the power of that. "Appreciate the Beauty," the powerful, attractive beauty, "of a Generous Life," because that's really what I'm talking about. But talk about be a good person out there at work in your neighborhood, you should be known as a good Christian. I want to be more specific than that. Cut this pie down into this slice. I'm talking about today, generosity. That is a particularly powerful foundational virtue that demonstrates the love of God.

When we think about the love of Christ that we're supposed to demonstrate, First John Chapter 3 verse 16, you know, Christ came and he gave his life for us. And he says, "We ought to..." If "He laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers." And then he says in the next verse if you, "See your brother in need," and you don't meet it, "you close your heart against that person, how can the love of God exist in you?" So here is a gal who is loving the way God would love, and she's doing it sacrificially. Generosity.

Now, you sit back, you hear the pastor telling you, "Hey, we need to be generous Christians inside the church and outside of the church," just like you probably had a generous person that was some kind of maybe paradigm breaking personality that you thought, "Well, I guess not all Christians are hypocrites and arrogant and narrow-minded. This person's loving me, caring for me, generous toward me. And they broke the mold." I'm just saying, when you think about that, the pastor just exhorted you, OK, be a generous person, be that beautiful person to people around you, I wonder how you respond to that. "Oh, I'm pretty generous."

If I got up here and I said this: "Hey, I just want to tell you how generous I am. Compass 2020. We'll talk a little bit about it next time. Two years ago, pastor got to talk about 2020 church planting churches and, you know, establishing ourselves here for the next 20 years and building the Compass Bible Institute and all that. You know, it's going to take money and so the pastor talked about money. So, you know, I got really generous. I gave \$30,000 to the Compass 2020 fund. I gave \$30,000 to them. Oh, and by the way, you want to talk about my generosity. I had this thing I got in the mail about this great, you know, soup kitchen up in



Santa Ana. And I just saw they had a need. I wrote them a check for a thousand bucks. And then I realized I got to know some missionaries here in our church and I sent \$2,000 over to their mission's organization because I thought I just want to support them.

There was a family in my small group and they kind of fell on some hard times. I just knew, they talked about things were tight. I wrote them a check for a thousand bucks. So I just testified to you I gave \$34,000 away the last couple of years just because I'm a generous guy.

Now, if that would impress you, OK, you'd need to know more. Because if I said, well, I just want to let you know when it comes to numbers like this, I also inherited \$800,000,000 from my in-laws two years ago. So when the pastor started talking about Compass 2020, I was like, ready, Johnny on the spot, 30 grand right there, bam. And I gave that thousand bucks to that soup kitchen and I gave two thousand bucks to the missionaries and I give a thousand bucks to that family in my small group. Ha!

Now, do you think I'm generous now? You don't think I'm generous, why? Because that's, ready, 0.00004% of my windfall. That's like you if you got \$80,000 in the bank, you're giving 3¢. Daaah... Compass 2020? Yeah, I got you right here. It's not going to affect your lunch, not going to affect your summer vacation, it's not going to affect anything for you to give three pennies away.

So you wouldn't think I'm generous. But let's just go back through those numbers. If I said to you this, "Hey, you know what I heard the pastor talking about 2020, church-planting, missions work, educating people at Compass Bible Institute. I wrote a check for \$30,000 this last week to go to that. That was the net proceeds on the extra job that I took on when I heard the pastor say all this. And so I've been delivering pizzas for the last two years and I saved every bit of that from that job. And I have just been doing it at nights and sometimes on Saturday mornings." Do people eat pizza on Saturday morning? "Saturday nights after the service, I've been delivering those pizzas and so I made 30 grand and I just wrote that check to Compass 2020."

"Oh, and, you know, I learned from my dad some great plumbing skills, and I'm not so bad at it, and I just kept my ear open. In the last two years, I've had like three families have some serious plumbing problems and I know how expensive it is. So I've gone over to their house and I've gotten under their kitchen sink. And I went through and got my snake out, went out. I worked on, helped three people solved their serious plumbing problems. It took me hours and one night I was at this place until 1:00 in the morning."

"My neighbor lost her husband, and I just know she's too elderly to cut her lawn. So every two weeks for the last two years, I've been cutting my neighbor's lawn, just going out there and keeping the lawnmower up to speed, buy gas for it, make sure it's got oil. I've been doing that for two years. Oh, and then I got another guy around the corner and they got two kids. And unexpectedly, they were surprised, surprise, they got a third kid on the way and, you know, my kids are now, you know, very much up and out. So we took our Honda Odyssey and I just signed the pink slip over to them because they didn't have a car. And so I gave them that."



Yeah, I might have, you know, 10, 12, 15 thousand bucks in the bank, but I did all of those things."

Now if I ask, "What do you think of that?" I think that's way different. "Same \$34,000, but one of them cost me nothing, literally 0.00004% of my wealth. The other one costs me a lot. It cost me sleep. It cost me effort. I didn't get as much time in front of my Netflix show. I ended up having all kinds of calluses on my hands. I, you know, all the nights I could have been watching what I want to watch or doing what I want to do, I was delivering pizzas." You'd say, well that's, you might even say this, "That's a beautiful thing you've done. It's really a beautiful thing you've done. You mean you just signed the pink slip over it?" Yeah.

Besides me telling you about that from the platform, none of this is true, by the way, that would be a beautiful thing. It wouldn't be a thing to boast about, but it would be a thing to say, "Wow, that's a Barnabas kind of thing." Because when Barnabas saw the church was in need early on, he saw people had needs and they couldn't meet them. And he said, "Well, I can't meet it either. But I got an asset. I got some real estate. I'm going to sell that real estate. I'm going to liquidate that. I'm going to bring it and lay it at the apostle's feet and say, 'Please meet the needs in the church.'" Barnabas was that kind of guy. Tabitha was the kind of girl that could see a widow who could no longer provide new clothes for herself, saw a shabby tunic on her and said, "Wait a minute, let me stay up and make this happen." Gazelle was a good name for her, beautiful.

Matter of fact, let me distinguish these two things in wisdom literature. Go with me to the last chapter of Proverbs just before I put this point to bed. Let's just look at this passage when the writer here in Proverbs compares the external form and beauty and the shiny eyes and the nice smile of the beautiful woman and says at the end of all of this, you know what? "Beauty is vain." It is fleeting. "Charm is deceitful." How sweet and wonderfully she flips her hair over her shoulder. "But a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." But that's what he says. Now, all of that doesn't mean that the gal who he's praising in the passage isn't beautiful. It's just the focus on this passage is a lot like the focus of Luke saying, you know, here is a beautiful woman right here. And let me explain to you what kind of woman that is. Now, I know you gulp when you think about Proverbs 31 and there are all kinds of things in it. But let me highlight just a couple of things that I think might just help us understand Tabitha a little bit better.

Look at verse 16. "She considers a field and she buys it; with the fruit of her hand she plants a vineyard. She dresses herself with strength and makes her arms strong. She perceives that her merchandise," her dealings, her marketplace work, "is profitable. Her lamp doesn't go out at night. She puts her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle." Right? That's her stuff to make clothing. "She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy."

Now, I know the context here is going to include her household. She's going to love the people nearby. But I just want to show verses 16, 17, 18 and 19 all prepare us for this statement. She's got money in her bank account because she's, quote unquote, delivering



pizzas so that she can see a need and meet it. It's the widows saying, look at the dresses that Tabitha made for us. It's amazing. She made them. She didn't pass us a gift card.

See, generosity is generosity when it's sacrificial and some of you think you're generous because you let a few things out of your hands that really didn't cost you anything. When David wanted to be generous to God, he didn't let Araunah give him the threshing floor. He said, I'm going to pay for it because I'm not going to give the Lord something that doesn't cost me anything. And you ought to think that way, really, when you start evaluating how generous you are. How generous are you, really? Think about it. And I will tell you, at least biblically in this particular stratum of your character, I'm going to tell you how beautiful you are based on how generous you are.

She was generous and look at this passage. The woman that is praised here as a beautiful heart. Think about it. Verse 18. "She perceives that all of this work she's doing is profitable." Why? So she can be rich? No. So she can dress her kids in the nicest? No. It talks about that. She does dress her kids well. But this passage is about her lamp not going out at night, not because she's watching the glow of her favorite TV show. Right? It's because she's working at this mill, what they call that thing where they make clothing? Yeah, that thing, right. She's working at that... City folk talking about stuff that we don't understand. She's doing all, she's staying up late at night because she's generous, it's sacrificial generosity, that's beautiful. And you know what? Non-Christians start to notice that.

Verse 24, "She makes linen garments and sells them; she delivers sashes to the merchants." She's doing all of that. "Strength and dignity are her clothing, she laughs all the time to come." She's ready, she's prepared all of that at the end. There's the punch line, verse 30, "Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, let her works praise her in the gates." And here we are 2,000 years later, I'm just praising a woman that should rightly be praised and she should be praised, Tabitha, because she was a beautiful woman and I have no idea what she looked like. But she was generous, and you know what, the town thought she was beautiful, and I just wonder how beautiful are you?

The more beautiful you are, the harder it is to call you arrogant, narrow-minded, hypocritical. People give a lot of grace to people who are beautiful, you know that. And all I'm telling you is you can change the reputation that people have about us, one person at a time, one coworker at a time, one neighbor at a time. The question is how generous are you? How much are you willing to work to show that people mean more to you than your stuff or your time or your convenience? We talk a lot around here about going the extra mile, staying the extra hour and spending the extra dollar. And I'm saying all of that needs to happen to make sure that you "let your light shine before men, that they might see your good works." What for? Because there's an evangelistic goal, "that they might glorify your Father who's in heaven." I mean, that's really the point.

That's the point when Jesus told the parable about the guy who worked for a master and ripped him off, but when he ripped him off, he showed that money could build a bridge for him



to have a couch to sleep on when he got fired. Remember that parable, the shrewd servant? And at the end, he says, you know, those non-Christians, they use their money a lot more wisely than we do. Because we don't use our money the way we ought to, to build the kind of bridges to say to people, I care more about you. I'm more sacrificially generous toward you than I am about me hoarding my money, hoarding my time, protecting my weekends, making sure I'm not out another weekend, not having to get up early.

We care more about you than all of that, and we're going to build bridges so that you might, the parallel is very clear, not go to someone's couch and crash on it after we get fired, but they're going to welcome us into eternal dwellings. Now, how do they get there in the kingdom? Well, because they got won to Christ. I made friends by means of my money, which is an act of my sacrificial generosity. You do appreciate the beauty of a generous life, and I'm just saying this, look back at it, which I'll make you do in your small groups this week, look back at people who played that role in your pre-Christian testimony. And then say, I'd like to be in someone else's testimony.

Back to our passage, Acts Chapter 9 verse 37. "Well, this is all about a resurrection, Pastor Mike. This is she rose from the dead. She popped up when Peter called her name out." Demonstration of power, I get that. I wanted to make this point something like this, which wouldn't fly, but... Make sure they miss you when you die. That would be a good point, right? Because I'm telling you what, I just wonder what it takes to have this group of people say, "Go get Peter, he's only four hours away. It's going to take you four hours to get there, three or four hours, then three or four hours to get back. We can wait six hours and fan this body and hope that everything's still OK and I don't know, can we get her back? Can we get her back? We want her back."

The beauty attraction of a generous life is that when that beautiful, sacrificial, generous person is gone, people say like, "I don't want that person gone." They want her back. Now, I know the distinction between a real resurrection that hasn't happened yet, the only one that has ever happened is Christ, the real resurrection, where they are resurrected into immortality by a body that is impervious to death and decay. It's only been one of those. He's the first fruits of those who will be resurrected, that's First Corinthians 15:20. But there have been some resuscitations. We call them resurrection. Man, they're resurrections, they're resurrections. It's not that your heart skipped a beat or we did CPR on you and got you back. This is like they're dead, right? They're dead.

So we know it's a miracle. We can put it into the rubric or the category of resurrection. But it really is a resuscitation because like Lazarus, like Jairus' daughter, they all go on to die. Tabitha died. Her body died later. But the resuscitation is an interesting thing. They loved her so much, they cherished her so much, they depended on her so much. The widows are saying, "Look at what she did for us. We want her back." I'd like to take that if I can just, I don't know, stretch your theology, make sure you're thinking this morning. I can take that picture of a righteous life that they want back and take that and put it down into this deeper foundational truth and say, isn't that really what the ultimate resurrection is like? Isn't it?



Don't we want the righteous to be resurrected? Don't we want the good people to be resurrected? "Oh, Pastor Mike, you're skating on thin ice. I thought you believed in grace." I do. I believe in grace. I believe we were saved by grace, through faith. I get that. I understand that. Matter of fact, let's quote the passage you're trying to quote, Ephesians 2:8-9. I understand it, we're saved by grace. "It's not a result of our works that no one can boast." We cannot boast about it. We don't get saved by doing good things. I know that.

But you do know verse 10. The thought's not done until we understand this, "That we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works." You live those good works out and guess what? People will miss you when you're gone. To the extent that you are really sacrificially generous, they will want you back. And you know what? There's going to be a place where they're going to get you back, the eternal state. The kingdom is going to be filled with those who are resurrected who have been good. What? Really?

Good, that's right. Good, in a relative sense, I get that. "There's none good but God alone." I've read that passage, too. I know that. But here's the idea, you need to have a life that befits not only people really mourning for you when you're lost because they'd love to have you back, but living a life that befits that foundational paradigm, which is the resurrection of the righteous. Number two, let's put it down that way. I want to make sure I'm that way, even just in a theological sense. I want to live the life, I want to be the life that befits the resurrection. Number two. "Be the Life that Befits the Resurrection." That's appropriate to, that makes sense, that is corresponding with the resurrection.

Because here's what the Bible says about the resurrection, there are so many passages we could look at. Let me just quote a couple for you. How about this one? Daniel Chapter 12 verses 2 and 3. "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." OK? The wicked, that's their lot. The righteous, that's not their lot. These are categories the Bible does not shy away from. It says this, "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness," I don't know, like Tabitha, "they'll shine like the stars forever and ever."

Christ says you are to be light, be light, the light of the world. You don't take light and hide it under a bushel, you are a light, you shine it, you put it on a hill and you let everyone see it. You put it on a pedestal, the lamp. And the Bible says, "So let your light shine before men." So people who are living those kinds of good lives, guess what? They then get resurrected and they all get assembled. It's the small gate and the narrow road, proportionately it's a small segment of society, but I'd like to be a part of that light-shining group, the children of righteousness, not just judicial justified righteousness. I get all of that. But you're saved for good works, real good works, works that are good that God loves, to quote the Scripture, right? The psalms say, "God is righteous. He loves these righteous works." He loves that.

And he wants then to collect those people who do those righteous things and he wants to put them there. Is it of grace? I get it's of grace, but he puts them there. I'm stretching your theology now and there becomes a place where all the righteous people get to live and then



it's on steroids because there's no flesh to encumber it, there's no tempter to make us fall, to lead us into temptation. All that's done. The lights get like fuel poured on them and then they're burning brightly. I mean, I'll just read it. They're like "the brightness of the sky above." And people who are really making a difference in this world now, they're like shining like stars, like this eruption of the fusion of this light forever and ever.

"Old Testament, man, you don't know your Bible, that's Old Testament Pastor Mike." I'm glad you said that. Matthew 13. Jesus talks about two destinies. The Son of Man is going to come, he's going to gather the kings, he's going to take all the lawbreakers, the sinners, and he's going to throw them into the fiery furnace. And I know that's not preached often, we don't find any Dayspring cards in our bookstore, there's not going to be a plaque that has that passage on it for your hallway. Right? But the Son of Man is going to gather the kings, and he is going to take all these lawbreakers, throw them into the fiery furnace, OK?

Verse 43 of Matthew 13, and "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." You've got the darkness and the wicked, the unjust, the unrighteous, and then you have the righteous. And the righteous who are doing righteous deeds, they get now placed into the kingdom where they can shine and there's no darkness around them. Pastor Mike, "Are you saying I'm saved by works?" I'm not saying that. Have I denied that charge yet to you? But I am saying this, if you are a Christian, you will practice righteousness and that righteousness befits eternal life.

I want you to think if your life was the kind of life that was going to inhabit the kingdom, is that what you would want there? Do you think that's what God wants? Do you think that's what I would want there? Do you think your friends would want that life there? I need you to be that life now. Well, it'll be on steroids then. It will be inflamed then. You'll just put every fuel possible on that light. But the light needs to be shining now. Your sacrificial generosity, your good works, your acts of charity ought to be exploding now because then they will explode like the fusion of stars and the sun in the kingdom.

If you want to turn to one, how about this? Luke 14. Luke Chapter 14, Jesus tells a parable about a banquet. Look at verse 12, Luke 14:12, if you can get there quickly. "He said also to the man who had invited him," to this dinner, he was at a dinner. So it's a good illustration, right? Apt on the circumstance and here it comes. "Hey, when you give a dinner or a banquet," which costs a lot, by the way, a lot of work, got to clean up afterwards, got to set up, you got to get ready, you got to clean off the chairs. A lot of work. "Do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your rich neighbors." What? No, don't do that. "Lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid."

So what's the point? If everything you do is so that you can kind of have, like, "I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine." I'll pick up the tab this time but I know he's going to pick up the tab the next time. If that's my idea of generosity, which is really not generosity, because I know it's just like "We're going have a party at my house this week, we'll have a party at your house next week. We'll all share the work and it won't, you know. I'll do it a little bit now. You do it later." If that's your idea? That's not generosity. That's not righteousness. As Jesus said



elsewhere, the sinners treat other sinners good when they know they're going to get good in return, even the tax collectors, they were kind to people who were kind to them.

No, "When you give a feast," I mean, when you're pulling out all the stops, when you're ordering not just pizzas from Costco, but you're really preparing stuff in your oven all day long, and you've got a feast going on, the barbecues going, you're working, you're sweating, "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." People who can't earn money. So they don't have money in our society, in this ancient society. Right? Then you're going to be blessed. You're going to be blessed, because they cannot repay you. That's real Dorcas/Tabitha-style generosity. "For you will be repaid at the resurrection" of the righteous, "of the just." "Dikaios" is that Greek word "righteousness."

The righteous are going to be practicing righteousness in this life, sacrificial generosity. They're going to be beautiful lives. They're going to be light shining in a dark place. And those lives, not only are going to shine even more brightly in the kingdom, but God is going to dump all kinds of rewards on them. That's the life I want to live now. I'm not going to say, "Well, I'm really going to be righteous when I get there. I'll really be sacrificial when I get there. Then I'm going to go the extra mile, spend the extra hour and spend the extra dollar because... I just can't wait to be in heaven because then I'll live righteously. You got to do it now.

Romans 2, I don't have time for that. You could look at so many passages, you think it looks like he's saying that we earn our salvation by seeking immortality in life and doing good they earn this resurrection. Well, it doesn't say earn, but it does say they get it, because they're shining this bright light. And they're turning, to use the words of Daniel 12, "turning many to righteousness." I want your infectious, attractive, good works and acts of charity, your sacrificial generosity to be transformative in other people's testimonies. I want it to start here in the church, Galatians Chapter 6, "Be good to all people if you have opportunity, first," he says, "and foremost to the household of faith."

So I want to work hard at being loving and sacrificial here. And then when my neighbor is trying to take a TV out of the back of his car, I'm the first one there. When there's a problem at night, I always tell them to call on me first. I want to be the person in my office where you can count on me. If you need someone to go the extra mile, stay the extra hour or spend the extra dollar, you can count on me. You've got to be that person. Do you know what that starts to chip away at? That chips away at that bunch of arrogant, narrow-minded, Bible-thumping hypocrites, it starts to work away at that. Be the life that befits the resurrection. I know this is a resuscitation, but the paradigm works, right? I want to be that life now, I need to be that life now, I'm called to be that life now.

Verse 40, back to our text. "Peter put them all outside, he knelt down and prayed; turn to the body and said, 'Tabitha, arise.' She opened her eyes when she saw Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand, raised her up. Then calling," everyone in, "the saints," the Christians, "and the widows," and the widows may not have been Christians within that church. They might have been people within the community because she's been doing acts of charity outside the walls of the church. I mean, there may be a distinction there although a lot of commentators



say there's no distinction there. There might be a distinction. There seems to be a distinction there. There are people who were being benefited.

Next door neighbor, non-Christians, I hope, come to my funeral. They say, "We miss him. We'd sure like to have him back. He was a good neighbor." If I move away from my neighborhood, I hope they'd say, "I wish you were back." If I work in a non-Christian environment and I take another job across the country, I'd hope they'd say, "Well, I wish he were still here, even though I don't believe all his religious stuff."

Then calling them together, "he presented her alive. It became known all throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord." By the demonstration of power? Yeah, yeah, year, I'll give you that. That's a mind-boggling miracle. But also because the life of this woman had prepared them for that, I'm quite sure. She had a reputation for this. She was a beautiful woman. I mean, in the gates, they praised her. Peter stayed there, transitional verse into Acts Chapter 10. We'll get to that.

I'd like my life to be that kind of compounding echo of the gospel. Let's put it that way. Number three, you need to "Make Your New Life Echo the Gospel." I just wonder, what was Tabatha's conversation with other people after this? I mean, the next tunic she gave away, I just wonder how that all went. Right? Just like, "I'm back!" Right? I mean, it's a weird thing, but I'm assuming and again, just to stretch the paradigm here a little bit, that her new life post-resuscitation, she wants to make sure she shined even more. Do you think she went even like the extra two miles and the extra two hours and the extra two dollars? I bet she did a lot. I bet she gave and spent and was gladly expending her life for other people.

And I'm sure she wasn't afraid to lead with the message that she wanted people to know, which is, "You know what, it's really not about coming back to this filthy, dirty life, because really I'd be much happier on the other side. But I was called back because I was needed. I was depended on. I was loved. People wanted me around and I'm around now to tell you, you need to put your trust in Christ." This is an evangelistic life. I bet she doubled down on the good works and acts of charity, and I'm sure she continued to lead with a message that the whole book of Acts is about, that is you turn, epistrepo or metanoia, the words for repentance, turning to the Lord, which we saw at the end of last week's passage and now this week to believe it, trust him. That's it. A penitent faith, turning and trusting. And I'm sure this is her life. This is a purpose for living. I'm going to do good works because I know this adorns our doctrine.

Matter of fact, that's a great passage. We've got to look at that real quick, can we do that? Titus Chapter 2. Titus Chapter 2 that phrase "adorning the doctrine of God." That is what this sermon is about. And I want to be very specific. It's about your sacrificial generosity. I want you to say, how beautiful am I to my non-Christian coworkers, my non-Christian neighbors? How beautiful am I within our church? Am I willing to sacrificially be generous? Only when it's convenient, only when it's 0.00004% of my time or my effort? Or am I willing to really be expended?



OK, well, if you are, to the extent that you are, not only will you be depended on by those widows in the passage, not only will you be wanted back, beloved. But you're going to be evangelistic just by your life. Make your new life an echo of the gospel. Take a look at Titus Chapter 2. Is that what I told you? Look at verse 7, drop down to verse 7. "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works." Do you think that fits Tabitha's life? Absolutely. I mean, she is the poster child of this verse. "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching," that doesn't mean you have to be a teacher for this passage.

But you know what? You need to be the person, as you say things about Christ and the truth of the gospel and why we're necessarily narrow about the truth, because truth has edges to it, right? "Show integrity and dignity and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent," who doesn't like what we believe, "may be put to shame because they have nothing evil to say about us." "Look at how that guy is willing to cut my lawn. I mean, man. It's hard for me to speak evil about those people." Overturning the bad reputation.

"Bondservants should be submissive to your own masters." Now, that's a terrible place to be, right? You don't have your freedom. You're conscripted to this one person. Not American slavery, but you know, Greco, Roman slavery, still, you're at the bottom of the totem pole. You've got a master who's got complete sovereignty over you in terms of your career at least, and your life in many, many cases, certainly the definition of the word "Doulos," "bondservant." But, you know, "be submissive and everything."

Be well-pleasing. "They're to be well-pleasing and not argumentative, not pilfering," not be in it for money. That's what generosity is all about. "But showing all good faith," they can trust you, "so that in everything," here it is, underline it, "they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." They know you as a bondservant. You say you're a Christian. You say you're a follower of this Jesus of Nazareth. Make that look good, make your new life echo this message, let it echo it "beautifully adorned," what a great word.

"For the grace of God has appeared to bring salvation," right? It's not about earning it, no, God's grace has come, but what does it do? It "trains us to renounce ungodliness," like clocking out early, cutting corners, doing what's comfortable and convenient, all the "worldly passions" and all the stuff that we want to do. No, "but have self-control," getting up out of my recliner when I don't want to get out of my recliner, "upright, godly lives in the present age," right now, when it's hard. "We're waiting for the blessed hope," we can't wait for Christ to return, "the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ," the king, the king of life, the king who can give life even through his apostle in Acts Chapter 9.

Christ, "he gave himself for us to redeem us," to buy us, to get our sin, "redeemed from us," and expunge from us. All that happened on the cross. It is about grace. But he's changing us and he's putting us on a path to redeem us and to free us from all our sin, to free us so that we can have all this "lawlessness" out of our lives, "to purify for himself a people," who are going to shine, "for his own possession who are zealous for good works."



The Bible says we are light in a dark place. I want you to leave this church service and say, "I am going to burn brighter. I want to shine brighter. I want the contrast between the selfish person in the world and my selflessness to be so obvious, I'm going to do it whatever it takes." I would like to have the apostle Paul, if he knew me, say of me what he said of Timothy in Philippians when he said, "I have no one else like him with a genuine concern for your welfare."

And you know "like a son with his father, how he served me in the gospel." Think that through. His genuine concern for the welfare of people was an element under the umbrella of the gospel ministry that he had of winning people to Christ. Timothy's sacrificial, real wholehearted, "I'm going to put my interest in the back and your interest in the front," that kind of sacrificial generosity, he said, was a service in the gospel. He is winning people to Christ through this.

It's more than just your life. Now, you people who are afraid of speaking about the gospel, it's not about that, not that dumb statement about, you know, "Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words." Well, no one can preach the gospel without words. Right? So you've got to use words. Matter of fact, I'd say you lead with words. People at work should know you're a Christian and then they ought to be able to watch your life and say, "This guy is the most generous guy in our office. This gal's the most generous person in our neighborhood. She's willing to spend and be expended for us. She's adorning that stuff I don't believe, that offensive Christian narrow-minded, Bible-thumping, fundamentalist views of everything. I really like the person. I don't know anybody who does what they do."

Adorn the gospel. So Paul can say about you, if he knew you, "They're advancing the gospel. I got no one with that kind of Tabitha attitude who is going to stay up late and build dresses for people that can't buy them on their own." Her life became a sign, obviously, and I'm sure she faithfully... we don't know anything else about her, but I can only imagine that she pointed people to Christ. She was pointing people to Christ before she was resuscitated. I mean, a little bummed that she probably had to come back, but she came back and she did her work and she pointed people to Christ.

I know people wrongly think that there's a miracle on every page of the Bible, there is not, less than a hundred breaking of natural laws in the Scriptures, and we're around 87 - 89. If you think about resurrections, there are less than 10 throughout the entire biblical history, 1,400 years. Some believe, "Yeah, but Christ, well he was raising people left and right." Three resurrections Christ performed. Three. I've named them all here today, I think.

Well, except for one, the first one, the raising of the widow's son. We don't know how old he is, but it was very clear, "widow son," usually that means the mom is dependent on the son and the son would become the source of provision for the mom because she's a widow, she can't make the money. In that society, certainly she can't go find a secretarial job. So she is dependent on her son. And so that son is dead and everyone's mourning and Christ comes in much like we see in Tabatha's experience. Here are the widows going, "We're depending on



Tabitha," and the beauty of that arrangement that this grown son could care for her mother, Christ resurrects her. It's a great example of that.

The other one is Jairus' daughter, which I did mention, she's 12-years-old. I mean, I know there are some 12-year-olds may be that aren't easy to like. But most 12-year-olds, I like 12-year-olds, right? They're fun. They're at a good age. Just fun. And you love them. And you think about how hard it would be to bury your 12-year-old. Rough. I've done it. Not my own, but I've done services. Heartbreaking. Heartbreaking, not because they're super productive and, you know, they're bringing in an income. "What am I going to do to replace my 12-year-old's income?" No one thinks like that. She's just my beloved child. There was that love attraction that, "I want her back, I want my daughter back." Jairus, of course, didn't even have a thought that Christ would do that. He wanted her to come when she was sick, but he delays on purpose, comes and raises his daughter. Another picture that reflects the Tabitha picture of them saying, "We love her."

Then the third one. Which reminds me of our third point, Lazarus, John 11. Christ does more in that resurrection as recorded in the gospels than any other in describing that this is the paradigm of the real thing. He asks Mary and Martha, the sisters, "Do you think he's going to rise?" They say, "Well, I know he's going to rise in the last day." He affirms all of that. There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous, the just and the unjust. There's going to be that. Just like we read in Daniel 12. And we trust he's going to rise again, rise in the resurrection of the just, the righteous. But you need to know this, "I am the resurrection and life. Whoever believes in me," trusts me, same word that's used in our passage, "even if he dies, yet, he shall live." It's really not about being resuscitated.

Now I'm going to resuscitate your brother and that's going to happen. Everyone is going to be happy after four days in a grave. I mean, it's going to be a good thing. But really, it was about him, so much so being a sign of Christ's power that the Pharisees and leaders want to kill him. Because he, like Tabitha, I'm sure, became a sign, an indicator of the real deal, which is you better trust in Christ because it's our only hope when you cross the threshold from this life into the next. The only reason you have any hope at a funeral is because we see people who have put their trust in Christ.

The widow's son. People depended on that son, they depended on Tabitha. Jairus' daughter, the love that they had. "We loved her, we want her back." Same thing in Tabitha's life and the sign, Lazarus. You see those three movements that we've tried to highlight today in the only three resurrections Christ ever performed. I'd like you and I to be Tabitha in our world.

The good thing, when we scatter from the parking lot, we go to all our different corners of the world here in South County and I want you to be beautifully generous. I want you to do that so that we might see more people enter the kingdom. That it might be that much like in Joppa, there might be a wave of new Christians in South Orange County, because we overturned the bad reputation that they naturally have because of the evil one in our culture, blinding the eyes of the unbelieving. That we would see that chipped away at because the way you live and the way that I live. May God strengthen us to that end.



Let's pray. God, help us to be generous people as hard as it is in a culture that values time and comfort and convenience and money. We know that every dollar that we leave on the table to have someone else helped by, it's out of our pocket and can affect what kind of car I can buy, what kind of vacation I can go on, what kind of clothes I can wear. You know that every hour I invest in helping someone else, I don't get an hour to spend on myself, I don't get an hour to rest or to do my stuff or engage in my hobbies or clean up my house. With all the effort that I expend, I end up being tired at the end of the day, I don't get enough sleep. It's so hard.

But let us be like that Proverbs 31 woman, let us be like Tabitha, let us be like Barnabas, let us be like Timothy, have a genuine concern for the welfare, not just of the people within our church, although that's a demonstration in itself of the lordship of Christ. But to see that happen with the non-Christians we interact with every day. So God empower that in our hearts and we make a difference for you.

In Jesus name. Amen.