

2. 5-8-22

Sermon- Good Works of Kingdom Women

Scripture- Acts 9:36-43, CTW- Ps23

Hymns- 18, 544, 102

Theme- Most of the women of the Bible got into its sacred pages because they were married to famous men, or because they had famous sons, or because they did some great and unusual deed. **Dorcas** is one of the few women who became famous for simply sewing...Sewing clothes AND SOWING SEEDS!

Today is Mother's Day and we focus our attention on a woman who sewed herself right into the fabric of biblical history. **Dorcas is her name**, and selflessly giving to others was her ministry.

Most of the women of the Bible got into its sacred pages because they were married to famous men, or because they had famous sons, or because they did some great and unusual deed. Dorcas is one of the few women who became famous for simply doing what was considered to be a womanly thing: sewing.

She is also famous for being the only adult woman in the Bible who was raised from the dead, but this never would have happened had she not been so faithful in using her needle to meet the basic human need for clothing.

She was just a simple loving woman who used the gift she had to be a blessing to others.

There are **three** things that stand out in today's text that I want to focus on. The first is-

### **I. THE GOOD WORKS OF HER LIFE.**

She is not portrayed as a brilliant and learned woman who could speak before groups and lead the women's Bible study. She is portrayed simply as one who is always doing good and helping the poor.

**"I was naked and you clothed me," is the testimony of the poor about Dorcas.** Those who otherwise would have been cold were kept warm because of her labor and generosity. The poor

got a taste of God's grace through her. She freely gave of her time and talent to meet a great need for clothing.

God was the first to provide clothing for sinners in the Garden of Eden. Dorcas was carrying on this ministry of grace.

**A. Because of her example Dorcas societies are now world-wide, and women by the thousands have provided clothing for the needy.** Only in eternity will we ever begin to know the full impact of this one woman's good works. She is an outstanding example to both men and women of the importance of good works in the Christian life.

Everyone who knows the Gospel knows that we are saved, not by our own works, but by the work of Christ on the cross. Salvation comes by faith in His finished work for us. Good works are not a means for our salvation, **but they are an expression of our salvation.**

If we truly trust in Christ, and love Him as Lord, then we will obey His command to love our neighbor as our self. This can be obeyed in a meaningful way by good works.

**That is why Paul writes in Titus 3:8,** "Affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." Paul implies that it is easy for Christians to forget the importance of good works. We need to be constantly reminded not to become weary in well-doing.

**Arthur W. Pink**, the famous Bible expositor, said, "This expression 'good works' is found in the New Testament in the singular or plural number no less than 30 times; yet from the rarity with which many preachers use, emphasize, and enlarge upon them, many of the hearers would conclude that these words occur but once or twice in all the Bible."

**The reason for this neglect is that they don't want people to think they can be saved by doing good.** To avoid this the church has produced millions of Christians who feel they can be good Christians and not do a thing.

**B. The lack of emphasis on good works is what threatens to have Christianity to become a spectator**

**religion. Jesus meant for all believers to be involved in the ministry of meeting the human needs of others...**

Remember the words of Jesus in **Matthew 25: 35-36**: <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

The good news about good works is that everybody can do them. Those who feel ungifted can still do many works of kindness.

**Vance Havner**, the great American evangelist, wrote, "We ought not to belittle the do-gooders. Our Lord went about doing good. Good works are not enough, but any faith that is without good works is not enough either. Some of our ultra-conservative Bible students could mix in a little do-gooding to great profit. **A cup of cold water in Jesus' name sometimes means more than a gallon of theology.**"

A seminary student who was late for class said to the professor, "I am sorry I am late, but my watch was wrong. I guess I should not have faith in this watch." The professor replied, "What you need in that watch is not faith, but good works."

That is what we need in the Christian life as well. Someone said that faith without works is about as powerful as a butterfly's hiccup.

James went even further and said, "**Faith without works is dead.**" It is true that we must warn the self-righteous who hope to pull themselves into heaven by their own works, that salvation is in trusting, and not in trying.

But let's not keep telling this to those who are already saved by trusting, for to them good works and trying are the key to the growing Christian life and eternal reward.

The choice is not to either trust or to try, but rather, there is the third choice which is the uniting of the other two, **to both trust and try.**

Good works happen because we choose to obey Christ. They don't happen because we choose to wait and see if Christ will do them without our efforts. All we will learn is that He won't.

## **II. THE SECOND THING THAT STANDS OUT IN THIS STORY IS THE GRIM WASTE OF HER DEATH.**

We are obviously in early church history here, for no one on the scene, and not even Peter, came up with the modern thought that the Lord must have taken Dorcas because her work was done.

This is a popular idea based on human feelings and speculation, BUT not on the revelation of God.

### **A. The work of Dorcas is never done, and even when she died the second time and entered the eternal world for good, her work was not done.**

The work of doing good and helping others is a never-ending task.

This is what makes it look like death is an enemy. It robs us of life and the potential to do good.

It is a terrible waste, and the loss of Dorcas was just such an event. Her life was such a blessing to others, and now she is gone and the blessing of her hand will cease.

Not everyone leaves a gap when they die. Some are ready to die, and their work really is done. They have given all they can give, and they are ready to depart and be with Christ.

But death does not limit its role to those who are ready. It is constantly touching the unready as well and taking those who have only begun to serve.

Dorcas was dead, but she was not done with her task. Joppa was a seaport from which many sailors left never to return. Their ships would go down in storms or be dashed to pieces on the rocks. The result was a city with many widows and children without support.

Dorcas loved to serve them, and the need for this was endless. You don't hear Peter coming on the scene and saying her work

was done. Instead, he does what he has never done before, and will never do again, as far as we have any record.

He will pray that Dorcas be allowed to live again and continue her unfinished work. Peter listened to the widows sharing how much Dorcas meant to them as they wept and showed him the garments, she had made for them and their children.

Peter was moved by this, like Jesus was moved by the scene at the tomb of Lazarus, and he vowed in his heart he would seek with all his might to reverse this tragic waste.

**B. The lesson for us is not to pray for the dead to be raised.** As we noted that particular prayer has only been answered for a couple of deaths in all of biblical history. To call it a long shot is an understatement.

In a way that is consistent with their own particular gifts, every Christian needs to be like Dorcas, and regardless of what there is to do, and all of the unfinished service to perform, **we must be ever ready to depart and be with Christ.**

You can only be ready by trusting in Christ as Savior. **Dorcas was a woman of a faith that worked because of her trust in the concept of the Kingdom of God!**

That must be our faith as well. We must ask Christ to come into our lives and be our Savior, and then be doers of His will to be ready for death, seizing opportunities to do good right up until the moment God calls us home.

The third things that stands out in today's passage is:

### **III. THE GLORIOUS WITNESS OF HER RESURRECTION**

**A. Dorcas belongs to that very exclusive group of people that God has permitted to come back from the dead.** There are only 7 of them besides Christ in all of the Bible, and five of them were children.

Lazarus and Dorcas were the only two adults in all of Bible history to be raised from the dead. One man and one woman, and both of them noted for one thing, and that was their loving relationship to others.

The fact that there is only one adult of each sex to have been raised speaks loud and clear that nobody has any basis to expect such an experience.

All of the great men and women of biblical history died and were not brought back to life. Just before Dorcas died **James and Stephen**, who were outstanding leaders of the church, were martyred, and not brought back to life...at least not life on earth. Death was accepted as the end of their earthly service. The point is, Dorcas like Lazarus, was a very unique individual. God used these two people to bear a special witness to the world.

**Great fruit came into the kingdom because of their unique experience!**

**B. People of God should be deeply impressed by the fact that God would give Dorcas new life. It was a confirmation of the Gospel. It not only showed that Christ can conquer death, but also that God does love HIS people.**

What could be greater proof than the restoring to life one who could go on ministering to those who so desperately needed her help?

The skeptics and the doubters were overwhelmed. They said, the God who gives back a Dorcas is indeed a God of love, and they submitted to the Lord whom she loved and served.

It was the witness of her life before she died that made the witness of her resurrection so powerful.

There is no escaping the conclusion. The miracle of resurrection only had the power to move people to Christ because the good works of Dorcas had already pointed them in His direction.

**C. Good works evangelism is a biblical reality, and many people come to Christ because of the good works of believers.** Believers found joy, and unbelievers found Jesus because **Dorcus the Doer** was alive and well again. The sickness that killed her was healed as only God can heal, and she was back to work meeting the needs of people.

The witness of her resurrection goes on to this day, and every May 25th there is a festive celebration of the anniversary of Dorcus by the Christians in that part of the world.

Dorcus was her Greek name, and it, like Tabitha her Aramaic name, means gazelle---a beautiful animal. Joppa, the city she lived in, means beautiful in the Hebrew.

**God chose a beautiful place to do a beautiful miracle for a beautiful woman who had devoted her life to doing beautiful deeds.**

This tells us something about what God loves, and about what true beauty really is. This story should give all believers strength and devotion to their own ministries here on the earth!

No true believer ever needs to feel secondary in God's plan, for the job of doing good works is open to all equally.

History would be emptied of so much of its joy without single women like Dorcus, Jane Addams, Frances Willard, Florence Nightingale, Mother Theresa, and the list goes on...

God has meaning and purpose for all who would care and dare to answer His specific call upon each of us. Let us celebrate all of the women God has put in our lives...today, and every day...!

Amen? Let us pray...