

I recently got connected to my college class online. I am not sure how I got into this; a long story short—I went online and joined this site and was able to see some of the people I went to college with 30 some years ago back in Korea. I was a little bit emotional revisiting that time of my life; in fact, it took me a while to get there.

When you log in, you know how it goes; you can see people’s names along with their pictures. People also put their stories about what they have been doing and how many kids they have and all. They even put some old pictures and Yearbooks online.

Many of us have not seen each other in almost 30 years, but when I saw those pictures, I felt, it was like yesterday.

Someone once said that the only reason anyone would ever look at a yearbook 30 years later would be to remember the good things that happened. Sure, pictures and Yearbooks remind us of many things; and we tend to remember the happy and good times.

In a way, the book of Acts is like that too; it’s a yearbook of the church. It doesn’t give us the whole story, but the story that the church decided should be remembered about its earliest days

so that the later church could look back on its time  
and remember those teachers long since gone and the Spirit that  
shaped that earliest community of believers.

In today’s text, Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, is calling our attention to one photo in the book. It’s a picture of Tabitha, or in Greek, Dorcas, and a woman whom Peter raised from the dead.

The way Luke remembers it-- Peter was told to go to a place called Joppa without delay, but when he arrived at the woman’s house, she had already died. The wake was under way, and the room where she had

been laid was filled with people; they were this woman’s friends, mostly widows. They were standing around the body weeping as they passed around blankets, sweaters and shawls--all made by Dorcas.

Everyone there had a story about how her life had touched theirs, each told about a selfless act of devotion that she had performed for them.

Tabitha or Dorcas was a tireless disciple whose devotion to others inspired a network of support that undergirded an entire church community. You can almost see her looking after others, taking food, dropping by with flowers or spending an afternoon babysitting.

It was alongside this disciple that Peter knelt and prayed for a miracle to happen.

We know that Jesus performed many miracles. He turned water into wine; he fed 5000 people with a handful of bread and fish; he healed countless sick people; he even raised people from the dead.

But today’s story is the first time we hear in the New Testament that the story was not over.

What I am reading is this: all the work Jesus did was not done with Jesus; it continued through the hands of his disciples; it continued through the group called a church even after Jesus was gone.

Peter's act made clear the fact that the resurrection of Christ had now been passed on to the apostles, and that the resurrection was now at work in the life of the earliest communities of believers.

Then, why this woman? Why this woman called Dorcas? Dorcas was not one of those hand-picked disciples by Jesus. She was not a preacher; she was not a teacher. It doesn’t say this woman had a powerful spiritual gift; it doesn’t say she gave a lot of money to the church.

But she took care of people. She was the mother of all widows in town. She made clothes and knitted blankets; she baked cookies; she delivered meals, held hands, and cried with those crying people.

She listened to people’s stories, good and bad; she was a true follower of Jesus Christ; she was putting a human face on the compassion of Jesus Christ and expressing and embodying that love for those in the village of Joppa.

Luke, the first Christian historian, says this woman was the example we need to follow; he says, this woman died but the community felt like it lost all they had. And, Luke says, God had mercy on this woman.

In the Gospel lesson, people come and ask Jesus, “Tell us who you really are!” Jesus says, the works I do in my Father’s name testify of Me. The works that I did for the poor, the works that I did for the sick, the works that I did for the lonely, the works that I did for the naked—they all tells you who I am.

Sure, our faith comes from what we believe in; it has to do with our understanding and knowledge of life, God, and the world.

But I believe, whatever thoughts and beliefs we cherish, it has to come down to this: practicing love and compassion for others. That’s what Jesus did and that’ what this woman called Dorcas did in the book of Acts.

Dorcas became a symbol of resurrection life in the Joppa church because of her simple acts of compassion and care expressed something of the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Is it no wonder that death could lay no more claim on her than it could on Jesus?

“The Works I Do” Acts 9:36-43; John 10:22-30; 4/25/2010; Albany UMC

As you may remember, John Wesley said: “Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.”

Wow. What a message! What a challenging word!

It is not a small matter that we are here; we are here because it is important to us; we are here because we want to be the people of God.

We are here because we are called to be here by the love of God; we are here to praise and lift up the Lord. We are here to say thank you to God for his love and his gift of salvation.

We are here as a church. The Greek word for Church is *ekklesia*. And the word meant “an assembly of people who were called out for a particular cause.” And that particular cause for us is to follow Jesus.

Church is not a building; a building belonging to the church; and the building can be destroyed, but the CHURCH cannot. It is God's possession. It is God's mission in the world. And God is not done with his mission in this world.

That brings us to the importance of who we are. We are the church. We are all members of this privileged mission of God. You and I are owned by God; we are God's possession.

God has a lot for us to do through this church. Our community counts on us; our nation counts on you and me.

Jesus said, “The works I do tell the world who I am.”

And I believe, what we do, small or big, tells the world who Jesus is too.

“The Works I Do” Acts 9:36-43; John 10:22-30; 4/25/2010; Albany UMC

What we do together in this small church not only glorify Jesus’ name but also changes the world.

God really does count on us. Amen.