

You Raise Me Up **Acts 9:36-43**

Mother's Day!

Two children ordered their mother to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to breakfast in bed, the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. But after a good long wait she finally went downstairs to investigate. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs. One explained, "As a surprise for Mother's Day, we decided to cook our own breakfast." Happy Mother's Day! Thanks to all you mothers who would still love their children even if they only cook their own breakfast.

A Mother's love has power, power to comfort, power to heal. It has been said, "Sometimes the strength of motherhood is greater than natural laws." (Barbara Kingsolver) I think that's true. When I was a kid, I sometimes got an upset stomach and would hardly eat anything for a day. My mother would gently rob my belly saying, "mother's hand is a healing hand. Mother's hand is a healing hand." And strangely, I would feel more comfortable and would soon fall asleep. Mother's Day is the day of celebrating lives touched by the love of all mothers.

Mother's Day is a joyful day. At the same time, it can be painful for some of us for different reasons. For me and Juhee, Mother's Day and Father's Day have been kind of bitter for many years because we could not have children. Many women want to be mothers but have been unable. Also, not all mothers are shining examples of faith and family, so some may not have a good relationship with your mothers. If Mother's Day is a difficult day for you, please remember that God is not only our heavenly Father but also our heavenly mother who gives life to all creation. So let us celebrate Mother's Day together and give thanks to all mothers and our God.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, I feel that we need to expand the meaning of Mother's Day. Mother's Day should be a day to celebrate not only mothers but also others who have nurtured us and helped us grow, no matter if they are our mothers or not. Our lives have been touched by many people who care for us and love us. Those colorful threads of love bind us together and weave our lives into a beautiful tapestry of communal life in the church.

Tabitha, A Disciple

In today's scripture, we hear about a small church in Joppa losing one of the pillars of the church. Tabitha was a disciple and devoted to good works and acts of charity. Tabitha was the only woman who was described as "a disciple" in the Bible. It means that Tabitha's leadership and good works were widely known in the early church. She was very good at knitting and sewing so by using her gifts, she made tunics and other clothing for widows. What Tabitha was doing was weaving the church community together through her acts of loving and serving. However, Tabitha became ill and died. Her death threatened to sever the threads that bound the community together and the people mourned their loss. However, the threads that bound Tabitha to the community were many and they were strong. People decided to grasp onto their desperate hope and sent runners to Peter.

They may have heard that Peter had performed a miracle in a nearby town, healing a man who had been paralyzed in bed for eight years. I don't know if they believed that Peter could raise Tabitha from death, but they just couldn't sit there because they loved Tabitha. They wanted to do something for their beloved friend who tirelessly cared for them and nurtured their community with love. They might have thought that the best and proper way to honor Tabitha's

death was to ask Peter, the first disciple, to lead her funeral. We don't know what they wanted, but they asked Peter to come. "Just come quickly!" they asked. I don't know if Peter personally knew Tabitha, but, drawn by their threads of love, Peter came, quickly.

When they saw Peter, they said, "she was a servant, a very devoted servant. She didn't just care for us in the church but for people in the wider community. The people out there, the ones Tabitha clothed called her Dorcas, her Greek name! They pointed to the clothes that they wore and how well she made clothing for others. I believe Peter probably felt their love for their sister and good friend. He must have smiled at their love.

Remember the one who binds us through love

I believe that you all have had opportunities to see people who have left an indelible mark on their community, even if you haven't met them personally. For me, Tina Bishop was that person. The day I moved into the parsonage was the day of Tina's funeral. People told me that she was a pillar of the church and she had done many works for the church. I didn't have a chance to get to know her, but I could see many strong threads that bound her to the Asbury family through my ministry. In November 2019, I smelled the sweet aroma of bread filling the downstairs of the church building. I read about how Tina's ministry of baking bread became popular in our area. On Easter Day, I saw Tina's rock that resembles to an empty tomb. I could see the threads she knotted in love for Asbury and those threads are still strong and even tighter and more binding with time. Death cannot sever the threads of love that bind us together.

You may have several women who are like mothers to you. If you do, you are blessed. You may not know yet, but you may be like a mother to others. Mother's Day is also an occasion of recognizing and celebrating those life-giving relationships. So think of them and say 'thank you' for their love and friendship. Make those blessed threads of life stronger and tighter. Even death cannot sever the threads of love we weave together.

Get up!

People in Joppa wanted to let Peter know about all the wonderful deeds Tabitha had done for them and their community. But they stopped talking as they saw the body of Tabitha lying on the table in the middle of the room. Her body reminded them that their loving relationship was interrupted by illness and finally came to an end by death. But Peter must have felt something or seen something at that moment. He shooed them out of the room and on his knees, he prayed. What did he pray for? We don't know. He might have prayed for the church. He might have prayed for Tabitha lying there washed and ready for what would come next. He prayed for the will of God to be done. What else could he pray?

When he was done, he stood up and then, he remembered another room with a body laid out. He remembered that a little girl, the daughter of the leader of the synagogue, laid out in a room. He was there with Jesus that day and he saw Jesus reach out his hand to the dead girl and say, "talitha coum – little girl rise." He remembered what happened in that room. So, Peter reached out his hand and said, "Tabitha get up!" And she opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. He took her hand and helped her up. Then he opened the door and called in the believers and presented her to them alive! What would have happened in that room? Hugging, crying, and laughing. This is a story about the treads of love that are stronger than death.

Sometimes miracles happen and dying people return to life. More often, the miracle is that the threads of love we have woven together remain even after death. They grow and change

and become stronger, tighter and more binding. That is what all mothers or those who are like mothers leave to us.

[ppt] Have you seen the cross and frame at the entrance of the sanctuary. It's beautiful! Again, many thanks to the chancel guild for their excellent work. When I entered the church last week the words caught my attention. "Because someone we love is in heaven, there's a little bit of heaven in our home." I know that many of your mothers rest in heaven, but their love has made you who you are. You are who you are because of their love, and maybe a little bit due to their mistakes. Their love and their presence have been an integral part of who we are and we cannot undo the threads of our being. So let us honor all mothers who are here and in heaven. Let us give thanks to God for motherly love. Amen.