

Traditional Home service Sunday 8th May

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

We come to God as one from whom no secrets are hidden, to ask for his forgiveness and peace:

*O King enthroned on high, filling the earth with your glory:
holy is your name, Lord God almighty.
In our sinfulness we cry to you
to take our guilt away, and to cleanse our lips to speak your word, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Ye Servants of God, Your Master Proclaim*)

READINGS - Acts 9.36-43
Revelation 7.9-17
John 10.22-30

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*Crown Him with Many Crowns*)

CONCLUSION

The Lord bless you and watch over you, the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

1 You servants of God, your Master
proclaim,
and publish abroad his wonderful
name;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
his kingdom is glorious and rules over
all.

2 God rules in the height, almighty to
save;
though hid from our sight, his
presence we have;
the great congregation his triumph
shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our King.

3 "Salvation to God, who sits on the
throne!"
let all cry aloud, and honor the Son;
the praises of Jesus the angels
proclaim,
fall down on their faces and worship
the Lamb.

4 Then let us adore and give him his
right:
all glory and power, all wisdom and
might,
all honor and blessing with angels
above
and thanks never ceasing for infinite
love.

1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem
drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless king
through all eternity.

2 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save;
his glories now we sing
who died and rose on high,
who died eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

3 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side,
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified;
no angels in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends their burning
eye
at mysteries so bright.

4 Crown him the Lord of years,
the potentate of time,
creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity

Sermon - Barbara MacMillan
How to Raise the Dead
Acts 9:36-43

The realm of darkness doesn't respond to confidence. It responds to authority. The elevation of decibel levels and wildly animated movements are irrelevant. It's not our effort that brings a shift, it's simply enforcing the victory of Christ. He rendered the enemy powerless so there is no power struggle happening.

Brian Orme

When I was given the opportunity to talk on this passage in Acts of Peter raising Tabitha from the dead, I started pondering the question, "How *does* one raise the dead?" I looked at the various accounts in scripture where people had been raised from the dead, both on purpose and by accident. Did you know that the bible records ten times that people are raised from the dead? Three in the Old Testament and seven in the New, the most awesome instance being the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (obviously!). And as I dwelled on these passages, I couldn't find a set of special circumstances that pre-empted a raising of the dead sort of miracle; no ritual or formula was repeated for success. People were raised by different people, in different circumstances and for different reasons. Here's a slide that puts it all into a tidy table. Don't worry, we won't go over all of these. The first two accounts in the Old Testament were performed by Elijah the prophet and his by successor, Elisha. Elijah prophesied that a woman who had been barren would give birth. And she did. She gave birth to a son. When the son later became ill and died, the woman let Elijah know, with some very sharp words. Elijah came, lay prostrate over the boy—not once but three times—and the boy's spirit returned to his body. Elisha, Elijah's successor who received a double portion of Elijah's spirit, was also asked by a widow to raise her son back to life. It was an urgent matter, so Elisha ordered his servant to take his staff, run ahead of him, and upon arriving at the house, touch the boy's cheek—that would raise him to life. It didn't work. When Elisha arrived, he lay prostrate over the boy. The boy warmed up a bit. Elisha paced the room and then lay on top of him a second time.

The boy sneezed seven times, and finally opened his eyes. Alive again.

And we can be tempted, looking at these two accounts, to think: Ah, the way to raise the dead is simply to lay on top of a dead body, wait for it to sneeze, and life will be restored. But you probably need to be the son of a widow to warrant the effort.

But we're talking about death. And as unusual as these accounts seem to us in the 21st century, the pain, grief, loss, and turmoil that we experience when our loved ones pass away is no laughing matter.

In my life, I have had one opportunity to personally pray for the dead to be raised. It was a friend from my high school days, Pat Laden. He was a bit grumpy, moody, edgy, but loads of fun to be around. And he had a kindness about him, too. He was one of the few friends from my "wild party days" before Christ to come and visit me when I had to drop out of uni at the end of my first year to recover from a bicycle accident. He admired the scars on my face. I mentioned the scars on his arms—he was self-harming. Not with blades, but with fire. A zippo lighter. We didn't have the language 25+ years ago to talk about mental health, especially men's mental health. Going to therapy, taking medication...no one we knew did that back then. It was offered to Pat, I found out through a mutual friend after his funeral. But for Pat, all those years ago, the only escape from what he was silently suffering from was suicide.

I had been a Christian for only a few years at that point, but I remember going to my bible study leader and telling her what had happened—that I was going to attend his funeral and I wanted to know how to pray for him to be raised back to life. What should I do? What should I say? How do I pray? The look of pity in her eyes, I will never forget. The message I heard was clear was this (whether she intended to communicate it or not): Don't be silly. We don't pray for the dead to be raised anymore. As much as I didn't want to believe her, I partnered with that spirit of unbelief. At the funeral, when my pew filed out to stand before his body in the casket, I didn't do what I had planned. I didn't put my hand on his chest and say, "Pat, get up!"

It took twenty years for me to find Christians who believe that we should still pray for the dead to be raised today. If we're instructed to do it, we must also be told how to do it. And I think this account in Acts, where Peter raises Tabitha from the dead, gives us a good framework to follow. As I wrote in the table, if we want to raise the dead, we need to do what Jesus did, but kneel and pray first.

Although this is the first time that Peter is recorded as raising the dead, I don't believe it is the first time he actually raised the dead. In Matthew 10:8 Jesus sends out his disciples and says matter-of-fact, "Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers and cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." And in Matthew Chapter 9, we read about Jesus raising Jairus's daughter back to life. Luke's gospel tells us that Peter, John and James were allowed to remain in the room when Jesus performed that miracle. Let's have a look:

Luke 8:51-56

⁵¹ When they arrived at the house, Jesus wouldn't let anyone go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the little girl's father and mother. ⁵² The house was filled with people weeping and wailing, but he said, "Stop the weeping! She isn't dead; she's only asleep."

⁵³ But the crowd laughed at him because they all knew she had died. ⁵⁴ Then Jesus took her by the hand and said in a loud voice, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵ And at that moment her life^[c] returned, and she immediately stood up! Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were overwhelmed, but Jesus insisted that they not tell anyone what had happened. Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead was the final training ground for the disciples before they went on their solo mission. They had seen Jesus do what he was asking them to do. They had seen these miracles of the sick being healed, the dead being raised, the lepers being cleansed and the demons being cast out; they had seen them performed with their very eyes. They knew, without a doubt, it was possible, it was real, and it was the kingdom of God here on earth. And Jesus said to them, "Freely you have received, freely give."

This is the starting point for performing the miracle of raising the dead, or a miracle of any kind: receiving. Receiving is key! Before we can do any of these marvellous, supernatural works, we first have to receive from Jesus. I think there are two ways we receive. The first way we receive is by watching a miracle being performed on someone else; being mentored by a miracle-working leader, in other words. The second way is when the miracle is performed on us; the miracle becomes our personal testimony. Let's turn back to the passage in Acts. I want to draw out a few similarities between Peter raising Tabitha and Jesus raising Jairus's daughter and show how I think Peter was doing what Jesus did, and how it can serve as a model for what we should do.

1. The first thing I noticed was that both Jesus and Peter responded to the requests of people of faith to come and perform a miracle. Jairus was a synagogue leader, and Tabitha was part of a generous and caring community of believers in Joppa. The raising of the dead in these two cases wasn't to put the power of God on display for non-believers to witness; rather it was the response of a caring Father to His children. I think this is an important point to remember. Yes, miracles are amazing tools to be used in evangelism, but they are also the essential vitamins and nutrients that our spiritual nature craves; we need to consume the supernatural regularly in order to grow and mature in our faith. Jairus and the believers in Joppa reached out and literally begged for a miracle. They didn't see themselves as being greedy or entitled. They didn't think, "My life has been so blessed already. I really shouldn't ask God for anything more. So-and-so is going through a much harder time than me." No, they believed that God's goodness had no limits, that the well of his blessings could never run dry! They knew not to allow the appearance of death to give doubt a foothold. In Joppa, Tabitha's body was already "washed for burial and laid in an upstairs room". People were already gathered there, weeping and grieving her passing. But then they heard that Peter was in a nearby town, and they were reminded that even Tabitha, washed and prepared for burial, wasn't dead. She was eternally alive.

From the time she first decided to follow Christ, she was alive. Even now, it wasn't too much to ask Father God for her spirit to return to her body. She was taken too soon. She had too many good works left to do. So Peter came; He knelt and prayed. And Tabitha returned.

2. The second thing I noticed is that both Jesus and Peter had to overcome worldly distractions, sending people out of the room, before performing the miracle. In other words, they had to silence the spirit of unbelief. When Jesus arrived into the room where Jairus's daughter lay, the wailing mourners laughed openly when he told them she was not dead but merely asleep. He sent everyone out, apart from James, John, Peter and the girl's parents. Similarly, Peter had to create a space where he could clearly hear the heart of the Father, so he also sent all the widows and mourners out of the room. We are taught to pray on Earth as it is in Heaven, not in Heaven as it is on Earth. We know that in Heaven there is no weeping—no more tears—so it must be difficult to hear Heaven if our ears are flooded with sounds of mourning. Jesus and Peter both created a space so that they could minister from Heaven to Earth and not be tempted to come into agreement with the mindset of the mourners—that death had come, that death had won. We, too, must create a space where we no longer hear mocking or mourning in order to usher in the miraculous from heaven.
3. The third thing I noticed is that both Jesus and Peter uttered a simple phrase, "Get up," and the miracle was accomplished. There was no performance, no elaborate ritual— in other words, no religion was involved. Jesus and Peter knew that all miracles, including this one, calling a person's eternally alive spirit back to the body it had recently departed, was accomplished entirely by the power of God. There is one difference in these two accounts, however. Before Peter said, "Get up, Tabitha", he knelt and he prayed. We know that Peter was with Jesus when Jairus's daughter was raised. Jesus kneeling and praying is not recorded there. Other times when he performs miracles, he prays audibly, like when He called Lazarus out of his tomb. But I believe that Peter was emulating Jesus

when he knelt and prayed, because Jesus lived his whole life from that posture. I was reminded of this passage in Philippians, which says:

- 5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:
- 6 Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
- 7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness.
- 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!
- 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,
- 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
- 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

I think the disciples saw first-hand, how Jesus emptied himself before the Father. And from that place of surrender, humility, and complete trust, He boldly asked, time and time again, and He miraculously received, time and time again. Miracle after miracle, he went to the Father with empty hands, ready to receive. How much can we receive if our hands are full? Not much. The more we lay down the cares, worries, mindsets, and habits of this world, the freer we are to pick up the blessings waiting to be lavished upon us from heaven.

I think Peter had learned how to do this. Peter had come a long way. When He knelt and prayed, I believe he emptied himself, as Jesus had, took on the nature of a servant, and carried on doing the work of Jesus, through the power of his Spirit. As a result, the Father could do what was always his heart's intention: to raise us up to the exalted place that Jesus's death and resurrection has provided us in the heavenly realms. This is the work of the Father. All we

have to do is say, “Get up!” That’s what Jesus said. That’s what Peter said.

Get up! Is the word that Jesus spoke to the lame man who then picked up his mat and walked.

Get up! Is the word that Jesus spoke to Peter’s mother-in-law, and she left a bed of sickness.

Get up! Is the word that the angel spoke to release Peter from prison.

Get up! Is the word Peter spoke to the paralyzed man in Lydda.

Get up! Is the word Jesus spoke to Matthew, inviting him to leave his tax booth behind.

Get up! Is what Jesus said when He called you, and when He called me.

At the beginning of this talk I said that there are two ways that we receive miracle-working power: 1) when we see first-hand the miracle performed on someone else and 2) when we experience the miracle being performed on ourselves.

We’ve experienced the miracle of being raised from the dead. If we are in Christ, we are eternally alive. We are new creations. We have been risen from the dead. What will happen to our earthly bodies on the last day is yet to be revealed. But today, right now, we carry the power to raise the dead because we have freely received it!

Raising the dead is not simply calling a person’s spirit back to its earthly tent. Raising the dead is also going after the sheep on the Sabbath, the sheep that had fallen into the pit, and “getting it up” from the darkness that has consumed it. In the Greek, it’s the same word! This, too, is the work of the gospel. Jesus used this example when He healed a man who had a withered hand.

Going to believers, going on the Sabbath, speaking the resurrection power of Christ into each other’s lives, into the areas that have become withered, dried up and dead, cut off from the life-flow of Holy Spirit—and saying Get up!... This is the Gospel!

Today the Lord is telling us: Get up! Get up! out of that pit of sickness, Get up! out of that pit of abuse, Get up! out of that pit of addiction, Get up! out of that pit of self-loathing, Get up! out of that pit of despair. Get up!

And sometimes, the Father tells us to Get up! When the miracle doesn’t happen. When

our loved ones do die before their time, when we feel disappointed, angry and robbed of the life we had hoped to live with them. When we don’t experience miraculous healing, when disease and sickness don’t retreat, when we’re trapped in a pit of grief, we have to let go. We have to empty ourselves... empty ourselves of bitter sting of unfulfilled expectations and wait (because this process takes time) before we can receive from Jesus. And then in His strength and power, we Get up!

And I feel like the Lord wants to remind us of the many times Peter must have been called to Get up! Yes, the Lord called him to Get up! and follow, but I’m talking about all the times after that. The times the Lord said to him get up out of your disbelief, get up out of your pride, get up out of your arrogance, get up out of your simple-mindedness, get up out of your laziness, your sleepiness, your rage, your violence, your cowardice (And that was just on the night before Jesus died). Get up! And follow me again. Get up! And be the rock I’ve called you to be and follow me. Peter had fallen into so many pits... just like us. That’s why we love him. He’s so relatable. But we can’t just relate to his failings; we must also relate to his victories. Look at his transformation: Look at what happened in him. What happened to him—the beautiful evolving into a son of God, the working out of his salvation—is happening in us. It is. It really is.

Some of us here today are ready to Get up! And we’ll have a time of ministry in a moment, but I’ll close with these verses from

Romans 8:

Now Christ lives his life in you! And even though your body may be dead because of the effects of sin, his life-giving Spirit imparts life to you because you are fully accepted by God. Yes, God raised Jesus to life! And since God’s Spirit of Resurrection lives in you, he will also raise your dying body to life by the same Spirit that breathes life into you!

Amen.