Our next Scripture will be coming from the New Testament book of Acts. The book of Acts was written by the same person who wrote the gospel of Luke. The gospel of Luke tells us about the life of Jesus and then Acts begins describing stories from the early church.

The story that we will be reading will be a miracle story where the disciple named Peter brings a person back to life from death. There are three other instances in Luke and Acts where this type of miracle occurs where a person is brought back to life from death.

Just prior to our reading, Peter travels to the town called Lydda and encounters a man named Aeneas. Aeneas has been bedridden for 8 years and is paralyzed. Peter tells Aeneas to get up in the name of Jesus Christ and make up his bed. He does as Peter says and is healed of his paralysis.

The Scripture that we will be reading now will occur in Joppa which is a town about 11 miles away from Lydda. I am personally excited to read this story because when I went to Israel a few years ago I was able to visit the location of this miracle story that we are about to read.

When we read a miracle story, our natural tendency is to focus on the person who is doing the healing. But this morning I invite us to pay attention to the person who is being healed.

We will learn that her name is Tabitha or Dorcas. One of these names is Greek and the other is Aramaic. In other words, Tabitha or Dorcas is bi-lingual and is a bridge between two communities. We will also discover that she is highly valued in the community because she is devoted to good works and acts of charity.

Tabitha makes a lot of the clothes that are worn in the community. Unlike today when we simply buy clothing off the store rack and know nothing about how it was made, making clothes in Jesus day was very time consuming and anyone who made clothes was highly valued. Her value to the community is reinforced by how people react when they realize that she has become ill and died.

**Read Acts 9:36-43**

Today is Mother’s Day and that means different things to different people. We are going to watch four videos. We are going to watch four videos which give four different portraits of what may come to your mind when you think of motherhood.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laCaqSFsDes>

“Moms Night Out Why Do I Feel This Way”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2WtByoAW7I>

“Spanglish”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgIPcOdnyxA>

“June Cleaver on women’s changing roles in the 1960s”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HiznUK5KTz8>

“Despicable Me 2 - "Agnes recites her Poem / Less like a Zombie / Pretend"

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We watched four videos which portray four different images of motherhood. We have the frazzled mother with young children. We have the woman who became a single mother and refugee who crossed the US border with her daughter in search of a better life.

We have June Cleaver who is the model of the traditional 1960s mother that some of us know. I was surprised when I came across this video in which she advocates for the equality of women in the workplace.

And then we have the child who has no mother representing those of us who are orphaned after the death of our mother or our child or are estranged from our mothers or children in some way. And I add to this list families like the family of Christian author Rachel Held Evans who died this week.

Evans died at the age of 37 after making a tremendous impact upon the lives of many people struggling to overcome their fundamentalist upbringing and understand the Christian faith with fresh eyes. Evans leaves behind a husband and two small children.

I add to this list the family of my friend and Clover High teacher Kelly O’Kain whose husband John died a few months ago in a car wreck leaving her alone to raise her two small boys as a single parent. I add to this list my unnamed friend who is preaching today on Mother’s Day even though she is undergoing fertility treatments because she has been unable to become pregnant.

On this Mother’s Day we remember all these images of motherhood. It’s important that we in the church do not hold up unrealistic and stereotypical images of motherhood that leave many women feeling empty. It’s important that we remember the brokenness that this day can represent.

But whatever our images of motherhood, I think the scripture that we read can give guidance to any woman or man present today about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Tabitha is called a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the only place in the book of Acts in which the word disciple is found in its feminine form.

Tabitha is a disciple by following Jesus which leads her to do good works and acts of charity. Tabitha is a person who is valued because she has devoted herself to making clothes and helping others. Tabitha is celebrated as a person who took care of the widows in her community. She is so valuable that when she dies, the leaders in the community summon Peter to walk from 11 miles away to try to bring her back to life.

On this Mother’s Day, we lift up the women like Tabitha who model discipleship for us. The women who model discipleship by their good works and acts of charity. The women who love us whether we are biologically connected to them or not.

Our first Scripture we read from the book of Revelation is a song of praise. A song of praise to God. On this Mother’s Day, we join in their chorus.

We join in the chorus and give praise to God for the important women in our lives and affirm our own efforts to be faithful to God. We give praise to God for our own efforts to be good mothers or being supportive of mothers in whatever way that means.

In the words of Rachel Held Evans, faithful Christian discipleship “isn’t meant to simply be believed; it’s meant to be lived, shared, eaten, spoken, and enacted.

Today we remember and celebrate the women who model this kind of discipleship. AMEN.

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-Evans, Rachel Held [Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church](https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/42042272)

-Given: May 12, 2019 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)