



# SERMONS AT SAINT MARK'S

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THE VERY REV. STEVEN L. THOMASON, DEAN AND RECTOR  
THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, MAY 11, 2025  
ACTS 9:36-43; PSALM 23; REVELATION 7:9-17; JOHN 10:22-30

## BEAUTIFUL ONE, GET UP!

*Acts 9:36-43 [Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, "Please come to us without delay." So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, "Tabitha, get up." Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.]*

When I was 15, I had something of a conversion experience at summer church camp—a mountaintop experience in which I felt the Holy like never before. After that, I started reading the Bible, and for reasons I cannot explain, I began with the Acts of the Apostles. Not Genesis, not the gospels, but the Book of Acts.

I can say with some assurance that I am here today, serving in this wonderful community as your priest, because the Book of Acts broke

me open, much like the people whose experiences are recorded there.

It is well worth the read, if you are so inclined. We are here today because those first people were open to the Spirit's moving in their midst, and the world was changed forever.

There are patterns to the stories recorded in Acts: human foibles overcome by the Holy Spirit's movement, miracles of healing, faithful people coming together, generously giving of themselves and their money for the

work of the Church, sharing the Good News to any who would listen, and a bit of internecine conflict in the early Church, because, well, it wouldn't be the Church without a bit of controversy, right?!

Peter and Paul are prominently featured, but make no mistake, the Holy Spirit is the chief protagonist in the story. Peter and Paul are simply showing the rest of us how to be People of the Way.

Today's passage about Dorcas dying comes at a pivotal moment in the story, about a third of the way in... (it's worth noting that Dorcas is named a disciple here, the only place in the Bible which uses the feminine form of the word disciple.)

This is a resurrection story which has ties back to the gospel, specifically Mark 5, when Jesus raises a dead girl back to life, and says, "Little girl, get up!" Peter echoes this "Tabitha, get up!" Tabitha is Hebrew for gazelle, or beauty, so we should hear it as: "Beautiful one, get up!"

Centuries earlier prophets Elijah and Elisha have similar experiences of raising someone from the dead, but all four of them (Elijah, Elisha, Jesus, and now Peter) are clear about their peculiar claim to resurrection power: it is not they themselves, but God who is entrusting the power for life to human agents, and the world is transformed as a result. The

Book of Acts reminds us that God is not finished with us yet.

As we watch from a distance the papal conclave in Rome, awaiting word and white smoke declaring that Peter's succession as Rock of the Church continues. May this person be guided by the Spirit's call to humility, grace and justice.

A more protestant reading of things: the "rock" of Peter's primacy is his unshakable faith in Jesus. Taken either way, Peter represents, in our narrative from Acts, more than just one particular human being with miraculous powers: he epitomizes the authority and capacity and mission of the Church, including this church community gathered here today.

Walter Brueggemann maintains that Peter (the Church) "is entrusted with the resurrection power of Jesus...the power to create new life. It is no wonder that in the Book of Acts, the church is always before imperial authority, for the capacity to bring life out of death threatens every status quo."<sup>1</sup> And this is our portal into the story here and now.

My friends, I have heard from several of you about how you are dubious, or even wary, of the timing and purpose of our Living Stones II capital campaign. I get those reactions, and I recognize these are uncertain times. But I

am convinced, down to the depths of my mortal bones, that this campaign is about more than floors and bathrooms and heating systems. It is the invitation given to us, in this generation, to manifest our unshakable faith that God is working in this cathedral, in this community, to transform the world, and by God's grace, will for generations to come. In the face of all the powers and principalities that seek to rule the day with deadly intentions, we stand with Peter and the early Church and say God has a grander story, one in which we are entrusted with the power to create new life.

Without this place, and the vibrant community that gathers here, without functional infrastructure and welcoming environment that enable us to gather, there would be no women's shelter, no feeding ministries, no missional focus on Creation Care or restorative justice, because this building would eventually close. Folks would go elsewhere. That's the harsh reality of it.

But more than that—the Holy Spirit is the protagonist in our story.

At the Easter Vigil last month, we baptized seven adults. And sixteen more last Saturday confirmed and received at Cathedral Day. Folks, do you realize how counter-cultural, how profoundly miraculous it is that seven adults would choose, in this day and time, to

commit their lives to Jesus, would commit to joining this community?

The faces of those newly baptized were a sight, beaming with the Spirit's essence, and we get to say to them as they arise from the waters of new life, "Beautiful one, get up!"

We are People of the Way, and the patterns of the age-old story ring true for us even still: human foibles overcome by the Holy Spirit's movement, miracles of healing, faithful people coming together, generously giving of themselves and their money for the work of the Church, sharing the Good News to any who would listen, and a bit of internecine conflict in the Church, because, well, it wouldn't be the Church without a bit of controversy, right?!

And yet God continues to entrust the power for life to the Church, to human agents, to you and me.

I've been asked to share what Kathy and I will give to this campaign. We do so with some temerity, but we're encouraged by many others who are making their commitments also.

Kathy and I will give \$30,000 over three years, over and above our annual pledge. That \$10,000 each year is about 6% of our annual income. It is money we would have put into our retirement funds rather than living on

this year anyway. We trust we can live comfortably in retirement without that amount. This is what we will give, and we do so with joy and deep gratitude for this community and the honor and privilege to serve in it for a time. We believe in this community and its mission.

This campaign is about more than floors and bathrooms and heating systems. It is the invitation given to us, in this generation, to manifest our unshakable faith that God is

working in this cathedral, in this community, to transform the world. I believe that in the depths of my mortal bones, and I am trusting that everyone who calls this place their spiritual home will also.

You decide what amount is right for you. But count it as an opportunity to practice resurrection in these challenging, chaotic times. Count it as a sign of faithfulness that God is entrusting the power for life to you. To whom will you say, Beautiful one, get up!

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2007-04/blogging-toward-sunday-0?utm\\_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=a71b3db477-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_SCFREE\\_2025-05-05&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-a11c3b8de1-82678819](https://www.christiancentury.org/blogs/archive/2007-04/blogging-toward-sunday-0?utm_source=Christian+Century+Newsletter&utm_campaign=a71b3db477-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_SCFREE_2025-05-05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-a11c3b8de1-82678819)



*Saint Mark's Cathedral lives in a grounded faith and spirituality; we seek to liberate people for ministry. We are grounded in ancient Christian scripture and tradition while at the same time remaining open to the insight and truth of contemporary life. You'll find Saint Mark's Cathedral actively involved in service and outreach to our community. Together we pray, worship, study the scriptures, and explore the richness of twenty-one centuries of Christian experience. Wherever you are on your journey of faith, you are welcome here!*