

May 12, 2019 | Easter 4

Back To Life

Ancient Reading ~ Acts 9:36-43

Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha in Aramaic ("Gazelle"), "Dorcas" in Greek. 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 messengers 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, arise. Stand up." She opened her eyes. When she saw Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her to stand. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in God. Peter remained a while in Joppa, staying with Simon, a leather tanner.

Second Reading ~ adapted from Rachel Held Evans in "Faith Unraveled"

It's always a little embarrassing when you come out swinging, ready to fight, and there's nobody there to fight with you. I think that's how a lot of us felt when we realized that the world wasn't asking the questions we had learned to answer. Many of us who grew up in the church, or received Christian educations, were under the impression that the world was full of atheists and agnostics, and that the greatest threat against Christianity was the rise of secular humanism. But what we found upon entering the real world was that most of our peers were receptive to spiritual things. Most believed in God, were open to the supernatural, and respected religious ideas so long as they were not forced upon them. They weren't searching for historical evidence in support of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. They were searching for some signs of life among his followers.

Not once after graduating was I asked to make a case for the scientific feasibility of miracles, but often I was asked why Christians aren't more like Jesus. Most rejected Christianity because they thought it means becoming judgmental, narrow-minded, intolerant, and unkind. People didn't argue with me about the problem of evil; they argued about why Christians aren't doing more to alleviate human suffering, support the poor, and oppose violence and war. Most weren't looking for a faith that provided all the answers. They were looking for one in which they were free to ask questions.