

³⁶In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called the believers and the widows and presented her to them alive. ⁴²This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. (NIV 84)

Theme: Be a Dorcas

1. She was loved by many
2. She was given a new life.

What would it be like to attend your own funeral? Many people wish that they could out of curiosity; to be a fly on the wall at your funeral in order to see who would bother to show up to your funeral and what they would say about you when they found about your death. You would hope, of course, that the place would be packed—full of friends and family, and perhaps even those you didn't know all that well. You might hope that there would be a lot of weeping and mourning—that people would be sad at your death, that they would never see you again this side of heaven; that the loss of you would make a hole in their heart—then you know that you were at least appreciated! No one wants to have their death celebrated—like when tyrants, like Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Osama Bin Laden, died; or made fun of when they die like Ebenezer Scrooge's acquaintances did in Charles Dickens' classic, "A Christmas Carol."

You also would hope that people would have certain things to say about you. But what exactly do you wish they would mention? Some

people want to be remembered for their favorite sports team, their favorite hobby, what they did for a living, or perhaps their love for a certain entertainer. But is that what you really want people remembering about you? Is that going to give those who mourn your death any comfort or encouragement?

1.

A. 1. To be honest, there may be a lot of heartless people in the world today, but there aren't too many who are going to talk bad about you at your funeral. For the most part, they are going to remember the good things about you and the good times they had with you.

But could they remember something else? Of course. You may be beloved by many people, but there are certainly those who don't care much about you—perhaps they even despise you. And there are those, many of which still love you, that you have mistreated again and again. There are plenty of people—some who may be at your funeral and many who won't, that you failed to love again and again. They could tell stories about the times you attacked them with your words or with your actions. About the times you were cold to them, failed to help them in time of need, or when you tried to sabotage their lives. You would hope that people would talk about how nice of a guy you were, how you always helped those in need, that you are always cheerful and smiling—that you were a friend of everyone and an enemy of no one. And maybe some just might be able to say those things about you. But there are plenty of others who can say the exact opposite. When you die, what kind of reputation are you going to have when you die in the eyes of everyone?

Really, all of us should want to be like Dorcas in our text for today—she could not preach and did not teach. She just helped those she could as best she could. She didn't look for a great reward. She quietly went about her business using the talents and other gifts that God had given her those who could not repay her. Luke simply says that she, **was always doing good and helping the poor.** We find out later that she often made clothes for those who couldn't afford clothes themselves, especially for widows who had no way of supporting themselves at that time.

And when she died, those who mourned were the evidence of her faithful loving service. Look at the sterling reputation that she had.

When she died her house was full of people wailing and mourning her passing. She was so beloved that two men traveled, most likely by foot, 12 miles one way to Lydda to get Peter. Right before this Peter had given Aeneas, who had been crippled for eight years, the ability to walk. Perhaps the word spread about this and the believers in Joppa fetched for Peter in hopes that he might be able to do something. It's important to ask (and answer) the question why did Dorcas do what she did. What led her to spend her life doing good to others and helping those in need? Simply put: out of love for Jesus Christ her Savior. Luke refers to her simply as a disciple. She was a student of the gospel—a follower of Christ, whom she believed to be the son of God and her Savior.

She knew that Jesus gave her everything—especially the gifts of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through his perfect life, suffering, death, and resurrection. She knew that this gift of salvation couldn't be won, bought, earned, or deserved—and that it was more precious than any amount of gold or silver. So she used time, her talents, and her treasures to show love to others as Christ showed love to her. These acts of love were done out of loving service to her Savior, Jesus Christ.

It would be a good funeral for any of us if our funeral would be like hers almost was—with so many people mourning her death and praising God for her acts of love. And so we want to be a Dorcas—but not merely because she was so beloved; but because she is a good example of living a life of love out of love for Christ. May we follow her example each and every day for the rest of our lives.

But the story of Dorcas can teach us much more. As faithful as Dorcas was, as beloved as she was, she still died. She was a sinner just like you and me; was born into sin and failed to obey God's command each and every day. And so, as a result of her sin, she died. It seems that she died quickly—perhaps even in a lot of pain. It was something she couldn't escape.

Of course, the same thing will happen to all of us—unless the Lord returns again on the Last Day beforehand. We will all die one day. At some point our loved ones and others close to us will be mourning and weeping at our funerals. It doesn't matter how good we might be, how much love we show to others, or how healthy we may be now. Eventually all of us will die and face judgment for our sins.

It was later in the same day as her death that Peter showed up at her house. They had begun the proper burial procedures and had placed her in a room in the upper portion of her house. Peter had been with Jesus all three times he raised someone from the dead. On one occasion Jesus sent everyone out of the room except the Peter, James, and John and the girl's parents. He only had to say, **Little girl, I say to you, get up.** And Jairus' became alive!

Peter, of course, isn't God as Jesus is. So after he kicked everyone as the Lord did, he got down on his knees and prayed to God. And then he said, **Tabitha** (that was her Aramaic name), **get up.** And suddenly Dorcas was given her life back—she opened her eyes and then sat up completely fine! Peter didn't have the power to do this himself, it was given to him by the Lord. The Lord's victory over death by his own resurrection meant that he had complete control over death. And he allowed Peter to use that control for Dorcas.

And so by that same victory we know that we too will be raised from the dead. Christ not only won the victory over death but he also gives us that victory—not just to Peter; but to each and everyone of us. His resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that we too will rise from the dead

But chances are that at our funeral the Lord isn't going to send one of the Apostles to raise you from the dead and give you a new life on earth. But he has a much greater gift in store for you. He will raise you and all believers on the Last Day and your perfect and glorified body will join your soul in heaven. And there you will live in a new and perfect life—free from sin and death forever!

What do you think Dorcas did with her new lease on life? Of course, we are never told; but I doubt that she retired and went visiting different countries around the world; she didn't write a book to capitalize on her experience; she didn't go into hiding or anything of the sort. She probably just went back to doing what she had been doing—continually doing good and helping the needy—she continued to produce fruits of faith by living Christ's love.

And word spread—about what the Lord did through Peter and, more importantly, what the Lord did for each and every one of us. That by his death and resurrection we have forgiveness and the sure hope of eternal life. And through the gospel that was spread, many were brought to faith in the one true Lord.

So we do well to follow the example of those believers and spread the gospel so that others may know and believe in our Lord's power over death. And we do well to follow Dorcas' example. Be a Dorcas, not merely so that you would have a great funeral filled with acquaintances mourning your death. That was a byproduct of who Dorcas was. No, be a Dorcas in that she lived the love of her Savior on a daily basis. It is her love for Christ that led her to show love to others and why so many people loved her. And through faith, you will be raised from the dead and given a new life—only yours will be eternal. Amen.