

# The Beautiful Tabitha

By Prof. Brian Huizinga

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**Bible Text:** Acts 9:36-42  
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## Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

**Website:** [www.graceprc.org](http://www.graceprc.org)  
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We turn in the scripture this evening to Acts 9. Acts 9, and we'll begin reading at verse 31. The first two-thirds of the chapter describe for us the persecution of Saul of Tarsus, how he was converted on the way to Damascus, and then became a preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ and himself suffered for that, and now we pick up the reading at verse 31 to the end of the chapter. The text, which I will not reread, is verses 36 through 42.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. 32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33 And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34 And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord. 36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. 37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them. 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

This is the inspired and infallible sacred scripture. May God bless it to our hearts.

As announced, the text is verses 36 through 42. Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Scriptures take us tonight into the city of Joppa. You might recall that it was to Joppa that the prophet Jonah fled in the Old Testament, and from there he boarded a ship. We don't read of Joppa in the gospels, but now here again in the book of Acts. It was a seaport village in Judea, just south of its border was Samaria and all of the people and goods that would come out of the Mediterranean world and pass into Judea and into its capital city of Jerusalem would pass through Joppa, a bustling city, lots of people, boats, goods, very busy city.

There was a Christian community in Joppa, probably not yet a fully instituted church with a pastor and elders and deacons. but a growing Christian community due in part to the fact that according to chapter 8, Philip had been in the area preaching. We also know from earlier chapters there was the persecution of Saul of Tarsus going on in Jerusalem and people were fleeing Jerusalem into some of these outlying areas like Joppa. And then we also read in the immediate preceding context that Peter was nearby in Lydda bringing the gospel and there was already a community of believers there. So there were believing Christians in the city of Joppa and to Joppa we go tonight.

In that town of Joppa there was a woman whom God elected from all eternity in Jesus Christ. He created her in Jesus Christ so that she was his workmanship created in Christ unto all good works which God had before ordained that this woman should walk in those good works. She was his workmanship. She was his jewel. She was precious to the Lord. She was beautiful, spiritually beautiful. And that's very clear from her name. Her name is Tabitha in the Aramaic. or as verse 36 teaches us in the Greek, Dorcas. Tabitha or Dorcas means doe, roe, gazelle, that is, sleek and tender like a young deer, which is to say, beautiful, lovely, pleasant. How often do we not read in the book, the Song of Solomon that "My beloved is like a roe." We could read it this way, "My beloved is like a Tabitha, a Dorcas," that is, beautiful, spiritually beautiful. Whatever the reason was on account of which her parents gave her the name Tabitha at her birth, we don't know but God saw to it from all eternity that this little girl would be called Tabitha because at some point God would come to her and recreate her in Christ Jesus and make her spiritually beautiful to the praise of his glorious grace and to the growth of the growing Christian community, the church in Joppa. Beautiful Tabitha is presented to us tonight in scripture and may God make all of us like the beautiful Tabitha so that having tasted and seen that God is good in the table of holy Communion, now filled with gratitude, we live our lives like Tabitha of Joppa.

But Tabitha is not the main figure in the text tonight. That, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no beauty in the heavens above or in the earth beneath that can even begin to compare to the beauty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be admired, the one who came and suffered and died for us, who rose again the third day. And all the beauty of Tabitha is beauty she had in the Lord, beauty of the Lord that was reflected through her so that to see her tonight is to see the Lord Jesus Christ. So let's consider the text taking as our theme the beautiful Tabitha, her works, her resurrection, her purpose. What made Tabitha spiritually beautiful is that she was full of good works. You know all those trees outside, especially over the last at least three or so weeks, with all those beautiful pink

and red and white blossoms? You know how beautiful those trees are? Tabitha was beautiful, adorned, like those trees with all of their flowers, adorned in good works.

Verse 36, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." Verse 36 uses three different words to emphasize all of her doing. Now to use the distinction of James, Tabitha was not merely a hearer of the word, Tabitha was a doer. So we read in the end of verse 36, this woman was full of good works. Tabitha worked. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds. Tabitha was doing deeds. This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did. These works of Tabitha were good. That means they were beneficial. They served the glory of God. They served the good name of the believing community in Joppa, and they served the lives of other people in Joppa.

Now, the text takes that very general term, good works, and it narrows it just a bit by the term almsdeeds, but almsdeeds does not refer simply to the giving of alms like the giving of offerings in the church, this too is a word that refers generally to gifts of charity, acts of mercy, and so that broad category of good works and almsdeeds is then narrowed and it becomes very specific. In this case when we read later that after the death of Tabitha in verse 39, the widows were standing by Peter weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made. That's how she worked. Those were her deeds. That's what she did. She made coats and garments. Coats is the translation of a word that refers to an undergarment, so that first article of clothing we would put on the skin, coat, and then the word garment refers to an outer garment like a sweater or we would probably say a coat.

So Tabitha had some needles, she had some threads, some fabric. She used her time and her energy to sew coats and garments for other people, primarily for poor people, and very specifically, verse 39, for widows, all the widows of Joppa, probably all the widows of Joppa, but especially those who are of the household of faith. And there may have been a large number of widows in Joppa because when Saul was persecuting Christians down in Jerusalem, there may have been men who were killed in that persecution, and now as the Christians are fleeing, there may have been a number of women who are fleeing without their husbands. They were now widows. To the widows of Joppa, she came with coats and garments.

Now, what a beautiful woman. What a beautiful thing in Joppa. Tabitha. Tabitha didn't need to be married to be beautiful. Every indication is that she was unmarried, for later in the text we read of her death and resurrection, and there's not even a hint of even one family member. And that's very unusual in the scriptures. When you think of the resurrection of Lazarus, or the daughter of Jairus, or the son of the widow of Naan, there's always family. There's parents, there's siblings, but in this case, not one family member mentioned. Maybe she had been married and now she was a widow, but probably she had always been single, never married. And here's a woman who didn't need to be married and that's a general truth. A woman doesn't need to be married in order to have a place and a role in the church and to be beautiful. Tabitha was beautiful in all of the good works that she did as a single woman.

Tabitha didn't need to be a man to be honorable and beautiful to the church. Of course, the church needs men, not the least reason of which is that we need pastors and elders and deacons, but we also need heads of homes. We need many men. The church needs men, but the church also needs women. The church needs Tabitha. And here's a woman, Tabitha, she didn't need a pulpit. She doesn't need a seat in the consistory room at classes or at synod in order to be beautiful. That's not her place. God gave her a place. God gave her a privilege. God gave her an opportunity, and she knew it, she saw it, she embraced it. "I make things for people. I don't know what you do, and different women do different things. I, Tabitha, I make things for poor people."

Tabitha didn't need a showy, prominent, ostentatious station in Joppa in order to be beautiful. Her good works were of the very, very quiet kind that you perform privately, probably late into the night on a rocking chair under the glow of a lantern, busily working her needles, sewing all these coats and all these garments, and then very quietly bringing a coat to that widow and then through the streets of Joppa to deliver a garment to that widow. And even if no one ever praised her and thanked her, that's all right. Tabitha wasn't making things for the praise of men. She had a big heart and she was doing this in compassion for other people and for the glory of her Lord and so she quietly went about her business, making coats and garments.

Tabitha didn't need an extraordinary spiritual gift, some great gift of knowledge and utterance in the word in order to be beautiful. Think of a woman like Priscilla. She could sit down with her husband Aquila, and they could meet with Apollos, open up the scriptures, and together, both of them could expound to Apollos more fully the word and way of the Lord. Now maybe Tabitha had some great knowledge. Maybe she was pretty articulate and she could carefully and in depth explain the truth of God's word. Maybe she was the kind of woman who would be very willing to pray publicly in the presence of other women, leading them in prayer. But maybe not. And that's okay. Her place was to sew coats and garments and give them to poor widows and so she wouldn't say, "I don't have some outstanding spiritual gift and knowledge and utterance. I don't have a place in the body." No, she did. She was beautiful in the good works that she did.

And this was her life, Tabitha. This wasn't a half hour one week. Maybe I could find a sliver of 15 minutes the next week. Like those trees outside the last few weeks, full. All those blossoms full of beauty and color. Verse 36 says that she was full of good works and almsdeeds. This was her life. She wasn't a busy mother in the home with lots of children. This woman, all alone, lived her life for other people all throughout the city of Joppa. Beautiful in her good works.

Wouldn't the church lose so much beauty if God would take away all our Tabithas? Like cutting off all the branches of those beautiful trees? You think of what would happen to Grace Protestant Reformed Church if God would take away from us all of our Tabithas, all our women, And I don't have to mention anything specific, but you try to think about all that a woman does in her home, all that a woman does in the school, all that a woman does in the church with her busy, industrious hands. And you think of how often in our churches we've had what are called helping hands, committees, and then you watch what happens when there's a crisis, some great need in the church, and watch the women,

watch how busy they are making meals, transporting people, watching little children, caring for children, and all kinds of other activities. The sheer industry of a godly woman is immeasurable and the women need to know that's her beauty, that's Tabitha's beauty. full of these good works. And that stands out in this world in which we live. This self-centered age of individualism and everyone being so, so self-centered. Me. And it's all about me. And then here you have Tabitha. And that's the beauty of a child of God living for others. The beautiful Tabitha.

Her beauty, however, cannot be fully understood and appreciated unless we go deeper and understand the source of those good works. Tabitha's beauty was not that she had a natural heart, a natural affection, according to which she performed humanitarian acts of service for other people, as even the heathen do. These works, according to the text, were good. And most of us, from about 8th or 9th grade upward, that's when we start Heidelberg Catechism, Catechism class, and we all have Heidelberg Catechism preaching, most, if not all of us, know very well the truth of Lord's Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism, if a work will be good, then it meets these three criteria. 1. It proceeds from a heart of true faith. 2. It's performed according to the law of God, and therefore it's done in love for God and for the neighbor. And number 3, it's aimed at the glory of God. And verse 36 tells us that Tabitha's works were good.

Then the text definitively identifies what is the source of these good works when it calls Tabitha, in verse 36, a disciple. The text does not say, "Now there was at Joppa a certain woman named Tabitha," but instead we read "there was a certain disciple named Tabitha." Tabitha was a disciple. Now a disciple is not simply one of the 12 who followed the Lord for three years, neither is a disciple simply anyone who has some kind of association with Jesus, but according to the instruction of our Lord himself, to use the very graphic, figurative, vivid language of John 15, a disciple, a true disciple, is someone who's been grafted into Jesus so that the Holy Spirit takes one and he sovereignly grafts one into Jesus by and with an invisible, mysterious, living, covenantal bond and sometimes we call it the bond of faith, so that there's now this unbreakable union between the disciple and Jesus so that the disciple knows Jesus, believes in Jesus, loves Jesus, lives for Jesus, has fellowship with Jesus.

Doesn't that describe you at the table of our Lord this morning? A true disciple says about Jesus, belonging to Jesus, "Jesus is my sacrifice. Jesus is my atonement. Jesus is my redemption. Jesus is my justification and my sanctification. Jesus is my life. Jesus is my joy. Jesus is everything to me." A true disciple is someone who is bound unbreakably to Jesus Christ. He's the great worker. He's the one who's full of all the good works of redemption and a true disciple belongs to him. So that you could read verse 36 this way, "Now there was at Joppa a certain... Now there was at Joppa in the tree called Jesus a certain branch named Tabitha, which was full of fruit," that is, all of the good works, "and the almsdeeds which she did."

To say that the source of Tabitha's beauty and all of her good works is a true faith is really to say that the source is Jesus. Now, that doesn't mean that Jesus is the one who performed these good works. A little boy can understand or a little girl can understand verse 36, "This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which," feminine singular

pronoun, "she did." She did the good works. Jesus is the source and strength of those good works in that she belongs to him and she is only able to live this way and be full of good works as she lives out of Christ.

How important theologically then is the relationship between Tabitha's beauty, all of her good works, and her identity established in verse 36 as a disciple. Tabitha didn't do good works to become a disciple. Tabitha's good works were not a condition that she had to fulfill in order to know Jesus. Tabitha never sewed a single coat or garment in order to be able to have a loving relationship with Jesus as one of his disciples. Rather, all of Tabitha's good works were the fruit of her faith by which faith she belonged to Jesus Christ. As Jesus, the sovereign Lord by the power of his Holy Spirit, took Tabitha and grafted her into himself and gave to her the knowledge of faith, the firm persuasion of his love for her, and as she lived out of that knowledge of the love of Jesus Christ, full of gratitude, which ought to describe all of us as we walk away from the table of our Lord, she lived in all good works, manifesting the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tabitha was obligated to perform good works. She must perform good works. She must be commanded to do good works. And she took that obligation very seriously and she did good works. A woman devoid of good works, and now don't think very narrowly, as we sometimes do, that good works are only acts of charity toward poor people. Good works is a very broad concept. It refers to all of the obedience that we give according to the whole law of God from commandments 1 through 10, and the law of God is very broad. That whole life of obedience. A woman devoid of good works is a very, very ugly woman, no matter what she looks like outwardly and physically because if she doesn't have good works, as James teaches, her faith is dead. She has no faith. She's spiritually dead. She's like a dead twig on the ground. No blossoms. No fruit. Beautiful is Tabitha. And it is inevitable that grafted into the Lord Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit working in her, she will live in all these good works. True disciples must and do bear much fruit. John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be," that is, show yourself to "be my disciples." Beautiful is every Tabitha.

As beautiful as Tabitha was in that believing community in Joppa with all of her good works, God would make her even more beautiful to the believers and he would do that by making her sick and causing her to die and then raising her from the dead. A resurrection. It must have been a very, very sad day when Tabitha passed away and it was. We read in verse 37, "And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber." It's very interesting that they didn't bury her. They wash her body and they carry her upstairs into an upper chamber in one of the rooms, one of the houses. Now, maybe some of them were in denial that Tabitha was dead but more likely, they were clinging to some hope that maybe, just maybe, there could be a resurrection. They're believers. They know of Jesus Christ resurrected and ascended into heaven. They've heard about Christ and the miracles he performed on this earth in resurrecting the dead. Maybe, maybe Tabitha can be raised.

Well, they hear Peter's 10 miles away so verse 38, "And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them." Peter's an apostle of the Lord,

and the apostles of the Lord perform miracles. Now, maybe not a resurrection, but they've heard of these miracles. They were probably just hearing the news coming out of Lydda that he had healed Aeneas, who was sick of the palsy for eight years. Tabitha's dead upstairs so they call two men and say, "As quickly as you can, go to Lyda and get Peter."

And so they go get Peter and here comes Peter and now we have one of the most touching scenes in the whole Bible, 39, "Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them." Peter climbs up the stairs and he gets into this upper chamber and it's Peter one man and all women. One's dead, that's Tabitha, and all the others are widows and all standing there weeping, weeping, and probably with one hand, wiping away the tears out of their eyes, and with the other hand, they're holding up the coats and garments that Tabitha made them and, "Peter, look at this one. Do you see this, Peter? I had one garment for years. I was so poor, old and tattered. I'll never forget the day when Tabitha came to me with this new garment and said, 'I made this for you.' Isn't it beautiful, Peter?" And all around the room, as they're weeping, they're all showing Peter how large a place Jesus Christ had in the heart of this dead woman. "Look at all the things she made us."

How often doesn't something like that happen during visitation at the funeral home when some of those good works that were done in secret are brought out and made public by God? The brother's in the casket, the sister's in the casket, and the family stands there, and the long line of guests, visitors, snakes through the parlor and maybe outside the door, and here they all come. and they come to give their Christian sympathy and their condolences to the grieving family, and then you start hearing stories you've never heard before. "I want to tell you something your father did for us. I don't think you know this. Your mother, your daughter, will never forget the time when she came over to our house," and out come the stories, the good works, which no one ever knew, and God brings them out to comfort the grieving family.

And there they all were upstairs showing Peter what Tabitha had done. Don't live your life in such a way that when you die and we put you in the box, no one has anything good to say about you. Don't live that way. Beautiful Tabitha.

Now Peter's gonna talk. "I would like all of you to leave now, please. Everyone, down the stairs." Verse 40, "But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive." Peter doesn't know if God will perform a miracle. After everyone leaves the room, Peter gets down on his knees. Later we read he has to turn, so his back to the corpse, he gets down on his knees, probably in the corner, and he prays, "Lord God in heaven, this is not about me, and my name, and my reputation. This is all about thy glory. This is all about the honor of Jesus Christ, and the advance of thy kingdom, and the spread of the gospel. Lord God in heaven, for Jesus' sake, please, please, bring her back." He's praying to God, and then he stands up, and he walks over to the corpse, and he says, "Tabitha, arise," and she opens her eyes and she sits up, looks at Peter. And again, this is such a touching scene. Then Peter reaches out

his hand and he takes Tabitha and lifts her up and she stands up and together they walk to the door and they go down the stairs and Peter says, "Call everyone to the door now." And what's interesting is verse 41 now makes a distinction between saints and widows. Upstairs, only widows. Downstairs, many people have been coming now so that there are saints, believers, men and women. "Bring them all to the door." And here they all come, the saints and widows, and Peter takes Tabitha and verse 41 says he presented her alive. "Everyone look, here, Tabitha, whom God raised from the dead."

And it was at that moment that Tabitha became more beautiful to them than she had ever been before, not because she now was radiating with heavenly glory like our Lord was on the Mount of Transfiguration, not because she had a new resurrection body like that body she will have in the last day. She came back with that same old body of Tabitha, but now there was something different because Tabitha was not merely on a journey, Tabitha had not merely been absent, Tabitha had not simply been sick, Tabitha was dead. Tabitha was gone. She was a corpse. She was cold. Every tie, every earthly tie and relationship to Tabitha had been severed. She was gone. They were weeping and the Lord brought her back and turned all of their weeping into joy, and when they laid their eyes upon her raised from the dead, she became still more beautiful to them. And that's not hard to understand. You think about it. If one of our own brothers or sisters in the congregation would pass away, and get put in the casket and we have a funeral and then God would raise him or her from the dead, I would dare say that the next Sunday morning when you all come to church, not one person exits the sanctuary out the door to the car without first going, first going to that resurrected brother or sister to see him, probably give the biggest hug you've ever given, and look him right in the eyes. "Why are you staring at me?" Look him right in the eyes. "Why are you staring at me?" "Brother, you were gone. You were gone. You were dead and God brought you back. You're more precious to us than you've ever been before."

He presented her alive. But the Lord raised her, not Peter. The Lord did. And the Lord's presenting her tonight, not Peter. To you and me, the Lord is presenting Tabitha in her beauty, raised by the Lord, because her resurrection is a picture to us of our own resurrection in two respects and that makes her beautiful to all of us as we see her tonight. First of all, that resurrection of Tabitha in the upper room is a picture of our spiritual resurrection that occurs in the depths of our heart at the moment of regeneration when life is implanted. Ephesians 2:4 and 5, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)" So that by nature all of us, like Tabitha, are dead in sin, spiritually dead in unbelief, so that we hate God in Christ and we can't do any good, and all the works that proceed forth from us as we are by nature, they're all evil. None of them to the glory of God. None of them in love for God. None of them truly in love for others who are around us. They're all evil. And when God, through the Apostle Peter, raised Tabitha in that upper room, that was a picture of what God had already done in Tabitha's heart when he raised her spiritually. Inaudible were the words uttered at regeneration but they were the same words to the spiritually dead Tabitha. God said, "Tabitha, arise," whenever that was, and theologically, that's the same moment that occurs when the Spirit takes Tabitha and he grafts her into Jesus Christ. She's already been raised spiritually and now the bodily resurrection is a picture of it. And for all of us,



we've all been raised. Do you know that? If you've been saved, a miracle has already occurred in your own heart as God has raised you from the dead, giving you new life, and now the Lord is the author of our faith, of our life. and of our works. It's his beauty that's reflecting through us as we all have been quickened together with him.

But in the second place, the Lord presents Tabitha in her resurrection to us tonight because it's a picture of our final bodily resurrection. Tabitha came back to life in that old dust-framed body and who knows how much longer and she would die again and go into the grave. But one day our Lord will come and he will call Tabitha out of the dust of Joppa and give her a new, immortal, incorruptible, heavenly, glorious body and so shall we all be raised out of the dust. John 5:28 and 29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good," Tabitha, "unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

Now her beauty is faint and so is ours compared to what it shall be. Sometimes our beauty is difficult to see because of all of our sin, all the corruption of our flesh, all of our weaknesses and infirmities that mar our spiritual beauty, but you just wait, just wait until that last day when to your perfected soul is united your body, now made glorious and heavenly in that last day, and you are presented into heaven through the gates of glory, raised from the dead with perfect glory in body and soul, and now no longer to love God with this flesh still cleaving to us, but to love, serve, and worship God perfectly in a perfect body and perfect soul. What a day that will be. And this resurrection in the upper room, upper chamber, was a picture of that final bodily resurrection. Indeed, Tabitha is beautiful in her resurrection.

Why don't I pause just a moment before we come to the final point and say, probably one or a couple of you will ask me after the sermon, "So what happened to Tabitha's soul in that period between her death and resurrection?" And so I'll just say it right now. I could maybe give a little bit longer answer, but the short answer, of course, is, I don't know. Nobody knows. The Bible doesn't tell us. But I know the Lord was with her. It's an interesting thought. Conscious in the soul and what was it like between her death and this resurrection? The Bible doesn't tell us.

She served a purpose. Jesus made her beautiful in good works and raised her from the dead for the growth of the church and thus the glory of God's name. That purpose is expressed in the text in verse 42 as a result, it was accomplished, "And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord." We can't fully understand this purpose that God has with Tabitha unless we consider the name of this book. It's called Acts, the Acts of the Apostles, more properly though, the Acts of the ascended Lord in heaven through his apostles. The inspired Luke wrote two books. He wrote the gospel according to Luke in which he told us of all Jesus did on this earth with his birth, his life, his suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven. So what he did on this earth, and then by inspiration, Luke writes the book of Acts to tell us what Jesus continues to do in heaven, in heaven as he pours out his Spirit upon the church, and then by the power of that Spirit, he sends out his apostles and his preachers through the whole new dispensation for the spread of the gospel, and that the church might be gathered in.

The book of Acts, what the Lord does from heaven in all of his acts. And so the main figure in the text, of course, is not Tabitha and it is not Peter, but it is our Lord. The Lord made Tabitha beautiful in all her good works for the growth of his church.

As Lord's Day 32 teaches, one of the benefits of doing good works is that by our godly conversation, others might be gained to Christ, and so Tabitha performs her good work, she's bringing coats and garments to all these poor widows up and down the streets of Joppa, and that gives her a wonderful opportunity to testify of the Lord Jesus Christ to whom she belongs, that more people might come to know the Lord, believe in the Lord, and be gathered into the church. But now it's the will of Jesus to use her in an even greater capacity in this bustling port city of Joppa. So according to the counsel of God, she becomes sick and she dies and then Jesus in heaven through Peter will raise her from the dead to bring even more attention to the gospel so that as the result is expressed in verse 42, "many believed in the Lord." For you see, there was something that Joppa had never seen. Now, not much. Joppa had seen pretty much everything pouring through those ports but not a resurrection. No one in Joppa had seen a resurrection, that stupendous miracle of a dead person being brought back to life. And so the Lord will perform a resurrection in Joppa, not simply to create waves of excitement, but the purpose of a miracle is always to confirm the word of the gospel. Here's the word of the gospel being spread through Joppa by the believers, "You're all sinners. All of you, head for head, up and down these streets, you're all guilty before God. You're all condemned before God. You need hope. You need a Savior. Jesus Christ is the one and only name given under heaven whereby we can and must be saved. Let me tell you about Jesus and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." So the gospel goes through Joppa. This miracle is to confirm the word of the gospel that Jesus is the Lord. Believe in him.

So here comes the miracle, and now people all throughout Joppa are talking about Tabitha and what happened as she's raised from the dead, and that's bringing more attention to the gospel, to the name of Jesus, and God uses it so that verse 42 says, "many believed in the Lord." The church is growing in Joppa and God would use Tabitha for that purpose, the growth of the church and ultimately the glory of God's name. So for all of us here tonight in this applicatory service, God put us here and God makes us spiritually beautiful for his church. Now, I know that's a peculiar concept in this individualistic and selfish, selfish age where it's all about me and me and me, and "I can probably tolerate having you in my life as long as you serve me but don't expect that I'll serve you. It's all about me." And the word of God says, "No, it's not. No, it's not. I do all I do with Tabitha for the growth of the church." If God gave you a hand, a hand that can sew, that's for the church. And if God makes you sick, like he made Tabitha sick, that's for the church. We need sick people. Now we don't want sick people, and we pray for health, but God will give us sick people because we need sick people to be able to manifest the mercy of our Lord. If God makes you sick, that's for the church. If God gives you a gift, that's not so you can run off somewhere and go live your own life and do your own thing. That's for his church. Whatever God gives you, your beauty is for the church. All that we are as made by God is for the church that we may all grow together in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so that others, we may serve others outside of the church, and we may tell them of the name of Jesus Christ, and maybe if we make a coat for them, we'll have an opportunity to name the name of Jesus

Christ, that others outside might be brought into the church for the growth of the church until the day our Lord returns. And all of this is for him so that the very last word of the text is, "Lord. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed," not in Tabitha, not in Peter, "and many," many, "believed in the Lord." Amen.

Let us pray.

*Father in heaven, we thank thee for thy great and marvelous works, which begin with the creation of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1, and all the way to the end of the book of Revelation, which tells us of the return of our Lord, works, marvelous, saving works and tonight in Tabitha, hallelujah, hallowed be thy name. Now may we joyfully sing of and tell others too, of all thy works. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*