

20260830 Gathered for the Miracle – Ps Bijoy

Acts 9:32- 43 (with Acts 5:12-16)

Introduction

There are two kinds of hard things in this life. There's the kind you can still fight the diagnosis you can treat, the marriage you can still repair, the mess you can still clean up. And then there's the other kind. The kind that just sits there. The kind you've stopped fighting because you finally admitted you can't win. Eight years of paralysis is that kind of hard. A body in a grave is that kind of hard. And if you're honest this morning, you probably walked in here carrying at least one thing exactly like that something you cannot change, or something you cannot get back.

That's the room Acts 9 was written for. Two people, two towns, and neither of them chose their situation. Aeneas didn't choose eight years flat on his back. Tabitha didn't choose to die in the middle of a life spent loving widows. Neither one of them does anything to earn what happens next. They simply run out of options and that turns out to be exactly where God shows up.

So this morning I want to walk through it pastorally, in three movements - what we do when we face what we cannot change, what we do when we face what we cannot recover, and what happens when we finally stop trying to carry either one alone.

When We Face What We Cannot Change (Acts 9:32-35)

Aeneas had been paralyzed for eight years. Let that sit for a second before we rush to the miracle. Eight years is long enough to stop expecting anything to be different. Eight years is long enough for hope to quietly turn into managing situation. you stop praying for healing and start just praying to get through the day. That is not weak faith; that is honest faith. Most of us are not carrying something we chose. We're carrying a diagnosis, a family pattern, a financial hole, a grief that reorganized our whole life without asking permission. And the longer it sits, the more it starts to feel less like a season and more like an identity.

Here's the pastoral heart of this first scene: Peter didn't bring Aeneas a strategy. He didn't bring him eight years of counsel on how to cope better with paralysis. He brought him a Person. "Jesus Christ heals you." Notice the text doesn't say Aeneas asked for this. It

doesn't say his faith was extraordinary. It simply says Jesus showed up in a house in Lydda, through Peter, uninvited, into a situation nobody thought was going anywhere.

I want to say something gently to whoever is sitting with what they cannot change this morning: you do not have to manufacture more faith before God is willing to visit you. Aeneas didn't perform his way into this healing. Jesus simply came to where he was lying. Sometimes the most honest prayer you can pray about the thing you cannot change is not "fix it" but "come near it." And when Christ comes near what we cannot change, He doesn't always explain the eight years. He just says, "Rise." Whatever has kept you flat may not release its grip because you finally understand it. It may release because Somebody finally shows up.

When We Face What We Cannot Recover (Acts 9:36- 41)

But now the story moves from something painful to something final. Aeneas was paralyzed; Tabitha is dead. And this is where the text stops being encouraging in a general way and starts being honest in a specific way because some losses are not "hard situations." They are closed doors. A relationship that will not come back. A person who will not walk through your front door again. A version of your life that is simply over.

Notice what the church does in verse 39. They don't perform. They don't pretend. They weep, and they show Peter the coats and garments Tabitha made while she was alive. That is grief doing exactly what grief is supposed to do, holding the evidence of love in your hands because you cannot hold the person anymore. If you are grieving something you cannot recover, this text does not rush you past that room. It lets you stand in it. Peter himself doesn't burst in with confidence; he sends everyone out, and he kneels. Before there is a word spoken over the body, there is a posture of helplessness before God. That is pastorally important: even the apostle does not walk into an unrecoverable loss standing tall. He goes down on his knees first.

And then only after the kneeling comes the word: "Tabitha, arise." I won't pretend every loss in our lives ends this way on this side of eternity; it doesn't, and this text is honest enough to know that most of our grief will wait for the resurrection, not reverse it in an afternoon. But this story stands in Scripture to tell us something we need permanently lodged in our hearts: nothing you have lost is outside the reach of the God who raises the

dead. Some things He restores now. Everything He will restore in the end. Either way, what looks unrecoverable to us has never once looked unrecoverable to Him.

When We Gather as God's People (Acts 5:12-16; 9:36-43)

Here's what I don't want us to miss: neither Aeneas nor Tabitha was healed in isolation, and neither were healed for isolation. Turn back with me to Acts 5. Before Lydda and Joppa ever happen, Luke shows us the church gathered "all together in Solomon's Portico" (5:12), so united and so marked by the Spirit's presence that people carried their sick into the streets just hoping Peter's shadow might fall on them (5:15). That is not superstition, that is a community so saturated with the presence of God that proximity to it became a means of grace. The multitudes brought their sick "and they were all healed" (5:16) not because Peter was magic, but because the gathered, praying, Spirit-filled church had become a place where God's power was simply at home.

That is the atmosphere Peter carries with him into Lydda and Joppa. And it's the atmosphere the story leaves us in. Look at verse 41 Peter doesn't raise Tabitha and disappear. He "called the saints and widows and presented her alive." The miracle is handed back to the community. And look at the very last line of the chapter, verse 43 Peter stays many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner. A tanner's trade made him ceremonially unclean by Jewish custom, yet the apostle lodges under his roof. Even the geography of this story is pastoral: God is already widening the circle of who belongs, preparing Peter and us for the fact that resurrection power was never meant to stay inside a private moment. It was always meant to gather people in.

Church, this is why we do not carry what we cannot change or what we cannot recover by ourselves. We were never designed to. The paralysis in Lydda and the grief in Joppa were both met by Christ through a community that had learned to gather, to pray, and to expect Him. If Solomon's Portico had never gathered, there may have been no Peter walking through Lydda at all.

Conclusion

So here is where this leaves us. Something in your life right now you cannot change by ourselves, bring it near to Jesus, not because you've earned an answer, but because He comes to where we are lying. Something you have lost that you cannot recover, kneel before you speak over it, and trust that what looks final to you has never looked final to Him. And whatever you are carrying, stop carrying it alone. Come back to the Portico. Come back to the room upstairs. Come back to the gathered, praying people of God, because it was in exactly that kind of room, among exactly that kind of people, that a man stood up after eight years, and a woman opened her eyes after her heart had stopped. He has not changed. Neither has this church's assignment/calling. Let's pray.