**A talk using Acts 9:36-43 11th May 2025**

The story of the raising of Tabitha is one of those stories that we wouldn’t believe if it wasn’t in the Bible. Pam’s miscue on the *tazing* of Dorcas. Did I believe this?

But plausability is not necessarily a good criteria on which to judge the value of things. There are lots of things that sound implausible until they happen and we get used to them. Consider a time 40 years ago when there was no access to computers for ordinary mortals like us. Each one had a dedicated building. The computer on your lap or in your hand now has about a multiples of multiples the computing power of 1970’s industrial computer. – not to mention almost universal and nearly free connectivity.

What we need to be careful of then, is that we don’t write off the story too quickly just because it has never happened before. Lots of wonderful things that happen have never happened before. Maybe God is doing a new thing. Maybe too, the importance of this passage is not just as a piece of history. Maybe it isn’t even history but it is true in some other way.

Jesus said in Mark 5 and the raising of Jarius’ daughter. Jarius was, like Dorcas an important person, a temple official. “Little girl, get up” in Aramaic that was “Tal-itha Cumi.”
And now here Peter, whose native language was Aramaic, says “Tabitha, get up,” which in Aramaic is “Tabitha Cumi.” Almost the same.
Luke wants us to know that the Jesus story is not over.

The power of Christ to bring new life is undiminished from one story and one era and one people to the next.

At the other end of the story is Simon the tanner, an occupation that according to some would make him something of an outsider. Both Jesus and the early Christian movement often found a following among outsiders and marginalised groups.

There is this whole build up of experiences that tell me that death wins, that tragedy is the end. Depression, inevitability. War in Gaza may seem insoluble, when will ethnic cleansing end in Sudan? Bob Hawke with intractable strike union/boss issues – “all we know at the moment is that it will end.”

Things we have done in the past. Youth group, Sunday school, church sporting teams, church community camps, 100 or so people in church – 40 of them including 15 teenagers going out to Sunday School and youth group.

God is doing new things. God is bringing life from suffering and death. But it won’t always be the way we want it.

There is safety in the presence of God who leads her to springs of living water from Psalm 23 and and wipes every tear from her eye, from today’s possible Revelation reading has a lot more to offer than getting well enough to go back to work. After all the raising of Lazarus, Dorcas/Tabitha or Jarius’ servant are only temporary reprives. They still died eventually.

Can we still believe in joy and energy in some new way when all around seems dead or dying?

The bigger question for me, and I think for many of us, is “Can we trust God in the face of tragedy? Part of the good news is that God does not require us to have a 100% unshakeable faith before we can be accepted as God’s children. Christ does not require that we have it all together and feel confident about everything before he will do anything good in our lives. Resurrection is happening. I guess that’s why this reading is in the season of Easter.

The bread and “wine” are reminders of a different life that is possible in Christ. A gift which is hard to fathom but offers a gift of life that is different to one we see with our eyes and our scientific mind.

Each of us when we hear these passages of scripture read, or in fact any body of information, we direct our attention to them differently, perhaps very individually. Maybe a word, a picture in your head really resonates with you and captures your attention. Often what we pay attention to is the thing that already makes a bit of sense to us and we build up another layer of understanding. We are inclined to confirm that which we already believe to be true or important. This confirmation bias helps us to feel secure in familiar territory it is the more comfortable fallback mechanism. Maybe even a survival strategy. This process also applies to our consideration of Mother’s Day. Seen through an historical and cultural lens the concept of the British ruling class giving their maid servants a day off to visit their mothers and possibly bake them a cake could be viewed variously, even positively or negatively. The same variation applies to our views of institutions and complex ideas.

Then we are left hanging with the **big questions**, the important questions which are best answered in relationship with others, more particularly Christian brothers and sisters and importantly we pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Today’s passages either present or beg for answers to big questions. Big questions about Jesus. Questions of Trust in Jesus, in the possibility of miracles, in the authority of the scriptures as contained in our Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Stories of raising the dead to extend their lives before they die at a later stage easily evoked notions of resurrection, though that was understood as more than temporary reprieve. They also symbolise hope. The good news is about bringing life where there is death, love where there is hate, healing where there is brokenness. The greater wonder today is when we can see people stand on their feet, communities make their way out of traps of poverty, enemies move towards reconciliation, despairing people finding meaning again. These are realities which take up the direction or flow of what would otherwise be legends left to the past. They invite us to take such stories as symbols of what is an abiding value and through them to find the hand of God in new beginnings today.