

## 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019: People of Resurrection 2: Dorcas (Acts 9, Jn 14) BCP

People of Resurrection: the idea is that in this Easter Season we see how the resurrection power of Jesus changed peoples' lives – and still does today. For once I'm being a good boy and using the standard lectionary readings for these weeks, which are from the book of Acts – and there's some well known stories and a couple of less well-known ones, including this one today – but it is one which has a special connection for us at **All Saints**, as the main character gave the name to a group which has met here for many years being modern-day Dorcas', using their practical skills to help others in need.

Interesting that she's in the bible not for her servant heart but because she was the beneficiary of an outstanding miracle – St Peter raised her from the dead.

Wonderful story, but it raises some big questions for modern church – lovely as it is to see how Jesus' resurrection power was working through the early church, was that just for then, or can we pray for such things now? And if so, is it just for special leaders or for anyone?

**(Authority)** Let's go back to Jesus' words in John 14, which Peter was so clearly obeying – what does Jesus say? READ v12-14

### **Straightforward reading: Jesus' promise is for everyone for all time**

- **Not just apostles** – 'whoever' believes (14:12), 'whatever you ask' (14:13) – David Pytches 'very uncomfortable with the idea that Jesus doesn't mean what he says.'
- **Not just 'deserving cases'** – Dorcas a great woman, but Aeneas is 'just another man', we don't know anything about him. This is both a great comfort and challenge – on the one hand no-one is excluded. On the other no-one can claim that they ought to be healed while so-and-so isn't

But two reflections/observations.....

**Mystery** – why some and not others? Recent example: Recently I received two e-mails within hours of each other. In the first, I learned of the tragic death of a young boy, whose parents – and many others, including me – had prayed faithfully for many months for healing from cancer... and who had died. In the second, I read the testimony of another young man, not yet a Christian, living on another continent, prayed for that week by his sister's Alpha group. This young man had just attended a hospital appointment at which confirmation of the original diagnosis of a similar tumour was expected... only to find he was completely in the clear!

Why was one miraculously healed and not the other? Why did the believers' child die, and the (as yet) unbelieving brother live? Why did a day or two's prayer from a few people yield amazing results, but not months of faithful intercession from many?

Truth is that we don't know – but the fact that we don't know does not mean that we don't pray. If it happens at all, we shouldn't be afraid to ask – 'Ask and you will receive', 'anything in my name'. Pray according to our faith – but not a slot machine, even mustard seed offered in faith can do great things (like story above).

**Mission** – link between miracles and mission. Miracles prove that God is real so it often happens that miracles come in context of sharing Jesus with people. I saw that in prison, but also true here – look at outcomes – Aeneas READ v35, Dorcas READ v42. Not to say that God only works in those situations, but likely to happen far more in those situations – why they're often called 'signs'. They point to reality of God's presence.

Meaning? – special grace, special purpose/responsibility....

