

INTRO

When Renee assigned me this section of scripture, I was like “O great, bringing someone back to life, how am I going to teach on this???” Steve jokingly had the idea that I could get some dead bodies from the morgue to pray over—thankfully that is NOT an idea I am going with today! Then, I thought about my own life and the resurrection of sorts that God has done in me. And to be honest, the things that God has resurrected in my life are just as miraculous as if I had been physically dead. Can you relate? Is there a situation that comes to your mind that if something changed it would be as shocking as seeing a person come back to life before your eyes?

PETER & TABITHA

When we read Bible stories of people brought back to life, I think it can be kind of easy to take it for granted, like, “o, look here’s another resurrection. Well, of course this is happening, God is in the life giving business.” And so, we move on, because people coming back to life isn’t part of **our** everyday life.

So, it’s easy to gloss over this story, I mean, not only is it a kind of unrelatable event, but we also don’t hear any more about Tabitha after this section, and so it seems to be just one more person Peter interacted with briefly in his ministry.

Despite all this, I want to slow down and sit with this story to see what we can glean about Peter and Tabitha, and how this story can apply to us today.

This resurrection event doesn’t just impact Tabitha’s life, but I believe Peter’s as well. And there is a far reaching impact from this resurrection.

Tabitha: described as doing kind things, caring for the poor, making garments for widows. After her resurrection, we see that many believe in Jesus’ resurrection life. So both before and after her resurrection, Tabitha’s life makes quite an impact.

Peter: follower of Jesus, was part of Jesus’ inner circle of friends, front row sees to all Jesus’ miracles, including raising a girl to life. Commissioned by Jesus to go and tell the good news to all. Tabitha (and her community) become part of Peter’s story.

RESURRECTION IN STAGES

When we think of resurrection and healing, it seems like it’s instant...and sometimes it may be, but have you noticed that sometimes there’s stages to observe, and sometimes multiple steps the pray-er has in the process of bringing life and healing as they pray to

God? And it seems that often the resurrection/healing doesn't happen in a vacuum of just the 1 person and God (There seems to be people of faith, mourners, prophets, friends, involved in the resurrection story).

Elijah:

1 Kings 17:21 CEB

[21] Then he **stretched himself over the boy three times** and cried out to the LORD, "LORD my God, please give this boy's life back to him."

Ezekiel:

Ezekiel 37:7-9 CEB

[7] I **prophesied** just as I was commanded. There was a great noise as I was prophesying, then a great quaking, and the **bones came together, bone by bone**. [8] When I looked, suddenly there were **sinews** on them. The **flesh** appeared, and then they were covered over with **skin**. But there was still no breath in them. [9] He said to me, "**Prophecy to the breath**; prophecy, human one! Say to the breath, The LORD God proclaims: Come from the four winds, breath! Breathe into these dead bodies and let them live."

Jesus:

Mark 8:23-25 CEB

[23] **Taking the blind man's hand**, Jesus led him out of the village. After **spitting** on his eyes and **laying his hands** on the man, he **asked** him, "Do you see anything?" [24] The man looked up and said, "I see people. They look like trees, only they are walking around." [25] Then Jesus **placed his hands on the man's eyes again**. He looked with his eyes wide open, his sight was restored, and he could see everything clearly.

Peter:

Acts 9:37-41 TPT

[37] But then [Tabitha] became very ill and died. After the **disciples prepared her body for burial, they laid her in an upstairs room**. [38] When the **believers** heard that Peter was nearby in Lydda, they **sent two men** with an urgent message for him to come without delay. [39] **So Peter went with them back to Joppa**, and upon arriving they led him to the upper room. There were many widows standing next to Peter, **weeping**. One after another showed him the tunics and other **garments that Tabitha had made to bless others**. [[40] Peter made them all leave the room. Then he **knelt down and prayed**. Turning to the dead body, he **said**, "Tabitha, **rise up!**" **At once she opened her eyes**, and seeing Peter, she sat up. [41] **He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet**. Then he **called for the believers** and all the **widows** to come and **see that she was alive!**

Peter's role

Peter listened to the need, responded to the request, traveled to another town, listened to the grieving widows, prayed in solitude, spoke life to Tabitha, held her hand, helped her up to walk again.

RESURRECTION STORIES

There's reading a scripture, and then there's letting a scripture read you. And, when I read this passage, 2 resurrection stories from my own life popped immediately into my head. I felt like I'm supposed to share them with you. But to be honest, it would have been a little less scary/risky to roll in a dead body to pray over, rather than to share publicly a personally vulnerable story.

AND YET...

That is what I feel like God is leading me to from this passage. Perhaps sharing my story is part of the continual unfolding resurrection in my life. And perhaps my resurrection story will bring encouragement to you and strengthen your faith in Jesus' life giving power.

If you feel comfortable, close your eyes for a moment and picture yourself sound asleep. Then listen as you sense someone calling you by name and telling you to wake up. Can you recall a past moment like that? Maybe you were a student in a classroom with your head down on your books, maybe you were taking a Sunday afternoon couch nap, or maybe you were riding the bus and about to miss your stop? In that moment, do you remember how disorienting it is to be woken up from such a sound sleep? That wondering where you are at? That bizarre mix between what is the real reality, the dream, or the place you find yourself upon waking?

I had a similar feeling earlier this week. During one of my prayer times, I heard God call to me "Melissa Wake up, Wake up Melissa, wake up." Of course I was physically awake, God was calling to my soul, my mind to awaken. I had asked God what the truth was about a fear I was dealing with. And before God spoke the truth to my heart, God made sure I was awake to hear it. And then God said "You are NOT a child anymore." Many of my adult fears are leftovers from childhood. And while there was self-preserving aspects to these fears, perhaps they don't serve me as an adult as well as they did as a child. Maybe there's another way.

Today I would like to share 2 stories of times when God has resurrected me out of fears that I had carried from childhood.

MY RESURRECTION FROM FEAR

My first story is one over a massive fear that apparently Jesus thought I needed resurrected from in order to continue the call God had on my life of extending Jesus' love into my community.

This may seem funny, and it kind of is, I had an extreme fear of roller skating. Very justifiable, mind you. See in 4th grade I had a FABULOUS plan!

The plan was to roller skate on an ice covered sidewalk, with my friends linked together in a train. And it WAS fun! Right up to the point where I broke my arm! (I had made a plan to prevent injury, I had given clear instructions that if we were about to fall, I would call "split" and we were all supposed to split. But alas, my younger sister didn't split, and fell right on me! That fall, that injury, set off a multi-decade long fear of roller skating. I went from being an instigating dare devil to a frightened hold-the-edge-of-the-rink-railing when forced to make an obligatory trip around a rink.

Which, in the grand scheme of life, this just didn't seem that big of a deal to me. I in no way felt a need to be set free from this fear. But that just wasn't something that Jesus wanted me to continue to live with.

And here's how Jesus did it! In stages, over time, and definitely more drastic than I would have thought necessary.

I received an invite to play roller derby. Once while living in Champaign. I kindly turned down the offer, from the roller derby player that apparently missed the fact that while I was at a roller rink, wearing roller skates, I was just hanging out with the youth group kids in the snack area and chatting...NOT freely roller skating.

Then I received another invite from a roller derby player. This time while living in Peoria. I literally ran into her (car accident in a gas station parking lot). And then not so literally ran into her again at a coffee shop. Again, I politely declined the invite, I didn't need to tell her how completely palms-sweating, knees-weak I got on skates.

But then Jesus showed up...in my prayer time...and gave me a vision. Think the expression when pigs fly. Only the pig was on skates. And I agreed! "When pigs fly" I'll skate! But deep in my heart I knew Jesus was inviting me to walk away from the fear and join roller derby! (Why it couldn't have been just a simple go skate occasionally casually and be roller derby of all things! But Jesus had a plan)

I asked Jesus to take away the fear of skating. I ended up going to roller derby boot camp, getting selected to the team, and started practicing with them. It was SO MUCH FUN! I really enjoyed learning to weave, jump, whip, bump, to place my skate one over the other to make those sharp turns around the rink...it was so much fun!

And slowly, I built relationships with the other derby chics. My experience was that most roller derby chics are pretty alternative, hard core, and don't trust others easily. I had to earn their trust before I could have the right to speak into their lives. So, I went to the parties, went to the bars with them (FYI I grew up in a Christian bubble and had never gone to a bar until then, in my 30's). Steve joined the security team for the bouts (I eventually had a shoulder injury from a car accident, so I had to go off skates, but I continued to be in the derby league, just as a non-skating official) . And over time, I did get to pray for several gals and bring words of life and encouragement to many.

I feel a bit like Tabitha: having a resurrection and helping others and more people knowing God's goodness

And I feel a bit like Peter: being taken further and further out of my comfort zone to reach others Jesus calls me to reach with Jesus' love and life.

MY RESURRECTION FROM TRAUMA

ONLINE

My second story is one of repressed trauma. Much of who I am had been dead and buried along with the trauma that was so bad that I had repressed it.

Not only that, this trauma, that until, brought into the light, had been causing all kinds of fears and anxieties to reign in my everyday life. Seemingly irrational, but overall I felt like I was doing ok going through life like this.

I carried on many many years with these fears. A ton of tiny anxieties and neuroses that I could excuse away as just my own personal preferences.

I didn't know I needed a resurrection. I didn't know Jesus had other plans for my life. Other people he wanted me to extend his love and life to in my community.

So, here I was in my 40's and then all of a sudden the repressed memory comes front and center! Once brought into the light, it so clearly explained all my little anxieties and neuroses.

Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)

Jesus brought life and healing to me through love and prayer and support from Steve and friends, and counseling. And slowly I started to experience freedom from anxiety and fear that had gripped me for most my life, more boldness.

I believe the impact of this resurrection in my life has already resulted in me helping others more widely, more effectively. And I believe there will still be a further positive impact in my community as a result.

YOUR RESURRECTION STORY?

Can you relate to my stories? Do you relate to Peter or Tabitha?

Do you know someone in need of resurrection in their life? (Perhaps you are being called to be a Peter for them?)

Is there someone that comes to your mind right now that could benefit from you speaking life to them? Holding their hand? Helping them up to “walk” again?

Or maybe, as I’ve talked, you sense that you have something dead that needs resurrecting?

Maybe it’s a relationship, a dream, lost physical health and mobility?

Or perhaps there’s a part of you that was fearless, bold, brave, generous, open, trusting, hopeful that seems to be dead and gone?

If so, I encourage you to ask someone to pray for you, to hold your hand, to help you “walk” again.

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, thank you that you are the resurrection and the life. May we see your love and power displayed in our lives and in the lives of those you call us to walk alongside. Amen.