

COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 8 MAY 2022- 4th of Easter

COLLECT

Almighty God,
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:
raise us, who trust in him, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,
that we may seek those things which are above, where he reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Psalm 23

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; ♦
therefore can I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures ♦
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He shall refresh my soul ♦
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; ♦
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me; ♦
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
- 6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, ♦
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Acts 9: 36-43

Peter in Lydda and Joppa

³⁶ Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas.^[a] She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. ³⁷ At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. ³⁸ Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, 'Please come to us without delay.' ³⁹ So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. ⁴⁰ Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. ⁴¹ He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. ⁴² This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Meanwhile he stayed in Joppa for some time with a certain Simon, a tanner.

John 10: 22-30

Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews

²² At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah,^[a] tell us plainly.' ²⁵ Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶ but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.^[a] ³⁰ The Father and I are one.'

A Reflection from Hannah....

Through the God's power at work in Peter, Tabitha is brought back to life, and we are reminded again that the Gospel changes the world- one person at a time. We are challenged to notice Peter, in the power of the Holy Spirit, doing the work of the kingdom- the things Jesus did- bringing miraculous healing. We perhaps, if we're brave enough to admit it, are a little scared- is our faith too small to believe that miracles can still happen? Is this journey, inaugurated by Jesus and with him as our constant companion... a bit wild maybe?! Indeed, the whole action-packed, tumbling and chaotic book of Acts can feel a bit too much...

But it's not always a bad thing to be scared! Faith is not about making us comfortable. If we feel too comfortable, perhaps we've become complacent about this strange business of a crucified Messiah who rose again and invites us to join the adventure. Faith can be frightening. It's about questions and it's about the mystery too. Just before the story of Tabitha, a paralysed man named Aeneas had been healed. Again through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in Peter. Why those two? We still ask this today because we don't know the answer- why them and not others?

That mystery remains. But what we do know, and we can see, is that the grand narrative- the big story of God's salvation through Jesus (which we were reminded of in our gospel reading), as it unfolds in Acts- is peppered with these small, still stories that reflect that same message, give us questions, but ultimately give us hope. Next- after Tabitha- the story moves on to Peter's vision, then an argument and a really important decision about the identity of God's people. But for now, we look at a lady who echoes Lazarus- she was once dead, but lives. We're invited to make the decision Jesus alludes to in our reading from John's gospel. The people gathered round him say 'If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly'. His answer is a reminder that we can have all the signs we want- his own proclamation, miracles... but in the end, it's our choice to decide if we believe it to be true. We name Jesus. We choose whether 'Messiah' is the right name for him. As he says, on this 'Good Shepherd Sunday' (did you know it was called that?!), his sheep know his name, listen to him, and follow him. Peter did. Tabitha did. Her friends did. Shall we?