**Morning Praise @ Home 8th May 2022**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Readings Psalm 23 Acts 9: 36 – end

**Reflection from Philip**

**A disciple named Tabitha, or ‘Dorcas’ (Greek)**

Joppa is a coastal town, now called Jaffa, near Tel Aviv.

You might remember it as the place Jonah set off from on his rendezvous with a certain whale….

But today we have heard an account by Luke of someone else from Joppa - a disciple named Tabitha, or in Greek, ‘Dorcas’. I’m going to call her by her Greek name, Dorcas. In part because I think it has a ring to it, and also because it is my wife’s middle name.

So who was Dorcas?

It is assumed that Dorcas was a relatively well-off widow. She had become a major figure in the local early Christian community. She used her sewing skills to help the local poor, in particular local widows.

When women lost their husbands at that time, they usually lost their status. Often they became the poorest of the poor. They became vulnerable, forgotten and desolate. God is attentive to widows throughout scripture; it is made clear that they need compassion and care.

We read that she had sewing skills, and that many other widows would show off the fine work she had done – maybe mending damaged clothes, by all accounts doing a fabulous job. Perhaps she ran a team of women who helped in the local community – a women’s welfare group.

But Dorcas wasn’t just a kind hearted soul. We are told that she was a **disciple**. In fact she is the only female disciple referred to in the Bible.

Disciple means **‘learner’** – those who learn from Jesus and seek to follow Jesus, someone who seeks to grow in the ways of Jesus, trusting God and serving God.

But as if being a disciple wasn’t enough, we are also told she was ***‘devoted to good works and acts of charity’.***

She became ill, and then we are told she dies. Her body was washed, as was the custom, and she was laid in an upper room. The local Christian community was distraught – indicating how highly she was regarded. As Peter was only 10 miles away at the time, it was decided to send two men to ask him to come to Joppa.

Peter arrived and found a house full of weeping widows. Women who had lost not only someone who helped them, but someone they looked up to and loved. Dorcas had given these widows help and hope. She did this because she was a disciple. Now she was gone, everyone was falling apart, especially the needy widows.

When God is on the scene, there is life, there is hope.

Is God on the scene in Ukraine?

Is God on the scene as we deal with our own troubles and our own regrets as we look back on our lives?

The story of Tabitha being raised from the dead was to confirm the message of the gospels – that God is always on the scene.

Weeping and loss may be present, but it is not the last word. Sadness and despair may be present, but that is not what holds at the end of the day.

Psalm 46 declares ‘God is our help and refuge, a present help in times of trouble’.

God remains present, God is at work. Nothing can separate us from God.

So how is Dorcas remembered today?

Interestingly I don’t think she is primarily remembered for being raised from the dead.

She is mainly remembered for having done good woks and acts of charity for some of the most needy in her community, Dorcas the disciple, devoted to good works and acts of charity.

This isn’t just the story of a do-gooder. Luke wants us to reflect on Dorcas’ life, on the esteem she was held in by some of the most vulnerable. Perhaps how we looked at the life of Mother Theresa.

Much of our lives seem to be focussed on the wrong priorities. Our social status, how successful we are, how influential we are. We should really be focussed on how we should answer the question ‘What have you done for the least of mine?’

We are all called to be disciples. Disciples are devoted to good works and acts of charity.

How can we, like Dorcas, contribute to the healing and hope for the world?

Do we speak up when we see bullying? Do we stand up for the oppressed?

What an example that Russian TV journalist gave as she held up her home made anti-war sign on a live Russian TV broadcast.

Do we work towards a better society?

In the words of Graham Kendrick’s chorus,

‘**God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray’**

**Amen**

**Affirmation of faith**

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ

known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession led by John**

Holy and Gracious God, we pray for the people of the Ukraine and the people of Russia; for their countries and their leaders. We pray for all those who are afraid; that your everlasting arms hold them in this time of great fear.

We pray for all those who have the power over life and death; that they will choose for all people life, and life in all its fullness. We pray for those who choose war; that they will remember that you direct your people to turn our swords into ploughshares and seek for peace. We pray for leaders on the world stage; that they are inspired by the wisdom and courage of Christ. Above all, Lord, today we pray for peace for Ukraine.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, lead us through our daily lives, especially when we walk through the wilderness times, to those green pastures where we might feed on your abundant provision.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, save us from ourselves and our persistence in doing the same “wrong” things over and over again, expecting different results. We go fishing every day and we fail to notice you waiting with a meal on the beach. We say we love you, and yet so often we neglect your sheep. Help us to hear and respond when you say, “Follow Me.” Help us to be Good Shepherds in our lives and be a true reflection of you.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, we pray for those in positions of authority and leadership; that they do not misuse their powers, but respect and care for all their peoples and for the natural resources of their countries.

Help us to learn from one another’s cultures and respect one another’s differences.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, as we reflect on Peter’s healing of the seamstress Dorcas we give thanks for all those pursuing craft activities throughout our churches and the valuable and ongoing fundraising function that they fulfil. We remember too that Jesus himself was a carpenter and so we also pray for all those who work with their hands to maintain and improve our homes and churches.

*The Seamstress’s Prayer by Jay Hanley*

“As the pieces come together, help us to sew seams that are straight, so that nothing tears apart or unravels; and when it does, show us where and how to patch with just the right touch.”

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, within your embrace we find comfort and healing. We bring to you those who are weak, or struggling with physical, mental or spiritual health. You are the great healer, and we pray for healing of mind and body for those we now name in the silence of our hearts.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, you watch over us; leading us through the barren places, to the place of your safety, that we might gladly lie down in peace. Be especially close to all those who, through the loss of a loved one, are now in a barren place. Give them comfort and reassurance and help them to remember that your son Jesus Christ put an end to death by dying for us.

Lord, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

Good Shepherd, support us by your grace through all the hours of life’s day: until the shadows lengthen, the busy world is hushed, the fever of life is over, and the evening comes. Then Lord, in your mercy: grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Merciful Father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be,

that you may live and work to his praise and glory,

and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**