

# NORTH MAIN SERMON MAY 11, 2025

Acts 9:36-43

<sup>36</sup> In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. <sup>37</sup> About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. <sup>38</sup> Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!”

<sup>39</sup> Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

<sup>40</sup> Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. <sup>42</sup> This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. <sup>43</sup> Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

John 10:22-30<sup>22</sup> Then came the Festival of Dedication<sup>[a]</sup> at Jerusalem. It was winter, <sup>23</sup> and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade. <sup>24</sup> The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

<sup>25</sup> Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me, <sup>26</sup> but you do

not believe because you are not my sheep. <sup>27</sup> My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all<sup>[b]</sup>; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD.. FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD..

God's love creates a generous dwelling place. John writes of Jesus' love as a reality in which we abide, even as we provide this abode for others. This abode of love is a place of joy as well as of obedience given willingly—not out of the fear that separates servant from master, but out of the understanding that grows between friends: Jesus and his disciples. John describes an even closer relationship: believers are born to our parent God. We are also born to our parent Mother. Our reading from John today should have been titled "Stay Close" or "With whom do you feel 'safe'"?

This seems like a simple question. But it can be a terribly complicated one for some. Many of us can answer that question. But for some, that question would be hard and difficult to answer. Not everyone feels safe in their lives. Not everyone has a parent or another person in their lives that consistently provides that feeling of safety. For many, to feel "safe" can feel like a priceless and rare dream, a precious gift always out of reach.

On this Sunday that we often name the "Festival of the Christian Home" when we honor mothers, or special women who have impacted our lives in unique or profound ways, we think of that rare, beautiful person who has made us feel not only safe but warm and cherished, valuable, and loved. Honoring those in our lives on this day that have been set apart to be honored means

for many of us a wonderful time for remembering those times when that special person was there for us, when that beloved someone supported us and lifted us out of a strange and unknown place, that time when sharing a few moments with our “person” felt like the most wonderful and powerful gift in the world to us.

Whether that person is still alive or whether passed on into the arms of Jesus, the memories of those “safe” times in their presence or their arms can still make us feel all warm and safe inside. Remembering is important. Even a few significant moments when we’ve been made to feel safe and loved can get us through tough times!

As we celebrate Mother’s love and caring today and the Festival of the Christian Home, let us remember to take time to cherish some of the women in our lives who helped us through tough times. Today we spend more money on flowers and cards and phone calls than any other day of the year. While these are great to give and receive, its important also to remember that not all women who helped us through the tough times are Mothers. So, it is interesting, here on Mother’s Day, that from our first reading we have a story about a woman who was not a mother. Here at the bedside of Dorcas, we do not find a sorrowing husband. There are no children weeping for a lost mother. There are no parents to mourn their daughter. There are only the widows of the church, gathered at her side. We do not know if she was a widow herself, or what circumstances brought her here. We only know that without a traditional family, Dorcas was still loving and giving to others and worthy of honor. In the first century Palestine, widows were powerless and counted on their children and others for their support. The church became the providers for these women who had no children, and it was one of their first missions. Dorcas - however, She was a seamstress and in the reading today the women of the church showed Peter and the others the clothing

she had made for them. The ONLY clothing the women had were the garments Dorcas had made for them. In today's America, we are individualists. We want to grit our teeth and push through. We think that we can make it on our own. We see here, in the gathering of the church, there is power. The women gathered around Dorcas. They called for the leader of the church. At minimum, they knew Peter would pray for them. In moments of crisis, it is the gathering around of those who love us that gives us strength and power. Here on Mother's Day, we learn a lot about being a mother, about being a disciple, about loving others, all from a woman who wasn't a Mother. When we listen to the story of Dorcas, we can see that she has spiritual gifts. One of her gifts was hospitality. It's clear that Dorcas was greatly loved as everyone gathered by her bedside to show off the clothes she had made for them. Dorcas was called a disciple because she was enthusiastic about following the teachings of Jesus. She knew that He called people to give to everyone who needed the clothing she made. Looking upon the life of Dorcas, we are reminded that no matter what name we are called, we are uniquely gifted by God.

Today, we need to thank all the many "mothers" of our Church family, the women who keep us going as a Church, who do the work of ministry with gifts that are too many to mention. Our God-given gifts may change from time to time according to our life styles but our significant roles in furthering the ministry of Jesus never changes.