

“Surely goodness and mercy pursues us all
the days of our life and we shall dwell in
the house of the Lord always.” AMEN!

“And I’ll rise up

I’ll rise like the day

I’ll rise up,
I’ll rise unafraid

I’ll rise up and I’ll do it
a thousand times again.”

We sing Andra Day’s song “Rise Up,” today.

Though in a more comfortable key for Pastor Tom. :-)

Still, we sing these important words
because we know what
broken down and exhaustion feels like.

We know of the way that living life,
on a merry-go-round, sickens us and
other people.

This song give us important reminders that
there’s fight in us.

“I’ll rise up! Rise unafraid.”

We see it to ourselves and to one another,
and lo and behold,
we can move mountains
with this power inside us. (Pause)

Since you know me,
you know I am
a creature of habit.

Routines comfort me.

It still amazes me that I left my home in California
to come to school in Tallahassee in 1988.

Where did that come from?

Fast forward to a comfortable life in 2007,
in Largo, FL doing youth ministry and
having my own handyman business.

What in the world happened
that led us to put a “for sale” sign in the yard
and move to Gettysburg
to go to seminary?

Where did that come from?

All this to say...

What kinds of miracles have touched your life?

Miracles, in the Bible, are signs that point to God.

Is that the way you see the miracles
that have happened in your life?

Maybe, maybe not.

Honestly, it's not always been that way for me.

Oh, I may have said it was a miracle
that I'd made it through the surgery or
healed after a major injury, but what
I really meant was that the doctors
did a miraculous job.

And sometimes that is exactly the truth,
but the longer I live, and the more

I look back on the way I used to live and
think about some of the decisions I've made
in the midst of that living,

it's evident that there have been many miracles

that've occurred for me to stand here today.
(Pause)

So, I'd just like you to think about your life
for a moment and have the same
experience of revelation.

How many miracles have happened to you
so that you're able to sit or stand here today?

They've led you to be here today.

They've even compelled you, a times,
to tell people about this loving God who
has intervened on yours, and my, behalf.

And who knows?

Such witnessing to others might even lead
them to consider the miracles in their life
and determine how they pointed to God.
(Pause)

The story of Tabitha's miracle is
told in our lesson from Acts.

Peter was nearby in an adjacent town and
healed a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed.

Bed-ridden, the Bible tells us, for 8 years!

In that town of Lydda,
Peter went there among the believers and said,

“Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you;
get up and make your bed.”

Now, we can laugh a bit here because think of it,

You’ve just been healed after
8 years of being paralyzed.

Is really the first thing you get to do
with your mobility is to make your bed!?! :-)

I mean, c’mon, let the guy
do a dance or something fun
not a chore! :-)

I recall this miracle to you to make the point
that “get up” in Greek is really the word “Arise!”

Or “Rise-up.”

It’s the same command Peter made to Tabitha,
the Aramaic word for “gazelle.”

Dorcas is the Greek word for “gazelle.”

It's interesting that Luke, the author of Acts,
gives us her two names in different languages.

We can deduce that she was known
by many people who spoke
different languages.

We are told that she was devoted to
good works and acts of charity.

And that she had become ill and died,
so they called Peter to come and
be with them without delay.

And when Peter went they took him upstairs
to where they'd laid her before burial.

And we are told something very important next.

"All the widows stood beside Peter in the room
where they'd washed Tabitha.

Weeping and showing tunics and other clothing
that Dorcas had made while she was with them."

Now we can piece together the
acts of charity she'd performed.

She made clothing for widows.

Her ministry was to make clothes for people
who couldn't afford to buy them.

Now, most of us, do not have a problem
with having enough clothes,
but in a society like the one

we encounter in the Bible,
we know most people had (at best)
owned two items of clothing and
they'd wear them as long as possible.

Widows, by definition, we among the
poorest of the poor.

When their one or two items of clothing wore out
there were few options.

Dorcas was an angel to them.

She'd provide them with new clothes and
I can't help but think of the way she'd cared
for these forgotten women.

Taking detailed measurements and
giving the touches of intimate contact that
gave them a little hope that they had value.

It's no wonder they were deeply grieving her death.
(Pause)

What a joy it must have been for them
to see her alive again, after Peter turned
to the body and said,

“Rise up!”

And rising like the day, she was raised. (Pause)

There's another an important connection
to understand today that has to do
with the relationship between
the one performing the miracle and God.

Peter is not Jesus, yet he is given
a divine power to even raise someone from
the dead.

What a miracle! (Pause)

I heard a doctor say once that,
though they did their best to bring healing
to a person they were treating,

they admitted that the recovery of their patient
was nothing short of something (or someone)

else intervening in the process.

Be it the power of prayer or divine intervention or both.

The possibility of new life
comes to those who pray,

To those who follow Jesus, and to
those who grieve when the miracles we wish
for do not come to pass.

Yet, new life still comes, but in other forms. (Pause)

What's true is that miracles have the ability
to act as guideposts that lead people to God,

but miracles don't create faith from nothing,
they fuel our faith and compel believers to believe.
(Pause)

In closing, it would be remiss of me
to not make note that today is
Good Shepherd Sunday.

What is the reason Jesus makes the distinction
that he is "good."

Kings and emperors were often
referred to as shepherds, but are they ever

“good?”

In Psalm 23 today we read,
“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

This statement was a form of protest
against the belief that kings and emperors
were gods.

We say these words in protest, too.

“The Lord is our shepherd,” our divine guide,
teacher, and mover.

With Jesus we always rise up and with Jesus,
who would rather die by violence than commit it,

we find the true meaning of power
in the Good Shepherd,
and listen to his voice.

AMEN!