

Reflection for May 11, 2025 - Wake Up

Inspired by Acts 9:36-43

“Wake up and smell the roses,” is a rather sarcastic phrase we have all used from time to time. You will remember using it I’m certain.

Recall when your teenage son or daughter just went a little too far. “Dad will you drive me to the mall, I want to meet up with my friends. Mom, can I have \$20, I want to go to the movies. Dad, where are my sneakers. Mom, I have to go, where is my lunch?” Those were exasperating times, times when you wanted to shout, and perhaps you did, my son, “Wake up and smell the roses, the world doesn’t revolve around you. Take some responsibility for crying out loud.”

Sheepishly your daughter arrives home with a note from the principle. She was caught smoking again on the school grounds. And perhaps worse, she presents a failing report card, which also confirms she has been skipping classes. “Girl, you need to wake up and smell the roses. Don’t you realize what the consequences of your actions will be? Don’t you want to graduate?”

It was infuriating wasn’t it. You saw all that potential being wasted. You wanted to grab the child by the shoulders and shake her, “hello, is there anyone in there, wake up, wake up, come back into the real world! Hello, is there anyone home?”

We use that phrase, or some facsimile of it, when we witness idiotic behaviour around us. The individual who flies past you in an all-out blizzard fishtailing down the highway. You numb-scuttle, wake up already. You’re going to kill someone.

The irrational, impatient shopper in the line behind you yelling, “hurry up, I don’t have all day here. What kind of service is this?” You think, chill our man, it’s not all about you. Wake up, can’t you see it’s really busy today? The clerk is doing the best she can.”

Some of the best examples come from our political leaders. Inappropriate charges to expense accounts, misappropriation of budgets, interference in awarding contracts. “Wake up already, we’re not completely brainless you know. We know what’s going on.”

The outrageous lies from the likes of Putin and Netanyahu are hard to stomach. Do you recall Mr. Putin’s original denial that Russian was at war with the Ukraine? Netanyahu is not threatened at all by Hamas in the Gaza strip. He just wants the Palestinians out so Israel can occupy the land. “We know what this is about, Wake up and smell the roses gentlemen, we are on to your games.”

As Jesus’ emissary, Peter has healed before, and he is asked to come to Joppa to raise the woman Tabitha from death. Peter kneels down next to Tabitha (who is also known as Dorcas) and says “Tabitha, get up,” and Tabitha awakes. The moment is another healing miracle, another resurrection. Goodness, gentleness and grace can live again. Factual or otherwise, the significance of this story about Peter’s healing is monumental.

The actual word Peter would have used to speak to Tabitha is the Hebrew word **Anastethi (An-as-te-thi)** from which the word anesthetic is derived. It means, arise, get up, stand up or wake up.¹

In this case, “wake up Tabitha, is not a criticism. It’s not a wake up and smell the roses, or a wake up, don’t be lazy, you have work to do. It is not a reprimand.

¹ Jennifer T. Kaalund, [Commentary on Acts 9:36-43 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#), May 9, 2025

Tabitha wasn't famous but she was a disciple of Jesus being described as someone who **“was devoted to good works and acts of charity.”** Apparently, God had more work for her to do, and so she is raised into discipleship once more.

Peter's wake-up call is God's wake up call. And it is not isolated just to the texts contained in the Acts of the Apostles. That message runs liberally through all of our biblical texts especially the gospels. And that wake-up call is before us each and every day directing us to act justly and love passionately. That means we love one another as ourselves. We speak out for the displaced and the forgotten. We walk alongside the weak and infirm. We speak for those without a voice.

All of us try our best to respond to Peter when asked, “Hello there, Wake Up, Wake up, God needs help.” But we have at times a significant problem – we are anesthetized. We are numbed from the continual lack of progress we are making, and we can't wake up. The effort required to stay engaged in Jesus' ministry makes us weary and it is sometimes demoralizing.

From our experience we feel defeated. We have encountered so many roadblocks before, that we just can't face doing it again. We hear God calling us, “Get Up, Let's get moving, we have work to do.” But we don't have an antidote for the anesthetic that has been administered by life, and we just cannot muster the enthusiasm to respond.

If you feel like that at times I can tell you, you are not alone, because I get to that place too. Too exhausted to respond, we just don't. Too discouraged, “forget it, I'm not trying that again.” Perhaps you have been previously hurt, “and you are thinking why would I respond to that request again? I'm not a martyr.” There is a limit to what can be expected of us and sometimes we reach it. There is just no more gas in the tank. Perhaps that was what was really wrong with Tabitha, she was so worn out and discouraged she couldn't continue.

What was it then that allowed her to hear Peter? What is it that revives us from our anesthetized state and brings us back. Is the message of this Acts passage one of miracle healing or something else?

A “Wake-Up” call isn't necessarily a reminder for us to act. We pretty well know what our ministry with Jesus is about. A prompt now and again to keep us on the path is a good thing, but we understand where we need to be going. The hard part of course is in the convincing of others to follow our lead. No, I don't think, “Ilan, *Anastethi (An-as-te-thi)*, means wake up from death, wake up from deep slumber or even wake up and smell the roses.” Peter would know that about me. He would know that about you. God does too.

No, I think wake up for us means, “remember, regardless of how tired you are, regardless of how discouraged you are, regardless of how fed up you are, we can succeed.” Peter (and God's) wake up call is about encouraging, supporting and loving. It is in reality a miracle or resurrection as we hear, “wake up, I am with you, you don't have to do this alone.” Perhaps that is what Tabitha heard, “wake up, I'm here to help.”

The “we” is the Holy Spirit working in and with us. It's encouragement is the antidote to the anesthetic that would lull us into complacency. It is saying, hang in there, we are a team. Lean on me when you need to. I am here when you are feeling hopeless. Rest in me a while when you are weary and you will find the strength you need.

Wake up, wake up, wake up and know that when you are beyond coping, when you are at your wits end, when you feel like you could just lay down and never get up again, the voice of Holy Love is there to bring you back.

Amen and Thanks for listening this morning.