

April 25, 2010  
Mechanicsburg Presbyterian Church

Acts 9:36-43  
John 10:22-30

***“LOOK WHAT’S COMING”***

Revelation 7:9-17

A question: Do you think the Mechanicsburg community would be effected at all if, for whatever reason, Mechanicsburg Presbyterian Church just closed its doors? Would people notice? Why? Beloved, St. Joseph’s congregation would rejoice for more parking spaces. But would our absence truly make a holy difference? If your Holy Spirit gifts of service in the mission and ministry of this congregation vanished, how long would it take before someone noticed?

It is evident that Tabitha made a difference in and was vital to the ministry and mission of her little faith community in Joppa...and beyond. We do not know if Tabitha was a disciple of Jesus prior to His death and resurrection. We do know when she opened her heart to the risen Christ, the love between the Shepherd and His lamb went deep into her soul, because the outpouring of her heart went deep into the souls of others. When she heard the voice of Jesus, she knew she was hearing the voice of God. When the power of Pentecost fell upon her heart, fruit of the Spirit flowed through her. From physical eyes that became spiritual vision, Tabitha fulfilled the words of Jesus: “Blessed are those who have not seen Me, and yet believe the love, mercy, goodness, and hope in the promises of God I give.”

Joppa and all the Early Church was a persecuted sect following a crucified Leader Who empowered them with an infectious belief in the God of Abraham and Sarah, and faith in their victorious Risen Lord. Through suffering and abuse, they insisted upon loving God, loving each other, and exhibiting that love in joy and obedient service in and to the world. The world within was stronger than the world outside.

It appears that every day, their trust in Jesus and faith in God led them to say, “Look what’s coming!”...Another day and more opportunities for us to walk with Jesus in paths of righteousness, and let Him lead us beside still waters. With every passing day, He restored their souls in the face of persecution and illness as they, with Tabitha, visited those in prison; fed, clothed, gave a cup of cold water; and knelt in prayer for all within and beyond their struggling faith community.

That is what prompted the two men to go and find Peter when Tabitha died. Did they want Peter to weep with them in the loss of this saintly

woman, or did they expect the miracle of restoring her to life? We do not know...and really, it does not matter. Fact is, they knew Peter had spent intimate, quality time with Jesus, and they believed Peter would be like Jesus...do what Jesus would do...in this time of need.

Has anyone sent for or called us...has God sent us...to be like Jesus in the death-room moment of another? Miracles still happen through the faithful service of those who hear and follow the voice of Shepherd Jesus. Millions today suffer in deaths of hunger, despair, addictions, hatred, diseases, natural disaster, physical and mental conditions that hinder the spiritual "up-reach" toward God. Are we there, in Christ, reaching with them? It has to be us. It has to be us!

The world cannot reach the soul-depth of their need because it cannot understand the soul-depth of the need. This is work for those who know the voice of and abide in the Son of God. Seeing through Holy Spirit eyes, they have been touched by the wounds in His hands and side, and surrendered to the One whom they declare, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus has suffered for us. Jesus suffers with us. Jesus blesses us with a healing peace the world cannot give and the world cannot take away. He teaches us how to "rejoice in the Lord always." He comes alongside, opens the Scriptures to us, baptizes us in the waters of His love, and gives us power to do and endure.

As much as we would like to hear, hope, or believe that walking with Jesus is pain-free, we know it isn't. It was never meant to be. Faith in God is just that...FAITH in God. Once sin hit the scene in the Garden of Eden, pain-free-life went out the window. But Jesus came to offer a love, hope, Presence, and fulfillment of God's promise of redeemed Life in life.

We recall in Jesus' great prayer in the seventeenth chapter of John, He prayed that God would not take us out of the world; but keep us from the powers of sin and death as we serve in the world. It's about a balance of living heaven on earth while we wait to leave earth for heaven.

And look what's coming. Hear these words from Revelation 7:9-17: "After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, singing, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and

honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." Then

one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you are the one that knows." Then he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship Him day and night within His temple, and the One who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Beloved of God, look what's coming! Look what's coming! It is not just coming, **it is!** We don't quit work on earth to sit and wait for heaven. Our God promised a taste of heaven on earth. We pray it every Sunday and in-between: "...Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Jesus calls us to be and tell the good news of heaven on earth until He returns and makes all things new. If we only trust Him, no matter what we face in life, He will make us more than conquerors through it all. When the pains and the deaths in life attack family, friends, and neighbors around the world...in prayer and in action...let us be a part of God's prep school for heaven. Let us lift them to see and feel the power and the promise in the face of Jesus.

Because God's mercies and promises are new every morning, may we continue to be as excited in Jesus as Tabitha and her community, Peter and all the apostles, and that great cloud of witnesses whom we will join in the everlasting song, "Glory, praise, and honor be to our God and to the Lamb forever and ever and ever."

Praise God! This congregation will be ministering in this community and in this world until Jesus returns, because, like every previous generation, we will pass the love along. We will be and we will look for "what's coming." "Amen?" "Amen!"