

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

TPMC Values: Generosity – The Woman's Garments

Rev Benjamin Lee
Acts 9: 36-42

SERMON SYNOPSIS

- On this Pledge Sunday, we examine an example of the early church's generosity to give despite its lack in Acts 9. Tabitha was a generous woman whose greatness is in not only what she had but greatness in how she gave by making garments for the widows of her time.
- Luke first described Apostle Peter as the authentic disciple of Christ by having the authority to raise Tabitha from death, demonstrating a good work for many to come to believe. In parallel, Tabitha was portrayed as an authentic disciple of Christ, full of good works and acts of charity (V26). She made tunics and garments, a typical multi-purpose outer clothes for the widows who could not afford for themselves.
- Tabitha has the heart for the needy and the vulnerable with 3 striking features:
 - i. Widows gathered around telling Peter who Tabitha meant to them. Women were not given education, and fully dependent on their husbands to live. Loss of their husbands and childlessness made them needy and vulnerable. Tabitha provided care and garments for them.
 - ii. It was customary to wash and anoint the dead with oil before burial. Tabitha was not anointed with oil. The widows were likely too poor to buy oil for her funeral.
 - iii. Described as full of good works and acts of charity to make garments, Tabitha provided both tangibly and non-tangibly with time and effort.
- Bishop Emeritus Rev Dr Robert Solomon noted 2 points: Spartan Christianity and Spa Culture:
 - i. Early church disciples who were not poor, intentionally & willingly lived a Spartan lifestyle, sold their homes and possessions to help those in need. Tabitha's & Jesus' lifestyles are also examples. Jesus did not keep much but gave of Himself for others.
 - ii. In contrast, modern disciples with means are more likely to spend on spa and lifestyle activities than to look intentionally in how to help or bless others.
- Two ways we can grow to be more like Christ:
 - i. To have the needy and vulnerable in our minds & hearts like Tabitha – to be willing and intentional to have a little Spartan lifestyle to provide generously for others.
 - ii. To become more empathetic towards the needy and the vulnerable by growing in our awareness of their needs and thus be attentive to them – so that we will be generous in our giving willingly & cheerfully.
- God provides us the means to be generous to give. It is a good reminder for us to be all in for Jesus is to do a beautiful thing for him by offering our treasures, time and talents. The rich young ruler was unwilling to give up his treasures and could not be all in for Jesus. What are we doing with the treasures God has given to us today?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

RELATE

1. We often hear stories of generosity among friends, relatives, colleagues and social media. When was the last time you experience someone's generosity? When was the last time we ourselves show a little more generosity? How did we feel when receiving more than we thought we deserve or give more than what we usually do?

REFLECT

2. Let's examine the nature of giving in the scriptures. **Is there a right way or a wrong way to give?**
[Verses to help us go deeper: Matthew 6:2-4; 2 Corinthians 9:7; James 2:15-16]

RESPOND

3. To be all in for Jesus is to do a beautiful thing for him by offering our treasures, time and talents. What are some tangible and intangible ways we can start doing this week and beyond to be all in for Jesus?

PRAYER POINTERS

- Give thanks to God who out of love for us provided Jesus to save us from our sins.
- Ask God's forgiveness for not spending time and effort to give generously and willingly.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to grant us compassion for the needy & the vulnerable by reminding us of the scripture text today so that each of us will be a Tabitha to someone in need.

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. [Acts 9:36 NASB 1995].