

## Daily Devotional Guide

**Monday** – Read Acts 9:32-35. Make note of verse 34. When Peter heals Aeneas he does not say, “I heal you.” Peter says, “Jesus Christ heals you.” As Peter went “here and there” healing and preaching the gospel, he was keenly aware that it was not his own power he was using but the power of Jesus Christ. One of the common faults of the church is to think too much of what we can do and too little of what Christ can accomplish through us. Imagine what the church could do if we gave Christ the reigns and followed him? Reflect on that today.

**Tuesday** – Read Acts 9, verses 32 and 41. Twice in this text the Christians in Lydda are called “saints.” The Greek word is “hagios,” which can be translated “different.” Christians are people who are indeed different, but what makes us different? We are not different in that we are more special than others or that we are chosen for greater honor. We are different in that we are chosen for a greater service. As William Barclay puts it, “We are saved to serve.” How is God calling you to serve today?

**Wednesday** – Read Acts 9, verses 34, 40 and 41. Notice there is one common word in all three of these verses, the word “up.” Aeneas was kept down by his paralyses. Tabitha was dead. And the widows that Tabitha served were brought down by her death with no one to help them anymore. Yet Peter came along with the power of Christ and pulled them up. In verse 41 it says that Peter gave Tabitha his hand and helped her up. There is so much in our culture that brings people down – poverty, illness, disappointment. Christians are called to help people “up” with the light and love of Christ. This week which people can you offer your hand to and help them up?

**Thursday** – Read Acts 9, verses 35 and 43. Notice that in both healings the witnesses turned to the Lord and believed in him. Many times people turn to God not because of some wise argument for God or an inspiring discourse, but when they see the love of God in action; when they see the love of God cause people to come alive. St. Thomas Aquinas once said, “Preach the gospel always and only when you have to use words.”

**Friday** – When reading stories like these from the book of Acts we often wonder, “Why can’t the church be like this now?” It is a good question. The early church we see in Acts was empowered by the Holy Spirit for amazing ministry. They seem unhindered by anything. We have the same Spirit available to us. We have the same calling, the same Lord. What is the difference? Perhaps it is simply our availability and willingness to be used?



### PASADENA COMMUNITY CHURCH

a United Methodist Congregation

227 - 70th Street South ♦ St. Petersburg FL 33707  
727-381-2499 email: pasadena@pccumc.org  
www.pasadenacommunitychurch.org



## Hope Worth Living

Sunday, October 17, 2010

Sermon by: Dr. Charley Reeb, Senior Pastor

Scripture Lesson: Psalm 39:7, Acts 9:32-42

I think it is safe to say that all of us have been inspired by the rescue of the miners in Chile. This week we watched as 33 miners trapped in a dark hole for more than two months emerged from the darkness to cheers, hugs, prayers and praise. Some of them called it a miracle. In fact, some miners were carrying Bibles and did the sign of the cross as they were rescued. One miner said that there was a 34<sup>th</sup> miner with them, Jesus. As the miners were pulled up to safety, the world was captivated by hope.

The world needed this event. You needed this event. I needed this event. Our community needed this event. Why? Because if there is one thing all of us need it is hope. In this day of 24 hour news cycles, discouragement is always with us. A lot of people are in holes they can't seem to get out of – debt, foreclosure, illness, divorce, loneliness, addiction, unemployment, abuse—they all seem like deep dark holes that no one can be rescued from. People feel stuck.

Well, I know a way out, and you know a way out. And that way out is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the one who can give hope to the hopeless and life to the lifeless. Jesus Christ is the one who can pull people up from the darkness and bring them into the light. Jesus is the one who can forgive sins, heal the brokenhearted, give purpose and meaning to life, and empower us to rise above death. Who else can give us this hope? No one. As the Psalmist proclaims, “Our hope is in you, Lord!”

This is what our campaign is all about - “Hope Worth Giving.” We have a relationship with the one, we serve the one, we have hope in the one who can bring hope to people. Our mission as the church is to bring the hope of Christ to the world! Our mission as a church is to rescue people from the darkness and pull them up to a new beginning in Christ.

This morning I want you to see two early church versions of miraculous rescues. They involved the Apostle Peter who was in the midst of the Holy Spirit tidal wave that the early church experienced in the book of Acts. The day of Pentecost had come. The Holy Spirit was empowering the church in mighty ways. There was nothing hindering them at all. And Peter was traveling everywhere preaching the gospel and healing the sick. Our text says that he first came to a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed and had been bed ridden for eight years. Peter told the man he was healed and then told him to get up. And the man got up!

Church, I want you to notice what Peter says when the man is healed. He doesn't say, “I heal you.” He doesn't say, “My power heals you.” He says, “Jesus Christ heals you.” You see Peter was grounded. He knew it was not his power that healed Aeneas. He knew that it was not his power that was empowering him to preach, heal and changed lives. It was the loving power of Jesus Christ living within him!

We need to hear this because too often we

as Christians talk too much about what we can or cannot accomplish and too little of what Christ can accomplish through us. We talk too much about what we can do with our money and too little of what Christ can do with our money. We talk too much about we can do with our time and too little of what Christ can do with our time. We talk too much about what we can do with our talents and too little of what Christ can do with our talents. Too often we make plans and take action and ask the Lord to notarize our efforts instead of asking Christ to use us for his good pleasure.

When reading stories like these from the book of Acts people often ask me, "Why can't the church be like this now?" It is a good question. The early church we see in Acts was empowered by the Holy Spirit for amazing ministry. They seem unhindered by anything. But we have the same Spirit available to us. We have the same calling, the same Lord. What is the difference? I will tell you what the difference is – our availability and willingness to be used. This is the only difference.

Imagine for a moment what your life would be like and the what the life of our church would be like if we threw caution to the wind and yielded to Christ and said, "Use me, use us however you want to use us!" Imagine what would happen if we were obedient to his call. Imagine!

This is how Peter lived his life. All he cared about was being used by Christ. In fact, our text says that as he was healing Aeneas and praying with those who had turned to Jesus after witnessing the miracles, two men from across town ran to Peter and catching their breath they said, "You've got to come quick! You know Tabitha – the disciple of Jesus who has been taking care of all the poor widows because they have no one else? She has died. It is the worst scene. All the widows are gathered around in tears." You have to come!"

What did Peter do? Did he delegate it to someone else? Did he call Tabitha's pastor and tell him to take care of it? Did he tell them that he couldn't take care of everybody? No, he immediately got up and went with them. And when he arrived, he went to Tabitha's room. He saw all the widows crying around her, holding the clothes that she had made for them. Peter told them to wait outside. He knelt down next to the

body of Tabitha and said, "Tabitha, get up!" She opened her eyes and sat up. She came back to life! And then the text says something important. It says that Peter gave her his hand and helped her up and showed her to be alive.

Oh church, if there ever was a universal image for the church of Jesus Christ, if there ever was a picture that captured the work of the church it is this one – a hand being given to help up those who have been beaten down by life – a loving hand reaching out to those who are dead – a hand pulling up those who feel hopeless.

Six different times the word "up" is mentioned in our text for today. This is no accident because the work of the church, the ministry of the gospel, pulls people up with the hope of Jesus Christ. Christ refuses to let people stay down. The world told Peter to stick to fishing and leave theology to the scholars. The world told Tabitha to stick to what she knew and don't bother with the poor. The world told Aeneas to stay in bed and obey the doctors. The world told the poor widows that Tabitha was dead and that there was nothing that could be done. And Jesus said "No! I refuse to let my children stay down. My church, my servants, my followers are going to pull them up with my power!"

Oh, Pasadena, what if the community around us saw our church, not just as a place that has concerts, events, a unique sanctuary, a big gym, but as a big hand pulling people up with the gospel of Jesus Christ! What if they saw our church pulling people up with the help and hope of the world! This is what we are called to do!

Twice in our text Christians are referred to as "saints." The Greek word is "hagios." The root word can be translated "different." Christians are people who are indeed different, but what makes us different? We are not different in that we are more special than others or that we are chosen for greater honor. We are different in that we are chosen for a greater service. As William Barclay puts it, "We are saved to serve."

So, how can you serve? Maybe you are sitting and thinking "How?" We need two things from you. First, we need your financial support. We need you to turn in your pledge card as soon as you can. I know I don't need to tell you that it is the right thing to do. I know I don't need to tell

you that the church cannot offer ministries that bring hope without money. I know I don't need to tell you that God calls us to give. I know I don't need to tell you that everything belongs to God and he just asks for ten percent of it back. I know I don't need to tell you that the only things that last are what we give to the Kingdom of God. I know that this year I don't need to cajole you to give to the church. I know I don't need to tell you all these things because quite frankly giving money is the easy part.

Here is the second thing the church needs from you – You, yourself. A pig and a chicken were walking down the street when they saw a Bob Evans sign saying, "Ham and Eggs Breakfast Special". "Well," said the hen, "I guess that is our contribution to the world." The pig responded, "Ham and eggs might be a contribution to you, but to me it is a commitment."

Now, the church needs your eggs. We need your contributions, but we also need you, your presence, your service, your witness. We need your commitment.

So many people say to me, "Pastor, I know I need to do more and give more. I wish I could give more." Well, here is your chance.

Our church will be partnering with Gulfport Elementary in providing mentors for kids who need positive adult role models in their lives. We will provide free training and work the details out for you. We just need you! I can think of no better way for our church to give hope to this community than to mentor a child. Over 80 percent of the kids in Gulfport elementary's traditional school are on assisted lunch. Over 80 percent. And you don't want to know the percentage of kids who don't have a positive adult role model in their lives. You don't want to know the stats on those kids who aren't able to read by the 4<sup>th</sup> grade who eventually drop out of school, commit crimes and go to prison.

Oh, it's popular now to bad mouth public education, but the question for us today is, "What is the church going to do about it?" None of our complaining is going to help precious children whom God has created have a future. None of our complaining is going to help these children reach their potential. None of our complaining is going to help these kids up. Won't you reach out your

hand and help these kids up? I'm going to do it. Will you join me? Won't you join me in listening to these kids, helping these kids, in simply loving these kids? This is what they need.

A few years ago *Parade* magazine had a story about a self-made millionaire named Eugene Lang. Mr. Lang was asked to speak to a class of 59 sixth-graders in East Harlem, the same school he attended years ago. But the school was failing and most of the students were dropping out in high school. What could he say to inspire? He wondered how he could turn these kids around. Scrapping his notes, he decided to speak to them from his heart. "Stay in school," he admonished, "and I'll help pay the college tuition for every one of you." Lang told the class about witnessing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 March on Washington. He urged the students to dream their own dreams, and promised to do all that he could to help them achieve their goals.

At that moment, the lives of these students changed. For the first time they had hope. One student said, "I had something to look forward to, something waiting for me. It was a golden feeling." Nearly 90 percent of that class went on to graduate from high school.

Now, you may not have that kind of money. But you have something more valuable – the love of Jesus in your heart. You have the time to make a difference to these children.

It's time to make a difference. It is time to give hope. It is time to live up to our name as a Community church. It's time. Amen.