**Unstoppable - wk 15 – Does God care?**

**Acts is Jesus: The Sequel. Luke Vol 2 – The “what now?”**

**Acts 1:8 But you will receive power (Dunamis – miraculous power) when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

**With supernatural growth and intense persecution – by the power of the HS - they were unstoppable.**

**God's Surprise Guest List. 5 people you might not have over for dinner, but God is inviting to the table. We have seen 4 – 5 is next week.**

**Before we get there… two stories rarely preached on you may have never heard. Everything in Acts is intentional.**

**Like diff threads in a garment, they together tell a grand story. Here are a couple of colorful moments and what they tell us.**

**Today Peter and 3 new friends – who will never be the same!**

**\*\* Raise your hand if you or someone you know suffers from a chronic illness.**

**\*\* Raise your hand if you have lost someone you love in the past few years. Look around. It can be so painful. Insurance and DR.’s can’t remedy the pain and loss. We live in a fallen world & body. It will not always be like this – Amen!**

**Today’s passage deals with this with hope!**

**A Christian Friend named – Aeneas (a heavy-hearted hurting saint)**

**Acts 9:32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord’s people who lived in Lydda.**

**Map - 35 miles from Jerusalem to Lydda. Modern Tel Aviv. (Acts 5) Previously people came to them, now apostles travel countryside to minister to the disciples. “Visit the Lord’s people (the saints)” Likely those spread out after Stephens is killed.**

**33 There he found a man named Aeneas, (a disciple of JC) who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years. (Do you know someone bedridden? That’s their whole life. 200 yrs ago – no insurance, no technology to alleviate the pain, no luxuries to pass time - can’t move for 8 yrs. Peter makes a house call) 34 “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up (Anis-temi’ = rise up) and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up.**

**No love offering needed. No altar call. No healing service.**

**You have a life to live – get up – make your bed – you’re not staying there. (I am thankful I get to get up and make my bed.)**

**35 All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.**

**Map - Coastal region people were following Jesus Christ**

**A Christian Friend named – Tabitha / Dorcas (the loving serving saint)**

**(18 miles west of Lydda…) 36 In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); (Disciple of JC… call me Tabitha. Name means gazelle = graceful beauty) she was always doing good and helping the poor. 37 About that time she became *sick and died*, (A Christian who lost life to disease) and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. (Viewing – 24 hrs+)**

**38 Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!” (Disciples that fled after Stephen living in Joppa - go 18 mi to get Peter – can you pray with us and encourage us?)**

**Luke describes her as “always doing good and helping the poor” - She loved people and served people. Actually helped others not just thought about it – she was doing it. She’s a sweet soul - please Peter come – we loved her so much!**

**39 Peter went with them, and when he arrived, he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. (Suggests they were wearing clothes made by her – these were people she loved on)**

**A skilled seamstress making clothes for the widows. They loved and wept for her. Look what she made us… you would have loved her. She was so special.**

**I’ve been there, visiting the home sharing things the person had made or done. Very Special.**

**They did not ask for her to be brought back to life. The expectation was to comfort and pray. But Peter sensed the Lord was leading him to something unique in faith.**

**40 Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. (Not screaming and shouting and casting out some demon of sickness and death. Love the humble calm quite gentle attitude.)**

**It was not a show or production - not a bring your wheelchair and crutches to the altar thing –Peter is imitating Jesus - Mark 5, when Jesus sent them out of room to raise a little girl from death.**

**Turning toward the dead woman, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” (Anis-temi = same word as Aeneas. Tabitha rise up – similar to Jesus with that little girl, Mk 5) She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. (She’s ack!) 41 He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive.**

**Can you imagine the feeling of getting that person back? Hard to imagine. Tears of joy and gratitude!**

**42 This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.**

**There is that key phrase again**

**A Christian Friend named – Simon (the blue-collar saint)**

**43 Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.**

**This an important friendship that we don’t know much about.**

**Acts 10:6 - lived by the sea – could be weeks to months. Acts 9:3 = 3 yrs**

**Simon Peter a fisherman stayed and worked alongside Simon a tanner.**

**It’s big deal, because Simon the tanner worked w/ dead things. Jewish religious leaders looked down on this – had to live outside of town. It was messing with dead things, the smell, the mess. Extremely low.**

**The trade of a tanner was held in such contempt that if a girl was betrothed to a tanner without knowing that he did this, the betrothal was void. (Morgan)**

**What a blessing to have the Apostle Peter live with you for a season. Of all the people – Peter stays with an exiled tanner.**

**Peter is living here when an important dream and invite comes to him. It sets the stage for one of the biggest shocks for dinner. (Next week)**

**What Can we learn from Pastor Peter and these Three Friends?**

1. **Jesus is the healer**

**Acts 9:34 “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up**

**Jesus Christ heals you – not me. I am not a healer! Jesus did it**

**Peter was an instrument that God used at that moment.**

**\*Man paralyzed and bed ridden 8 yrs - body no longer worked. This was not a gradual healing – this was straight up - get up, and walk – no PT. This was an absolute miracle.**

**\*Woman dead - not passed out or sleeping, prepared for burial. Washed and ready to be put in the tomb. This was an absolute miracle.**

**The medical doctor Luke gives the medical report of unexplainable miracles by Jesus.**

**Does God still heal? Yes. Like that. Rarely. All the time – no.**

**Paganism says you can control a god by your offerings, actions, or sacrifices, prayers, and rituals. If that what you are told… run!**

**Jesus is Sovereign. God is not one who can be controlled.**

**You cannot make him do what you want.**

**The people used by God to heal another are not healers.**

**Christ is the healer. At Christ timing and discretion.**

* **But - Jesus does not always heal or rescue everyone**

**Some have used this as proof text God always heals. God does not. Many Christians died sick, tortured, executed, fed to lions, beheaded, used as torches, many died in prison.**

**Examples when people in the NT were not healed:**

**Phil 2:25-27 Epaphproditus deathly ill, recovered only by the mercy of God - Not obligation / 2 Tim 4:20 - I left Trophimus sick at Miletus – After prayer still sick – not always healed. / 1 Tim 5:23 - Paul suggests Timothy to drink a little wine (as medicine) because he is sick so often. - He acknowledges ongoing ailments and treatment – because we are not always healed this side of heaven.**

**Gal 4:13-14 – Surely you remember that I was sick when I first brought you the Good News of Christ. 14 But even though my sickness was revolting to you, you did not reject me and turn me away… (Was sick – not always healed)**

**2 Co 12:7-10 Paul prayed 3X for thorn in flesh to be removed - was not, rather told, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”**

**10 That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

**Some say you need more faith. Pray harder, be better, fast longer, believe more. Truth is, we are to pray, request and trust God for the rest. He is healer – He is sovereign - He has a plan.**

**Acts 9:34 “Aeneas,” Peter said, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. (It was not dependent on Aeneas faith - but on God’s purpose.)**

**20 miracles are mentioned in Acts - most outside of church gathering.**

**These healings / miracles in ACTS as unique, unusual, and uncommon. That is why they are told. That is why it’s news not normative.**

**Stephen was not brought back; other disciples and followers were not… Then - Why does God heal and do miracles at all?**

1. **Jesus does miracles to point to the kingdom of heaven**

**Keep in mind Tabitha would rise again to die again - until the great resurrection. Aeneas was healed only to eventually die. All healings in this life are only a preview of what is to come.**

**\*But those who are sick – you are promised you will be healed**

**\*And those who pass away in Christ – we are promised they live again.**

**John 11:25 - Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die…**

**This is our hope! The end of all suffering is coming!! And from time to time, at God’s desire and purpose, we get a temp taste of it.**

**Romans 8:23-24 (NLT) - Even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a taste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering. We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. 24 Now that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom. For if you already have something, you don’t need to hope for it. (We don’t have it here – 1 Cor 15)**

**To a Christian this world is as bad as it will ever get – to the unbeliever this is just the beginning of suffering.**

**It is for this reason that John receives this revelation of the kingdom of heaven - Rev 21:4 He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever.**

**But this does not answer why some are healed and others are not – why didn’t God save my mother / father / grandpa? Why are they still sick, why did they die? Why do I have this pain?**

* **Jesus fulfills his purposes in our pain and healing – life and death**

**Stephen was not brought back to life - other disciples and followers were not… Why Tabitha / Dorcas – Why Aeneas?**

**Aeneas became a disciple while bedridden – and was still after – after years of praying God healed him. He was right where God wanted Him.**

**Tabitha would have enjoyed heaven better - and would have loved being with her Savior. But God allowed her to have her body back.**

**Simon the Tanner - outsider and exile – the lowest of jobs a person can have. But brought the Apostle Peter into his life.**

**Why was Dorcas / Aeneas / Simon - so important? Not told…**

**3 Possible Reasons: 1. God’s work for them was not finished (her work for the poor and widows) 2. Their miracle set the stage for the gospel and salvations - and 3. God was using these events to bring Peter to a very important encounter. (Next week)**

**2 Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay (feeble / fragile bodies) to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.**

**We say, for better or for worse in a marriage – but in our walk with God – for many it’s for better or I am gone! God uses our circumstances to accomplish his ultimate glory and good.**

**These events tell us – YES! - Jesus heals the broken heart and raises dead spirits to life. Those are the greatest miracles of all – and Jesus is still doing that every day!**

1. **Jesus greatest miracle is salvation!**

**The greatest miracles were the ones that happened afterwards.**

**This is repeated in both stories**

**V35 - In Lydda, it is said people "turned to the Lord"**

**V42 - In Joppa, it is said people "believed on the Lord"**

**This was the purpose of both and all miracles - the gospel (good news)**

**Used to bring authority and to testify to the gospel truth!**

**The point is not the miracles themselves – but that they point to a greater healing and greater resurrection!**

**Miracles that can be yours today!**

**Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power (Dunamis – miraculous power) of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. (About to be fulfilled next chapter)**

**Salvation is Dunamis power – miraculous power. The power to transforms lives, futures, and bodies! To hope, joy, & purpose!**

**That God could / would save me - a miracle! That God would spare me in 2009 – miracle! That I get to wake up and make my bed – a miracle.**

**One day I won’t wake up, but will receive an even bigger miracle – the kingdom of heaven with my savior!**

**3 Names – 3 People – 3 Disciples of Jesus - that made it into the bible.**

* **Aeneas - The heavy-hearted ailing saint – Jesus sees you!**
* **Tabitha (Dorcas) - The sacrificial serving saint – Jesus sees you!**
* **Simon the tanner - The blue-collar lonely saint – Jesus sees you!**

**Your life brings value to those around you. Whether bed ridden, making clothes, or showing up at work every day providing a service to others - our life is worship, we live to bring God glory.**

**I want to pray for you today disciple. Maybe you feel like of those three.**

**You wonder if God sees you – working every day, dealing with your sickness, pain or loss? Does God care? Yes!**

**Let’s pray, request and trust God for the rest.**

**His grace is sufficient!**