

So, what is on our agenda for this coming week? What are we going to spend the next 168 hours of our life doing? Somewhere I came across a chart of how we spend our hours in an average week...

Where the 168 Hours Go!		
Average Hours	Activity	My Schedule
7 – 10	Personal Care	
10 – 12	Meals	
5 – 10	Meetings – errands- commuting	
30 - 50	Job	
50 – 60	Sleep	
?	Recreation	
?	Family Time	
Tabitha's Day		
	_____	
	_____	

On the chart is the name "Tabitha." Her name means "gazelle." Tabitha is an Aramaic name. Aramaic was the language of Jesus and Nazareth. Tabitha was connected, then, to Jesus geographically.

But Tabitha was connected to Jesus by far more than just being born in the area where Jesus was born. Tabitha was an early follower of the Risen Christ.

Her story is told in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts. We are retelling her faith story this Sunday morning, because it is worth knowing, and might provide for us growth in our faith.

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The story of Tabitha which we have is a narrow part of her life. We do not know the early part of her life. We do not know if she had brothers or sisters. We do not know if she was married or unmarried. We do not know if she was rich or poor. We do not know when she became a Christian, or how she lived before she came to faith.

The story we have in Acts of Tabitha points out the two most important anchors of her life. That is what the Bible wants us to know. The first anchor was this:

- *Tabitha was a disciple of Jesus.*

What does it mean to be a disciple, or, as it can also be translated, a believer? What does that look like? Two years ago during Lent we looked at the Marks of Discipleship. Let me remind us of those as we think of what Tabitha was like.

- A disciple prays. One of the things I have been trying to do in the past few years is to use less rote prayers, and more personal prayers, in our life together.

I am hoping that by my example I can remind us that prayer is simply a conversation with God. It is unrehearsed and from the heart. As a disciple Tabitha prayed.

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- A disciple worships. To worship means to treat someone as divine, and to love that person deeply. Worship is an act of honor and respect towards the One who in your life is divine.

Jesus said that the first Commandment was to love God with all of our being: heart, spirit, mind, strength. As a disciple Tabitha honored God.

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- A disciple loves Scripture. Remember when you no longer read because you had to for school, but you read because you wanted to?

It might have been when you started working on cars, and you wanted to know more. It might have been when you were going to travel, and you wanted to plan the

trip. It might have been when your teacher gave you a book that you read and cried when you finished, because you wanted more.

Disciples do not read the Scriptures because they have to. Disciples read the Bible because they want to know more, and grow more. Tabitha wanted to know more about Jesus.

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The first anchor in Tabitha's life was that she was a disciple. This relationship was of supreme importance to her.

■ *Tabitha was devoted to good works and acts of charity.*

This is the second anchor in Tabitha's life. She was well known for doing good works and helping out. She was a contributor to the well being of others.

A pastor told of an Andy Griffith episode he remembered. How many of you know what I am talking about if I mention the name "Andy Griffith?"

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Sheriff Andy was elected chairman of the Needy Children's Charity Drive. They were taking up money for this charity at many locations in Mayberry, including the school.

Andy got word that his son, Opie, had only given a single penny to the Needy Children's Charity Drive. Andy knew that his son had a good sum of money in his piggy bank, but he only gave a penny.

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This upset Andy. He was the sheriff of Mayberry, he was an upstanding citizen, and the Chairman of the Drive. And this was a small town. Many people knew that Andy's son had only given one single penny. It reflected poorly on Andy.

Andy tried several times to get Opie to give more than one cent. But every time Opie would tell his Dad that he could not give more because he was saving his money. Andy assumed that Opie was saving it to buy something childish. He sent Opie to his room.

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Aunt Bea then steps into the picture. Remember Aunt Bea? Do you have an Aunt Bea in your life? Aunt Bea calms Andy down.

Andy calls Opie back for supper and tells him they will forget about this incident. If he wants to skimp out on this charity this one time so he can buy something he wants, that was okay this one time.

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Then Opie tells his Dad why he is saving his money. There is a girl in his class who needs a coat. Opie is saving his money so that he will have enough to buy a coat for her before winter.

“Opie, why didn’t you tell me!” Andy asks. “You never asked me,” said Opie.[End of story. You may now wipe the tear out of the corner of your eye!]

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I am asking you and me the question this morning. It is a question that the story of Tabitha leads us to ask. I am asking this::

- What are we saving our pennies for and what are we spending them on?
- What are we saving our time for and what are we spending our time on?
- What are we saving our talents for and what are spending them on?

Tabitha was devoted to good works and acts of charity. The second anchor in Tabitha’s life was what she did with her time, talent, and treasure. What she did was make clothes for widows.

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When Tabitha died, Peter was asked to come quickly. When Peter arrived he was met by widow after widow after widow who had been helped by Tabitha’s acts of charity.

The Bible paints this picture of that moment in time: *“The room was filled with widows who were weeping and showing Peter the coats and other clothes the Gazelle had made for them.”* [Acts 9:38]

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- Does God honor what you do with your hands in honor to Him? If you take a few moments to fix a window for a neighbor?

- Does God honor what you do with your feet in honor to Him? If you take a few moments to drive a person to a doctor appointment?
  - Does God honor what you do with your mind in service to Him? If you help a person balance a checkbook or learn how to email?
  - Does God honor what you do with your money in honor to Him? If you give money to keep a Church open where the Gospel is preached and Baptisms and Funerals are held and Sunday School is taught?
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Does God honor good works and acts of charity? Paul says it is one of the reasons we exist: to give honor to God through what we do with our 168 hours a week.

The Bible says: *“God created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things God planned for us long ago.”* [Ephesians 2:10]

Does God honor good works and acts of charity? I think what happens next in the story of Tabitha gives the answer.

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Peter had everyone leave the room. Peter knelt and prayed. Then having come to an understanding of what God wanted him to do at that time in that room, Peter turned to the body on the bed.

And Peter said, *“Tabitha, get up.”* By God’s power, she got up.

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God gave Tabitha a few more days of life in this world. How many more days she lived in this world we do not know. Months? Years? We do not know. It is not important.

What is important is what happened in the hearts of her friends and neighbors. The Bible says: *“The news spread through the whole town, and many believed in the Lord.”* [Acts 9:42]

The anchors of Tabitha’s life were held up as an example of honoring God: the anchors of discipleship and ministry. And it was a witness to others.

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So how will we use the 168 hours of life given to us this week? If we are inspired by Tabitha and would like to engage in more focused and deeper mission work, then we can learn from how Tabitha responded to Peter's words: "*Tabitha, get up.*" Maybe Tabitha can tell us how to be like her in service.

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- Open your eyes. The first thing that happened when she came back to life is she opened her eyes.

Maybe God is calling us to open our eyes to how we can contribute to the good of people around us. What is it that God has equipped you to do? Are you good with your hands? Your mind? Your social skills?

God invites us to use the gifts he has given. The first step is to open our eyes to how God has equipped us to contribute to the needs of others.

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- Sit for a moment. The second thing that happened when Tabitha came back to life is she sat and looked at Peter.

Maybe we need to sit in a silent place and speak to God, asking "Lord, how do you want me to contribute to make a difference in this world of great needs?"

If you are good with your hands, what does God ask of you? If you are good with social skills, how does God want you to use that gift?

- Stand and go! The third thing that happened when Tabitha came back to life is she stood and was reconnected with people.
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One of our newer members asked me this week: "How do I get involved? What can I do?" What a joy to hear that question!

Let God open our eyes to what we are gifted to do. Let God speak to us of how we can use what we are equipped to do. And then go out and be a Tabitha!

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In our list of where the hours go, may there always be a category – as there was for Tabitha - for discipleship and ministry. Glory be to the Father....