

**Get Up! By Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. E4070429**

**Psalm 23 and Acts 9:36-43**

**Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 29 April, 2007**

I often wondered where the phrase “Tabby Cat” came from and what it meant. I wondered why many cats are named “Tabitha” Then, I read the story of Tabitha in Acts. This is a woman who was raised from the dead. Cats are fabled to have nine lives. They seem to be able to survive jumps from high places. They always land on their feet. They’re fast and escape pursuers. It’s as if they’re raised from the dead.

It occurred to me that perhaps there is a connection between cats and Tabitha. Then, it occurred to me that perhaps “tabby” is related to Tabitha, hence, “Tabby Cat.”— speculation on my part!

Then, I found that the initial origin of the word seems to be from the Attabiyah section of Baghdad where a type of striped silk was made that was later used to describe cats.<sup>1</sup>

Tabitha is the Aramaic word for Gazelle. Dorcas is the Greek word for Gazelle. Tabitha and Dorcas are the same person. Tabitha, Luke says, was a disciple. Luke uses the feminine form of the word disciple, so when you think of disciples, don’t think merely of twelve men. Tabitha was a follower of Jesus.

Tabitha was devoted to good works and charity. She must have learned well as she sat at Jesus’ feet. She worked with the widows of the community.

You would not have wanted to be a widow in those days, even if you *were* a woman. Women were pretty much dependent upon their husbands for their livelihood. When your husband died, so did your income. This woman Tabitha taught widows how to sew and earn money for themselves. She helped them become self-sufficient. She taught and healed.

Tabitha lived in the city of Joppa, the seaport for the city of Jerusalem. It is present day Tel Aviv. Tabitha died and sent the church in Joppa into disarray. Carefully, they washed and laid her body in an upstairs room. They sent two men to bring Peter, who was eleven miles away in the town of Lydda, to her side.

When Peter got there, everyone was in mourning. They were weeping, crying out loud, and showing Peter the things she had made for them and had taught them to make for themselves. You can imagine the scene as they remembered this caring woman.

Peter shooed everyone out of the room, knelt down and prayed. Then, he said, “Tabitha, get up.” Tabitha, like a cat ready for another life, got up. Peter, the one who denied he knew Jesus, and then who promised the risen Jesus that he would feed Jesus’ sheep, had already healed others. Now he raised this woman from the dead. It was miraculous. Tabitha, or Dorcas, was ready to go back to work with the poor and widows of the church in Joppa. God wasn’t through with Tabitha yet.

The book of John says that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead in order to show his own glory. Here in Acts, Luke says that a mere disciple, a disciple who denied that he knew Jesus, raised Tabitha from the dead. Why? This incident shows that the power to heal and to breathe new life into people is passed on. The church, and the followers of Jesus have the power to heal. To be sure, it wasn’t Peter, or the church that heals, it is God who heals.

Peter and the church, today’s disciples, have the power to call people’s attention to God’s

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<sup>1</sup>Wikipedia

healing power. At the center of these raising-from-the-dead experiences, is the assurance that God loves us and can be trusted to bring about healing and wholeness in the worst of circumstances.

You and I are the church. Through us— through our words and actions— God heals and perhaps even raises people from the dead. God works through us to bring healing and wholeness to others. Trusting in God, the good shepherd, allows us to do amazing things.

Where do you see the need for healing? In yourself? In a family member? In a co-worker? In a single mother who is trying to secure a safe home for her children? In Darfur, or Iraq, or Afghanistan, or Israel? In the mistrust of those who are different?

God says, “Get up! Go to work for me! I’m not through with you yet. There’s a world out there, a world dying in its fear, A world choking in its greed. I need you to bring healing and love to that dying world.” Get up and do what is right.

What is right? The byline said

BLACKSBURG, VA –“ Moral responsibility,” Katelynn Johnson said, was what led her to add a Hokie stone for Virginia Tech killer Seung-Hui Cho to the 32 others in the Drillfield memorial.

Johnson, a senior sociology/psychology major, identified herself in a letter to the editor in the Collegiate Times [Wednesday] as the person who laid the stone at the memorial at 4 a.m. last Thursday.

She did so in the dark to avoid attention, she said. "My family did not raise me to do what is popular," the letter said. "They raised me to do what is morally right. We did not lose only 32 students and faculty members that day; we lost 33 lives."<sup>2</sup>

Get up and do what is right!

Jesus trusted in God. He nurtured that relationship every day in prayer and by his involvement in the synagogue. Jesus knew the twenty-third psalm, the psalm of the Good shepherd. He knew about a God who leads us through the darkest valley’s of life. He knew and trusted that God.

This is the season of Easter, the season of new life, the season of celebrating Jesus’ victory over death. We have nothing to fear.

Get up! Do something for God!

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<sup>2</sup>By Holly Prestidge, *Richmond Times-Dispatch* staff writer, Thursday, April 26, 2007