

# Full of It

## April 17, 2016

### Acts 9:36-43

Tabitha was a saint. She was the first woman in the New Testament to have the title of “disciple.” She was a living bridge between early Christian ethnic communities. We can see that because her name is given both in Aramaic and Greek. She used her funds and time to serve the needy in the community. She created a social support network through her gifts of love. She was the beating heart of that early Christian church in Joppa. Her death sent a shudder through that little congregation.

Tabitha was a saint. She was a saint because she was “full of it.” I don’t mean that in the usual and crude sense. Acts nine, verse thirty-six says literally that Tabitha was “full of good works.” She was overflowing with the mercy of Jesus. Tabitha was so full of Resurrection life that it spilled out of her as stitches and seams. She was so filled with the Holy Spirit that it poured out of her as tunics and togas.

#### **Easter is new life overflowing!**

We Lutherans sometimes have an allergic response to the idea of “good works.” We have theological anxieties about self-righteousness and spiritual pride. So let’s put that to rest here. We are certainly not saved BY good works. Instead, Jesus saves us FOR good works. In fact, doing good for others is the reason God makes us in the first place.

Many of us remember the words of Ephesians, chapter two, verses eight and nine. Paul writes, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.*” You are a saint. This is not about your self-image. This is not about how others view you. You are a saint because this is how God feels about you and how God treats you.

You are a saint because you are full of it.

Sometimes we get that part, but we hardly ever read verse ten. “*For we are what he has made us,*” Paul continues, “*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*”

God has made us to enjoy doing good. Jesus saves us so we can return to our real purpose. The Holy Spirit fills us up with good works just like Tabitha was filled. Giving ourselves away in love is the best way to practice the power of the Resurrection. It feels good because that’s how we’re made. You are a saint because you are full of Easter life.

#### **Easter is new life overflowing!**

Today we attend Tabitha’s funeral visitation. Peter comes to support the little church in their grief. The widows show him evidence of Tabitha’s resurrection life. Peter realizes that her work is not done. So Easter breaks out once again in the church. Tabitha is raised to continue serving.

At some point Tabitha will have a funeral that sticks. The real point is that death no longer decides what matters in life. Tabitha was not building the Kingdom of God through her works. But she was building FOR the Kingdom. Anything done in love will outlive death. Nothing good will be lost. That’s one of the deep truths of the Resurrection.

## **Easter is new life overflowing!**

We are a community that is full of it! We are filled with the Resurrection life of Jesus. We get that life renewed week in and week out. We hear the Word of Life. We eat at the Table of Hope. We walk through life in faith. The world benefits because we too are full of good works.

That's why people gather every Wednesday to make quilts and blankets for the needy. That's why we are talking about launching a daycare here at Emanuel! That's why we will participate in ServeFest on the second Saturday in May! That's why you give of yourselves in so many ways in our congregation and our community—because we are full of it! The Spirit of Resurrection life flows through us and the world is transformed.

## **Easter is new life overflowing!**

It takes practice to let Easter life flow through us. In September of 2014, we instituted the Emanuel Blessing Circle. It's time to revisit that practice. Think of a way someone else could help you. It can be anything. You will find little Blessing Circle request forms in the pews. Write a few details about your request. Put down some contact information. Pass that form to the end of the pew. The ushers will collect them. Those requests will be posted in the Fellowship Hall.

You may be too humble (or too proud) to ask for help. You may know someone else who needs help with something. You can write down that request along with your contact information. If someone can help, then you can coordinate that help with the recipient.

Even if you don't really want to ask, you can help other people just by asking. It's easier to ask for help when everyone does it. And it's easier to give help when everyone does it. So if you're too humble or too proud to ask, how about just taking one for Team Emanuel?

Today and in the next few weeks, look at the posted requests. If you can help someone, take that Blessing Circle request form and follow up on it. Just take one form at a time, so that you don't over-commit yourself to helping. If you can help personally, that's fine. But don't limit yourself to that. You may know someone else who can help. You may be able to connect someone to other resources or people. Don't make the pie of goodies smaller than it is!

Why should we do this? Because Christ is risen! So we are full of good works!

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