

The Power of God's Kindness

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[0 : 0 0] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity On the 6th of May 2001 The preacher is Ian Wyckart His sermon is entitled The Power of God's Kindness And is from Acts chapter 9 Verses 36 to 43 Our loving Father, your word has it That the entering in of your word brings light Though we pray now for the entering in of the truth of your word and its power Into our hearts and minds We ask in Jesus' name Amen It gives me a great pleasure to say that Paul will be back on Saturday And I'm very glad I've only got 6 big sleeps before his back But I'm also glad to say that over the time he's been away

That everyone's pulling their weight Which is marvellous This week, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday I was at the Melbourne Kludgey Conference Which was called by Archbishop Peter Watson It was an excellent conference Another excellent conference We had edifying speakers Michael Cassidy, Hugh McCay We had excellent worship And certainly encouraging fellowship So I can certainly say that Life for ministers in this diocese is pretty good In other places And also at Trinity People have occasionally said to me We'd love to know What you think and feel About us as a church So my response is to Have invented the story

In my story I had a dream Where an angel tapped down the shoulder And woke me up He said Ian, you're married to Wilma I said yes He said You're in ministry at Holy Trinity With Paul Barker I said yes And you're more pleased than ever That Peter Watson is Archbishop I said yes And the angel said Well I've got a warning for you If you ever wonder If heaven could get better than this The answer is yes One of the heavenly delights The kingdom of heaven delights In being in ministry Is being asked to preach On scriptures Such as the Acts reading We had this morning And it'll be helpful to follow that It starts on page 894 Act 936

Page 894 And in these few verses We have a delightful And certainly a moving narrative About the power of God's kindness Luke, who wrote the Gospel of Luke And also the Book of Acts Specifically included This narrative for a reason And the reason is given In general terms In the first few verses Of Luke 1 Where he writes So that you may know The truth Concerning the things About which you have been instructed And one of the truths That we get taught here Is the power That God exhibits At times in the life of the church

So through the whole book of Acts And particularly the story We're getting some more detailed facts About how God works in the life of his church Facts and truths Which liberate you Into more and more confident Christian living If you do a quick glance down Verses 36 to 43 You'll see what God can do And what he did that day In Joppa If you summarise that point form You end up with five points One God displayed great kindness Two He raises the dead Three He chooses to raise the dead Through human agency Four He guides the saints When they face Impossible situations And five He graciously gives Unbelievers

[5 : 04] Evidence Of his trustworthiness And kindness So first of all God's display Of great kindness Certainly In the town of Joppa When Dorcas became ill God Saw The tears And distress Of the church He would have seen The deepening anxiety As Dorcas' illness worsened And then The shock And the grief At the use of the death Now when you or I Comfort someone in their grief Without being kind But when God Steps in And removes the reason For the grief By bringing the person Back from the dead What sort of kindness Is that?

That's incredibly Overwhelmingly Powerful kindness And that's what he did In Joppa His kindness Was so strong That he elected To bring The lady back From the dead We'll stay with Dorcas For a moment You see In verse 36 There's a hint Of God's kindness To Dorcas Luke Talks about her name In Greek And in Aramaic Dorcas and Tabitha I mean Sang-zing And some Bibles Treat her kindly By a margin Comment That her name Means gazelle Friends Her name Literally means Wild She-goat Not a flattery name Perhaps But only perhaps This name Reflects her nature Before she became A Christian And that happens

And that happens I know a lady Who At the beginning Of a Quite a rebellious Phase of her life And her teens Changed her name And was known By that name For a long A long time After you'd be A Christian She'd believed She'd believed God wanted her To be known Again by The first name She was given That is Christine This lady That I mention Is currently As committed To helping The unlovely As Dorcas was To clothing In the poor My friend Was a real Hell raiser Before she got Converted She told me That not only Did she have Three children She had Three abortions She divorced Her husband She taught Some fairly Extreme feminist Views One being That all marriages End in divorce Or perhaps should And she said To me One of her Anguishses Is that in those Years She encouraged

Some of her Friends To end Their marriages Now She is a Kind Strong lady Who helps To mend Relationships And also To help Mend broken People In what At times Is a Thankless Ministry But God Has given Her great Perseverance But Christian Friends What you Or Christine Or any of us Were Before We were In Christ Is no Longer An issue What Counts With God Is the Transformed Life As shown In transformed Behaviour There's so much About Dorcas That's there In the one Word But told She was A Disciple What that Means is She was Someone Who Had been Born Again Born Again

Into a Living Faith With all That Brings A Cleansed Heart The Renewing The Filling With the Spirit Of God And Carol Is Preaching On that Very Thing Next Sunday With all That Life That Showed Not a Theory But in Fact She Was a Disciple Following Christ She was A lady Dorcas Who had Experienced The goodness Of loving Kindness Of God As Saviour And now In this Event In chapter Nine She And the Church Have a Fresh Experience Of more Of God's Kindness Second Point God Raises The dead I'll say That again God Raises The dead That's His Department So the Healthy way To view What God Does in Raising The dead Is to Celebrate Him As God

[10 : 01] Who has It in His Sovereign Power To do It To remember As the Writer to The Hebrews Tells us That he Has destroyed The one Who has The power Of death That is The devil Far better To celebrate That Than to be Among Those Well-Meant Christians Who fret And argue Over why God didn't Do it For this Or that Individual There's been Some Headlines In recent Years About Well-Meant Christians Who have Really been Convinced That God Was going To bring Their friend Or family Member Back from The dead Even at The Grape site It didn't Happen Well I Put it to You To stand Crying around The coffin Because God Didn't Raise the Person Even though You were Convinced That he Would Is to Greatly Dishonor God It is Also Destructive On faith Third point

Was that God Choses to Raise the Dead Through Human Agency He did It once Through The prophet Elijah In the Old Testament He did It twice Through Elisha And several Times Through his Son Jesus As we see In the Gospels Here In Acts 9 He chooses To raise Dorcas Through Peter It is Instructive To stop And think About the Situation Peter found Himself in We're told That before Joppa he was Busy in a Town called Litter Busy in a Ministry of Encouragement To the Church And then Through him God heals The cripple Aeneas A cripple Man is now Walking The word Gets round And before Long Two men Turn up In Litter At Peter's

Place And the Message With a bit Of creative Translation Is something Like this Peter Jump in Your car Hit the Gas And we'll Pay the Spitting Vines We need You urgently In Joppa And so In fairly Short order He's standing Beside the Body Of a dead Christian Lady Which brings Me to the Next point God Does guide His saints When they Are faced With impossible Situations Now we Don't know Whether the Church has Said to Peter Peter There's the Body You're an Apostle Do something I'm not Sure It would have Been like That But they Certainly Believed That God They knew That God Had worked Miracles Through Peter And so They believed There was some Hope there And called Him But if You or I were Peter What do

You do Once you're In the Room And the Saints and Widows are There showing You the Clothes That Daughters Made And they're Crying And upset What do You do Well We take A view From verse 40 We're told Peter Put them All outside And then He knelt Down and Prayed Just as Jesus says To do In the Sermon on The Mount Jesus said Whenever you Pray Go into Your room And shut The door And pray To your Father who Is in Secret And your Father who Is in Secret Will reward You Again I Put the Question How do You know What to Say Or do What God Wants you To say Or do Well I Put it To you That like Peter The better You know The Bible The more Likely You are

To know What to Do It's as Simple as That Fifthly God Gives Unbelievers Evidence Of his Trustworthiness And kindness That comes Verse 42 Dorcas' Raising Became Known Through Our Chopper Connor And Many Believed In the Lord This is One of Those Wonderful Times When God's Display of Powerful Miraculous Kindness Results in Conversions It It Had Happened In Verse 35 In Lydda When Aeneas Was Healed People Saw And Believed They Turned To Christ The Believers Seeing These Things For Them There Was A Deepening Awe And Reverence For God And His Power And That's Healthy That Improves Personal Holiness

[15 : 04] Brings a Blessing So When We Hear Of A Miracle Something A Healing Or Something Else That's Obviously God's Hand Impossible Human Hands That Happens Amongst Us I Say We Do What The Saints And Joppa And Lydda Did Let The Miracles Be Known People Said Guess What Dorcas Is Alive Again There She Is On The Way Down The Street To Buy Some More Stuff To Make Clothes And Some Of The Local Citizens Will Have Said What She Was Dead And The Christians Will Say Well She Was Mate But There She Is Draw Your Conclusions Just Like Beryl Wurl And I Have A Friend Called Beryl Who Is About That High Physically And About That High Spiritually Beryl Is T

And the doctor said, there's only two options. We give you a cortisone injection and hope for the best, or we have to cut a muscle. And she felt that that was like being asked, how is it like to die?

Firing a squatter electric chair. Not a happy choice. So she said, doctor, I'll come back later and talk to you about it. So she talked to us, Christian friends of the church, and we prayed with her for God to heal her thumb.

The next day, the thumb was normal. So she beetled off down at the doctor and said, doctor, look at my thumb. And he said, Beryl, what have you been up to if you had a cortisone injection?

She said, no. And he said, anyway, if you had it, it wouldn't be better this way if you had surgery. She said, no. He said, what have you been up to? She said, I got my Christian friends together.

[17 : 03] We prayed and God has healed my trigger thumb. She said, doctor, if someone else comes in here with a trigger thumb, send him down to St. Martin's and we'll pray for them and God will heal them.

And the doctor said, well, the doctor didn't turn to Christ on the spot. But who knows whether that event is a link in the chain which may one day seem in the kingdom.

So as they happen, it's good to let them be known because God often chooses to turn people's hearts to Christ as they hear about his kindness.

So the miraculous things that happen in the church bring a strong and useful reminder of what God is up to. You heard about that in the end of the second reading where Jesus says to the disciples, truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

I've deliberately chosen to quote that because a lot of people have been concerned about it and been troubled in their faith. They believed it meant that Jesus would return and heaven would start fully before the disciples died.

[18 : 32] Well, it doesn't quite mean that. But early last century, there was a philosopher, mathematician called Bertrand Russell. His greatest work, Principia Mathematica, is still famous and justly so.

He's a brilliant mathematician. And he wrote a book called Why I Am Not a Christian. And he quotes this verse. And he said, I do not find Jesus credible because he thought heaven would come before the disciples died.

To which we have to say, not so. You see, the one disciple in that group who did not see the kingdom of God before his death was Judas.

Judas did not live to see the resurrection. Did not live to see Pentecost and the life of the church after that.

You see, in this narrative in Acts 9, at Joppa, God is already demonstrating his kingdom power. I mean, when it comes to raising the dead, where on earth does that come from?

[19 : 45] Nowhere it comes from heaven. But God's also been busy at Lydda, healing the cripple, and in Samaria, the demons being exorcised out of people.

And back in Acts 9, before, at the beautiful gate of the temple, with the cripple being healed through the ministry of Peter and John. All that's great news.

God continues to do his kingdom things in the life of the church. Well, certainly, having people raised from the dead, having people healed, having people turned to Christ, is all great news.

But when it comes to raising the dead, well, there's the ones that Elijah raised, Elisha raised, Jesus raised, Peter raised. But God has got something better.

God has an encore. It's described in 1 Thessalonians 4, where it's all, the Lord himself, with a shout of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

[21 : 05] Then, we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together, with them to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever.

praise God for the powerful kindness he's already demonstrated, and praise him for what is yet to come. Amen.