The Power of Prayer

opening remarks.

- Last week Pastor Stu told you that we would be doing a series that looks at the issues in Haiti.
  - This is the second in that series.

content

- He talked with you about what just one can do.
- It starts with taking a single step in the direction God is calling.
- It is a matter of walking by faith and not by sight.
- Some of us may still be struggling with this.
- Today, we will see faith in action again along with its results.

putting the passage in context.

- This passage about Peter and Tabitha comes as the second of three parts that interrupt what was a very detailed report of Paul’s conversion.
  - This seems out of place here, but I would argue that Luke did that on purpose.

- The three parts.
  - Aeneas
    - Peter had traveled to Lydda and encountered this man.
    - Peter called on Jesus to heal Aeneas and he was.
      - Aeneas was a powerful witness to Christ following this experience.
  - Tabitha
    - Had a ministry to the widows of Joppa.
    - Died unexpectedly.
    - Brought deep grief calling Peter to Joppa.
  - Simon the tanner.
    - A Christian showing great hospitality despite being in a business that was considered unclean by the Jews.

a deeper look.

disruption

- This passage is a disruption of two very organized narratives.
  - There is the narrative of Paul and his conversion and subsequent training.
  - There is also the narrative of the Jerusalem Church becoming more organized.
- Suddenly we leave Paul for what seems to be a very disorganized set of events.
  - Peter is going here and there among the churches, going from place to place.
  - This is the first thing that disrupts us.
  - We suddenly find him in a town called Lydda confronted by a paralytic.
- Peter was in Lydda at the time of Tabitha’s death.
  - There is a disruption within the disruption.
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- Joppa is about 10 miles northwest of Lydda.
- It would have probably taken most of a day to travel that distance by foot.
  - Tabitha was very important to the community, and they wanted one of the church leaders to come to them.
  - Peter walked in faith and moved with haste to get to Joppa.
  - It is also important to note here another disruption that might not be so obvious to us.
    - This is the only place in the New Testament where the feminine form of the word for “disciple” occurs.
    - This is a discontinuity in the usual pattern of things.
    - In this new community everything is different, and no one stays in the normal roles.
  - Tabitha had created a ministry to the widows, providing things they needed.
    - The widows now had no one to look out for them since the men had not seen to their welfare.
      - Without Tabitha, they felt hopeless.
- That leads to the next disruption.
  - When Peter arrives, the widows mob him, showing him all that Tabitha had done for them.
  - Peter takes a page from Jesus’ book as he had seen in the case of Jairus’ daughter and sends everyone out.
  - Then he prays.
- Enter the next disruption.
  - Tabitha is raised from the dead.

❖ Application

❖ Disruption
- This is no accident on Luke’s part.
  - In Lukan theology, it seems Luke is always seeing Christ and the work of the Church as a disruption in the normal order of things.
- For Luke, one of the great disruptions, outside of the atoning work of Christ is prayer.

❖ Prayer
- We have all heard it said that prayer changes things.
  - This is true.
  - It is a disruption to the normal order of things.
- In prayer, we have the ear of God who, through Jesus, works to disrupt the normal order of things and show His glory.
- It says that Peter sent the people out and then “he got down on his knees and prayed.”

❖ Significance
- Why did Peter pray?
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- It first showed that the disruption was not done through his power but through the power and name of Jesus.
- It also shows us that prayer is our access to God’s disruptive power.
- Peter’s response to these widows who are the outcast and down-trodden is to seek that God would disrupt the normal order of things and bring Tabitha back to them.

Haiti

- Here we are today, watching the order of things in Haiti and seeking God’s disruptive power.
- We know that prayer is the most powerful tool in our arsenal.
- Eugene Peterson wrote, “Prayers are tools that God uses to work His will in our bodies and souls. Prayers are tools that we use to collaborate in His work with us.”
- In other words, prayer is the tool we use to participate in God’s disruption in our world.

Conclusion

Prayer power.

- As you leave the service today, members of the Mission Committee will be waiting to give you a book that will lead you through prayer for Haiti over the next 25 days.
- We invite you to be a part of God’s disruption in Haiti.
  - Each day you will pray for 2 to 3 of the 57 children that the Church of the Covenant sponsors either through individual sponsorships or corporate ones.
  - It will also give you items to pray about, seeking God’s disruption in the midst of the chaos.
  - The powers of darkness have had their day.
  - Let’s remind them that God is the one who makes the disruptions and brings light to a people so long lost in the dark.
- We will conclude this focused prayer time with an Ash Wednesday service on February 26th at 7pm, where we will ask God for His biggest disruption in Haiti.

Closing Prayer.

- Father, through Jesus, Your Son, You have disrupted our lives. You have disrupted time. You have disrupted sin, the grave, and death. You are still the God who brings hope and light to those lost in darkness. Lord, we call upon You to disrupt the evil and poverty in Haiti and pour out Your Spirit upon them. Change them from the inside out, in Jesus’ name. Amen.