

Introduction

For many years, I read in Hebrews that we are to remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them. I read in Matthew 25 in the separation of the goats and the sheep that the righteous visited the Lord in prison, and the unrighteous did not visit the Lord in prison. I had an empty feeling inside, as I had never visited anyone in prison. I did not even know anyone in prison. But, through these Scriptures, God planted a desire to get involved in prison ministry.

(Heb 13:3a) “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them...”

(Matt 25:36b) “I was in prison, and you came to Me.”

(Matt 25:43) “I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’

In 1997, our church in Atlanta placed an ad in the Marietta Journal. About a week later, I received a letter from Steve Hampton. He was in jail, and he wanted two things. He asked if our church could help out his wife, Kimberly, and their son, Ringo. He also asked if I could pay him a visit in prison. Those verses raced through my head as I read his letter. I determined that I would definitely go and visit him. Our church prayed for Steve for two weeks before I visited him. We also reached out to Kimberly and helped them with some practical needs, like food and clothing. When I went to the prison where Steve was incarcerated, the Holy Spirit moved mightily. I shared the gospel and Steve just began weeping. He received Christ and it was a wonderful thing.

Since there was a new believer that needed some follow-up, I came back the next week to begin discipling Steve. His bunkmate, John Cooper, came with Steve that next week. He prayed to receive Christ that day. Now there were two new believers that needed discipling. Week after week I went to the prison to minister to the men in L-4 pod. Lots of men were being saved and men were being disciplined in the Word of God. Steve was a real leader and had a big influence on other men.

Doc Frady, the Senior Chaplain at the prison, saw great fruit in my ministry, so he asked me to come on staff at the prison. I went on part-time staff and worked one or two days a week in the prison. We had nearly two thousand inmates in our maximum security prison, and we had seven chaplains, but even that was not enough to meet all the needs.

Our text today has a similar beginning. At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit moved powerfully, and thousands of people in Jerusalem received Christ. There may have been between twenty and fifty thousand people that got saved in a very short time. Then, in Acts 8, after Stephen had been martyred, a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem. All these new believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. All these new believers needed to be taught and instructed in the ways of the Lord. They needed to be disciplined. Therefore, just as I did with Steve and John in prison, the apostles began traveling throughout the region to teach, disciple, and encourage these new believers.

(Acts 8:1) “Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”

19 Mission of the Church (Acts 9:32-43)

Our text today begins with Peter traveling through all those regions where the disciples had scattered because of the persecution. Peter came down to the saints who lived at Lydda. He heals Aeneas while there, and then gets word to come to Joppa immediately. He travels to Joppa, and there he raises Tabitha from the dead. Because of that miracle, many people in Joppa came to the Lord. Therefore, Peter stayed in Joppa with a tanner named Simon for many days and discipled these new believers.

Today, we are going to look at Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa. We are going to find two very important aspects of his ministry. First, there was power evangelism. Second, there was discipleship. Let's read our text together.

(Acts 9:32-43) "Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. {33} There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. {34} Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up. {35} And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. {36} Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. {37} And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room. {38} Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us." {39} So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. {40} But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. {41} And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. {42} It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. {43} And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon."

1. Mission in Lydda

Our text begins with Peter traveling all through those regions. Essentially, he was traveling to all the places that the saints had scattered. Peter went down to the saints who lived at Lydda. If you head northwest from Jerusalem on the road that goes to Caesarea, and go about thirty miles, you will find Lydda. The Greeks called it by a different name, Diospolis, which meant the city of Jupiter. Apparently, they had built a temple for their god named Jupiter. The current name of the city is Lod, and it is twelve miles southeast of Tel Aviv. Ben Gurion International Airport, the largest airport in Israel is there. I had a layover in Tel Aviv many years ago, so I may have actually been to Lydda and did not even know it. The text says that Peter came down to Lydda. The elevation of Jerusalem is about 2,500 feet, and the elevation of Lydda is 135 feet, so Peter literally went down to Lydda.

(Acts 9:32) "Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda."

He went to the saints. The two primary terms for Christians were saints and disciples, and both are used in our text today. The word for saints is *hagios* (Strong's G40), which means holy or sacred. **A saint is a holy one.** The word saint is used sixty-nine times. God has made us holy through the sacrificial blood of Jesus. Therefore, we are exhorted to live holy lives.

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The other term that we find in this passage is disciple. The Greek word is *matthetes* (Strong's G3101), and the root word is *manthano*, which means learner. The term disciple is used 272 times. **A disciple is one who continually learning.** Disciples learn from their teachers. Jesus' disciples followed Him and learned by being with Him listening to Him teach them. All of us, as Christians, should always be learning. We are disciples or learners.

Peter came down to the saints in Lydda. He had a purpose for going to Lydda. **He went to tend the sheep in Lydda.** After the Lord had risen from the dead, he appeared to Peter on the beach. Peter had gone back to fishing after denying the Lord three times before the cock crowed. They had caught nothing all night, but the Lord calls out to him to cast their nets on the right hand side of the boat. When they did, they could hardly bring in the net because of the great number of fish.

(John 21:6) "And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat and you will find a catch." So they cast, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish."

After breakfast, Jesus restores Peter. He said, "Simon Peter, do you love Me more than these?" Peter replied, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. Jesus said, "Tend My lambs." Jesus asked Peter a second time and Peter replied, "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You." And Jesus tells Peter to Shepherd My sheep." Then, Jesus asks Peter a third time if he loves Him. Peter is grieved because it was the third time. Peter had denied Him three times, and now Jesus has asked him three times. Peter said, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus tells Peter, "Tend My sheep."

(John 21:15-17) "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs." {16} He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Shepherd My sheep." {17} He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

What is Peter doing in Lydda? What was his purpose in going there? The sheep have scattered throughout the region, and Peter goes to Lydda to tend the Lambs. He goes there to shepherd the sheep. Peter has been visiting all the saints in the area and teaching, encouraging, and shepherding the sheep. These new believers needed to be taught the ways of the Lord. They needed to be disciplined, and that is why Peter goes to the saints in Lydda. That is what Jesus told Peter to do.

In Mark and Matthew we find Jesus' final charge and mandate to the apostles. In Mark 16:15, He told them to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." In Matthew 28, He tells them that all authority has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He tells them to go therefore and make disciple of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that He had commanded them. **Jesus' final instructions to all of us were to go and preach the gospel, and to make disciples.** It is not either or, but it is both evangelism and discipleship. It is not enough to preach the gospel. God wants newborns to be fed, nurtured, and cared for. He wants His sheep tended, fed, and shepherded.

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(Mark 16:15) “And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”

(Matt 28:18-20) “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. {19} "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, {20} teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Peter has gone to Lydda to make disciples, and also to preach the gospel. That was the mandate to Peter and the other apostles. That is the mandate to all of us. That is the mission of the church. We are to continually preach the gospel as we go. And, we are to make disciples of those that receive Christ. The evangelism and discipleship go hand-in-hand. Once Peter arrives in Lydda and connects with the saints, he found a man named Aeneas. This man had been bedridden eight years because he was paralyzed. Peter found the man. He may have heard about him, and he went looking for this man. We do not know if he had a word of knowledge about Aeneas, or if he was simply told by the saints in Lydda about this man named Aeneas. Peter searched and found Aeneas.

(Acts 9:33) “There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.”

Then, Peter tells him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.” There was no doubt in Peter’s mind about what God wanted to do for Aeneas. Sometimes, when we pray, we pray without knowing what God intends to do. Peter had no doubt. He told Aeneas exactly what Jesus was going to do for him.

(Acts 9:34) “Peter said to him, ‘Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.’ Immediately he got up.”

I think it is fair to ask God what He wants to do in situations that we face. There is a sickness that leads to death. One day as I was praying, the Lord told me to prepare a funeral message for someone. He gave me the passage to preach, and so I prepared the funeral message. I went to see the man that week, and he was holding on to the promise of God healing him. He never gave up hope. He is permanently healed and with the Lord, because his sickness was unto death. I prayed for that man to be comforted, to have peace, and for the Holy Spirit to manifest His presence in his life, so that he would know that the Lord was with him. I did not pray for healing on that particular day because I knew what the Lord had told me to do. But, we have been called to preach the gospel, and heal the sick. I believe that the prevailing and general will of God is to heal people. Unless God speaks something different, I believe that we should pray for healing, which is what Peter did. Peter had faith that God would heal him. I believe that Aeneas also had faith. Even though he had been in this condition for eight long years, when Peter told him to get up and make his bed, he immediately got up. There was an obedience on his part that went along with the healing. **Aeneas simply obeyed.**

In 2 Kings we have an account of a courageous soldier named Naaman. Unfortunately, he had leprosy. He was told that the God of Israel could heal him, and so he went to visit Elisha. He expected Elisha to do something spectacular, but all Elisha told him to do was “go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and his flesh would be restored to him. Naaman went away furious. He did not have the same attitude as Aeneas.

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(2 Kings 5:10-11) “Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh will be restored to you and you will be clean.’ {11} But Naaman was furious and went away and said, ‘Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper.’”

Fortunately for Naaman, he had some wise servants who spoke into his life and encouraged him to do what Elisha told him to do. So, Naaman went and washed in the Jordan and he was healed of his leprosy. His skin was better than before. The word says it was restored like the flesh of a little child.

(2 Kings 5:14) “So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was clean.”

Another example is in Luke 17. While Jesus was journeying towards Jerusalem, He entered a village between Galilee and Samaria, and there were ten leprosy men who met Him. They were respectful and stood at a distance, and they raised their voices and asked Jesus to have mercy on them. Jesus told them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” There were times that Jesus healed people and then told them to go show themselves to the priest. But this time, He did not heal them first. Like Elisha, He told them something that they had to do. Luke records that they started going towards the priests, and as they were going, they were cleansed. The account goes on to say that one of them stopped and went back to Jesus to thank Him for his healing.

(Luke 17:12-14) “As He entered a village, ten leprosy men who stood at a distance met Him; {13} and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” {14} When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they were going, they were cleansed.”

Two lessons we can learn from this. First, when the Lord tells us to do something, we need to simply obey. The paralytic got up and made his bed. Naaman got healed when he washed in the Jordan. The ten lepers got healed when they obediently started walking towards the place where the priests were. Second, we should give stop and give thanks to the Lord for everything He does for us. Our lives should be filled with gratitude because He does more than we can imagine for us.

Aeneas got up and all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord. Sharon was a valley that was known for its fertile soil. They raised grapes for champagne. Sharon was mentioned several times in the Old Testament. For example, in Song of Solomon 2:1, He is the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley. Everyone living in Lydda and in the valley of Sharon saw Aeneas and turned to the Lord. His life was a testimony to the power of God. Our lives should be no different. Everywhere we walk we should carry the gospel with us. All of us have been healed. We may not have been healed from being a paralytic, but all of us have been healed. He was pierced through for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. By His stripes we have been healed of our sins.

(Acts 9:35) “And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.”

(Isaiah 53:5) “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.”

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I mentioned that we see two things in our passage today: power evangelism and discipleship. Peter goes to Lydda for the purpose of discipleship. He goes there to strengthen the disciples. While he is there ministering, Aeneas gets miraculously healed. That is power evangelism. As a result of this sign and wonder, all who lived at Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord. Now, there is even more need for follow-up and more discipleship. We must keep proclaiming and discipling. Both are important to carrying out the Great Commission.

The early church recognized the importance of seeing signs and wonders. They had seen Jesus heal lots of people, and the result was many people were brought into the kingdom of God. When the lame beggar was healed in Acts 3 by Peter, the result was that five thousand men believed.

(Acts 4:4) “But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

Therefore, **the early church prayed for signs and wonders**. After the five thousand believed, the religious leaders arrested Peter, and threatened them about speaking any more in the name of Jesus. After their release, they prayed. What did they pray? They prayed for God to extend His hand to heal, and for signs and wonders to take place through the name of Jesus. They understood the importance of signs and wonders and how it created big opportunities for people to receive Christ. We should be just like them. We should pray for healings, and for signs and wonders. We should pray for boldness to share the gospel. Peter saw Aeneas as another opportunity to see God move in a powerful way. Peter stepped out in faith and prayed for Aeneas. The result was that all who lived in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord.

(Acts 4:29-31) “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, {30} while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.”

2. Mission in Joppa

Not only did the people in Lydda and Sharon find out about the miraculous healing of Aeneas, the saints in Joppa heard about it. Joppa was a seaport and was about twelve miles from Lydda. In the Old Testament it was part of Dan’s allotment. (See Joshua 19:46.) It was probably more famous for being the seaport that Solomon used to bring in all the timber from Lebanon that he used to build the temple. They cut the timber in Lebanon, and brought it on rafts by sea to Joppa. Today, the city is called Jaffa.

(2 Chron 2:16) “We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon and bring it to you on rafts by sea to Joppa, so that you may carry it up to Jerusalem.”

In Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha. The word for disciple here is mathetria (Strong’s G3102a), which is a female disciple. The word Tabitha means gazelle. The Greek word for gazelle was Dorcas and the root word is derkomai, which means to see clearly. Gazelles had big eyes and were known for their keen vision. So, gazelles were associated with good eyesight and people with big eyes were sometimes called dorcas.

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(Acts 9:36-37) “Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. {37} And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.”

Tabitha was a true woman of God. She was a woman of excellence. She was a virtuous woman. She was a Proverbs 31 woman. She was abounding in deeds of kindness and charity. Luke tells us that she continually did these kind, charitable deeds. She had a great reputation, and was loved and respected by everyone. She was, and still is, a great role model for women. So, when she got sick and died, the disciples went to Lydda and requested that Peter come to them without delay.

(Acts 9:38) “Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us.”

Luke records that they had washed her body and laid it in the upper room. It was customary in their time to wash a body before burying it or cremating it. So, they had prepared the body for burial. Before they went through the burial service, some of the saints called for Peter to come without delay. In other words, we are going to bury Tabitha, and there is not much time left. Do not delay in coming to us. I do not believe that the disciples sent for Peter to come and do a funeral. They didn't need Peter to do a funeral service. I believe that they sent for Peter to raise Tabitha up from the dead. **The disciples had faith to see Tabitha raised from the dead.** Some of them may have accompanied Jesus when Lazarus was raised from the dead. In John 11, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days when Jesus has them roll away the stone by the tomb. He cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth.” And Lazarus came forth.

(John 11:43-44) “When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." {44} The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus *said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go.”

The end result was that many Jews saw what Jesus had done and believed in Him. We do not know if some of these Jews are in Lydda, but what we do know is that they believed that Tabitha could be raised from the dead just like Lazarus was raised from the dead. They had faith to believe in the miracle, and they sent for Peter to come to them without delay.

(John 11:45) “Therefore many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, believed in Him.”

It may be that some of the people were those that had been personally raised from the dead when Jesus died on the cross. Matthew records that Jesus cried out with a loud voice and yielded up His Spirit. When He did that, the veil was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook and the rocks were split. It does not end there. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and they came out of the tombs after His resurrection and entered Jerusalem and appeared to many. It could be that some of these folks in Lydda were ones raised from the dead. It could be that some of these were witnesses of people that had been raised from the dead. In any case, they had faith to see their sister in Christ raised from the dead.

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(Matt 27:50-53) “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. {51} And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. {52} The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; {53} and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.”

When things happen in our lives, how do we respond? Do we pray and ask God to move powerfully? Do we send for the elders or other leaders to come pray with us? James tells us to call for the elders of the church to pray for us when we are sick. That is what the people in Joppa did. They called for Peter, who was part of the leadership at Jerusalem.

(James 5:14-15) “Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; {15} and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

When Peter arrived, they brought him into the upper room, and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Tabitha had made while she was with them. Peter sent them all out. He was not interested in a memorial service; he was believing God for a resurrection and healing service.

(Acts 9:39-40a) “So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them. {40} But Peter sent them all out...”

Next, Peter knelt down and prayed. Kneeling is a posture of humility. Peter’s posture reflects a total dependence on God to move. After praying, he turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, arise.” I believe that Peter received instructions after he prayed. Praying is not merely telling the Lord what we want to do. Prayer is two-way. It is making known our requests, and it is also waiting on the Lord to tell us what He wants to do and how he wants to do it. **Prayer involves listening to the Lord.** I can think of several questions to ask the Lord. Lord, what is Your will in this matter? What are You wanting to do? Pause...You want to raise her from the dead. Okay. What do You want me to say or do? How should I go about doing this? Oh. You want me to just command her to arise. Okay. So, Peter tells her to arise, and she opened her eyes, and then sat up. Then, Peter gave her his hand and raised her up. Next, he called the saints and widows, and presented her alive.

(Acts 9:40-41) “But Peter sent them all out and knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up. {41} And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.”

This miracle became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. **The result of signs and wonders is the gospel is advanced.** We call it power evangelism because many people believe as a result of seeing God move in a supernatural way. Power evangelism does not work independently of proclaiming the gospel. It opens up hearts. It helps people believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But, to become a believer, we must do more than believe in our heart. We must confess Jesus as Lord. People still needed to hear the plan of salvation. They still needed to receive Jesus as their Messiah.

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(Acts 9:42) “It became known all over Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.”

Many people believed in the Lord. That meant that many people needed follow-up. All of these new believers needed to be disciplined. They needed instructions about how to grow in their faith. So, Peter did not return to Jerusalem. He did not go home. He made a decision to stay there for many days. He is doing exactly what the Lord told Him to do. Tend My lambs. Shepherd My sheep. Peter did power evangelism, but he was also committed to discipleship.

(Acts 9:43) “And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with a tanner named Simon.”

Another man with a similar attitude was Paul. In Colossians 1:28-29, he tells us his life purpose. He says, “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” **Paul’s purpose or mission was to preach the gospel and make disciples.** He wanted to present every man complete. This was Paul’s purpose in life. He proclaimed the gospel. But, he did not stop there. He admonished and warned every man and taught every man with all wisdom, so that he could present every man complete in Christ. That was Paul’s purpose. That should be the purpose of every believer. Our vision is to be a people that love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and who love our neighbor as ourselves. That is who we are. **Our mission is to preach the gospel and to make disciples.** That is what we do.

(Col 1:28-29) “We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. {29} For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

Before closing, I want to make a comments. First, I want to share about Peter. He stayed many days in Joppa. Peter was a married man. When Paul defends his rights as an apostle in 1 Corinthians 9, he tells us that the rest of the apostles and Cephas had believing wives. Cephas is another name for Peter. Peter was a married man. All this time that he is in Lydda and Joppa, he is separated from his wife and family. Peter and the other leaders made tremendous sacrifices for the kingdom of God. Being in the ministry requires sacrifices. Therefore, we are encouraged to highly esteem pastors. Someone told me this week that a person had said negative things about pastors. They sowed negative seeds of distrust towards pastors. I want to tell you that we should never sow seeds of rebellion and mistrust. That is the work of the enemy. We need to esteem highly people like Peter, who made tremendous sacrifices to advance the kingdom of God.

(1 Cor 9:5) “Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?”

(1 Thess 5:12-13) “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, {13} and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

Second, I want to talk about last week’s message. I mentioned that all of us are called to be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks us to give account for the hope. I said that the Greek word for defense is apologia. We get our English word apologetics from it, which is to give a defense of our faith. Some of you had an opportunity this week to give a defense. It may have been a defense

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of the deity of Jesus or the trinity. We did a series last year called the Essentials. I did a message on Essential Doctrines, and one of those was on the foundation of Christ. The trinity is an essential doctrine. The Lord is wanting each of us to preach the gospel and make disciples. God is calling all of us to be ready to give a defense of our faith. God is giving us opportunities to exercise our faith. He is giving us some pop quizzes so that we can see how we are doing. Let these experiences that we have had this week be a motivation to study and be ready to make a defense. Church, this is our mission and purpose.

(1 Peter 3:15) “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;”

Let’s pray.

Introduction (Acts 9:32-43, Heb 13:3, Matt 25:36, 25:43, Acts 8:1)

1. Mission in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35, Is 53:5)

- A saint is a _____.
- A disciple is one who continually _____.
- He went to _____ the sheep in Lydda. (John 21:6, 15-17)
- Jesus' final instructions to all of us were to go and preach the _____, and to make _____. (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:18-20)
- We have been called to _____ the gospel, and to _____ the sick.
- Aeneas simply _____. (2 Kings 5:10-14, Luke 17:12-14)
- The early church _____ for signs and wonders. (Acts 4:4, 29-31)

2. Mission in Joppa (Acts 9:36-43, 2 Chron 2:16, John 11:43-45, Matt 27:50-53, James 5:14-15, 1 Cor 9:5, 1 Thess 5:12-13)

- The disciples had _____ to see Tabitha raised from the dead.
- Prayer involves _____ to the Lord.
- The result of signs and wonders is the gospel is _____.
- Paul's purpose or _____ was to preach the gospel and make disciples. (Col 1:28-29)
- Our mission is to _____ the gospel and to _____ disciples.

Introduction (Acts 9:32-43, Heb 13:3, Matt 25:36, 25:43, Acts 8:1)

1. Mission in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35, Is 53:5)

- A saint is a _____.
- A disciple is one who continually _____.
- He went to _____ the sheep in Lydda. (John 21:6, 15-17)
- Jesus' final instructions to all of us were to go and preach the _____, and to make _____. (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:18-20)
- We have been called to _____ the gospel, and to _____ the sick.
- Aeneas simply _____. (2 Kings 5:10-14, Luke 17:12-14)
- The early church _____ for signs and wonders. (Acts 4:4, 29-31)

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