

Some of you may remember a sermon I did about a year ago about a book I had read where one of the main character's mantras was, "Grace costs nothing," well this morning we are here for part two featuring the second book in this series. Thank God for authors and memorable turns of phrase. *Yours Truly* centers around Jacob and Bri, two emergency room doctors struggling in the midst of brutal hours, heartbreak, familial drama, and illness. Jacob comes from a massive, meddling family that he attempts to balance while managing pretty severe anxiety. Bri is next in line for a promotion, but is in the middle of a divorce and trying to manage her younger brother's health as he is unexpectedly in the middle of kidney failure at the age of 27. Everything is messy and difficult and tinged with what feels like the impossible.

Because this is a rom-com a world of tropes takes place. The two of them end up fake dating to deal with both of their families asking too many relationship questions, it turns out that Jacob is the perfect donor for Bri's brother to receive a kidney but he wants to try and do it anonymously, even though of course eventually everyone finds out, and obviously, amongst the chaos and drama of their worlds...they fall in love. However, for the two of them, one divorced, the other watching his brother marry his ex-girlfriend, there is a world of doubt around the whole concept of love. They aren't sure

it's real or possible or if it is if it's meant for them because they have been burned too many times. Yet, through it all, Jacob's mom reminds him constantly of how you know it's real, you know, because "love shows up." When he doubts if Bri is developing real feelings for him, he strives to remember the times she has shown up for him when he has been smack dab in the middle of an anxiety attack. When she doubts if Jacob is genuinely as good of a guy as he seems, she remembers he was going to give her brother a kidney and tell no one. When they both are on the brink of running away from a blossoming relationship, they remember all of the times that the other has shown up because that's what love does. Love shows up. Sometimes in really big, let me give you a kidney ways, and sometimes in really small, I will show you the best closet to break down inside of where no one will bother you and you can lose it in peace. In a myriad of ways, big, small, and in between, love shows up.

I'll be honest, every single time that this lesson from Acts arrives in the lectionary, I get frustrated. Frustrated and sad. Six years ago, this was the lesson the weekend after Rachel Held Evans had died, unexpectedly, depriving the theological world of a voice for love, goodness, and messy grace. Three years ago, this was the lesson the weekend after my brother-in-law's mom passed away from brain cancer, and all of us were at loose ends

of how to process our grief. And now, it pops up again and I look back at what the last year of my life has brought and I'm just like, does this lesson always have to come up when something major is going on? But then there's the reality in my brain that goes, umm, ya know, there are two other lessons and a Psalm you could talk about, let the Acts go, preach on something else, find another sheep metaphor and go with it, but there is something about this text...it just will not let me go. It sticks in my brain and circles and demands I do something with it.

We find Peter living into his post-resurrection, post-Pentecost, practically the first Pope life today. He is traveling and preaching and following Jesus' call of the Great Commission to go out and make disciples of all nations. Today, he finds himself in Lydda, near Joppa, and when his presence becomes known, a group of people approach him deep in mourning. Their beloved friend and sister Tabitha has died and they want Peter to come do something about it. They show him relics of her life, clothes she made, things she did for them. They tell him of her goodness and her kindness and the ways those were made known in their community of faith. They want Peter to fix this. Like so many of us when we are in the throes of grief, we want to cling to that one last straw of hope that somehow, some way, this can be undone, the future rewritten. They beg Peter to come

to Joppa, and so he goes. He shows up for this group of mourners. He gets to the house, and much like Jesus before him, goes into the room where Tabitha lies, dismisses the crowds, prays, and tells her stand up, and...she does. Like Jairus' daughter, like Lazarus, Tabitha awakes from death and steps back out into the arms of her beloved community. Her friends showed up for her, even in death, and then Peter showed up for them, and as a result love showed up, resurrection showed up. It feels like the perfect text for the Easter season. It is full of hope and wonder, it's a miracle, it is Peter living out his call to discipleship and doing the wondrous. It's as literal as the resurrection can get, and that's great...but...it twinges...

This is where this text brings me up short and tugs at my chest and frustrates me and makes me want to weep and ask why can't I just focus on the Good Shepherd, because yes, while this text is a miracle...it feels like a miracle that isn't for us. It feels entirely disconnected from our own experience. I read this text and I think about Rachel, I think about Sandy, I think about my friend Julie who lost her husband, Matt weeks after their twin boys were born, I think about my sister who just had a member pass away unexpectedly on Friday. I think about all of us who sit here and hear this text and think...but why not my loved one? Why did this happen for Tabitha, but not for them? What was it about Peter that made this happen?

We want to rejoice in the resurrection miracle, but it becomes hard when its mixed and mashed with our own experiences of grief and loss. We don't always know how to reconcile hurt and hope, grief and grace. We want love to show up...

I think part of why this text hasn't let me go this week is because in my soul, right down in my chest I believe more than anything that love *does* show up, and honestly I believe that resurrection *does* show up, but we rarely think about it as resurrection. Now, I'm not going to stand up here and say that we need to be looking for literal Tabitha moments, that...well that is going to be a faulty expectation and as hard as that is to accept and hold, it's true, but that doesn't mean that resurrection doesn't show up all over the place, if only we are willing to see it that way, if only we are willing to view the world through a lens of that level of love.

For the addict showing up to their first AA meeting and meeting their sponsor, love, resurrection shows up. For the person who *knows* that something is wrong and *finally* gets a doctor to hear them, see them, love, resurrection shows up. For the parents who doesn't know what they're going to give their kid for lunch the next day, only to receive assistance from a place like Thrive, love, resurrection shows up. For the kid who has been struggling silently with a learning disability, who has a teacher refuse to give

up on them, love, resurrection shows up. For the college kid who misses home but doesn't want to admit it who gets a card in the mail from someone that cares about them, love, resurrection shows up. There is a super cliché line at the beginning of the movie *Love Actually* where Hugh Grant says if we dared to look we'd realize that love actually *is* all around. Because love is constantly showing up but so often we're running around too busy, too harried, too distracted to notice. But truthfully, while we need the reminder to recognize that love, maybe even more so we need the reminder that we can *be* that love, that resurrection that shows up for another person. No, we aren't walking into someone's lives with the strength of Peter, but we have worlds of possibilities before us to *show up* for one another, for our neighbors, for our siblings. We have chance upon chance to be resurrection for someone, if we dare to take the opportunity.

Show up for the kid that just wants someone to use their chosen name, to acknowledge their pronouns, to see them for who they are. Show up for the family member that always seems to call at the inconvenient time, but clearly wants to talk, to connect. Show up for your neighbor that needs their lawn mowed instead of complaining that their yard looks atrocious. Show up for the person you don't even know who is hungry and could literally have their life saved by putting a few extra groceries in your cart. Show up

for the person is constantly told that anxiety or ADHD or autism is fake or just something that can be fixed and see them, listen to their experience in the world and honor it. Show up for the cranky teen who is working the drive-thru that you would rather just write off and grumble about because kids these days, maybe that kid needs *one* person to show them grace. Show up for the friend that shares something that is weighing on their heart, don't try to fix it or end up in a game of yeah but do you know what happen to me, listen, honor their experience and who they are. Honestly, show up for the world around you, plant a couple extra pollinators in your garden so the bees have somewhere to go, take the extra second to recycle something, resist the urge to use one more piece of one-use plastic. Each and every one of those things is a way to be the resurrection. It might seem small, it might seem insignificant but to the recipient of your grace, your love, it might just be the thing that brings them back to life.

This Easter season, yes, it's about Jesus and all of the hope and promise that his resurrection brings to us, but it's also about daring to ask how we can keep the resurrection alive, how we can *be* resurrection people, how we can live out the gift we have been freely given. The Easter season is a season of love, and maybe this time around this text is asking us what does love do? And maybe this time we realize...love shows up. **AMEN!!!**