

Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church
Disability Concerns Committee Presents
A Disabled God:
A Lenten Devotional

Thank you for your interest in this devotion. Within these next few weeks, we will be looking at the intersectionality between disability and faith, two things that are often not thought of together. We know that all people are created in the sacred image of the living God. We understand that all people, no matter what their ability, have sacred worth.

We hope that this devotion, which is written for every Sunday during Lent and the last half of Holy Week, will enliven your hearts and minds to see those of us with disabilities as having sacred worth; not more or less worth, but equal worth. We ask you to see Christ in us, and we ask you to see us.

If you are interested in finding out what we are doing, check out our website at <https://www.wpaumc.org/disabilityconcerns> or you can contact our chair, Anais Hussian at anais.firstchurch@gmail.com. We hope you will pray for us as we work towards inclusion and justice for all people no matter what their abilities are.

Thank you,

WPAUMC Disability Concerns Committee

February 18, 2018

Scripture

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. - James 1:2-4

His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. - John 9:2-7

Reflection

Why would God allow people to have disabilities? Could it be to show the world that people can be diverse and God still loves all people no matter what and can still use them for His purposes? No one totally understands God, but we should still trust Him and know that He has a reason and purpose for what He does. Therefore, we need to find joy in all things and be happy that we are being used to fulfill a purpose, even if we don't know what it is yet. One day we will know and will rejoice. Everything on earth is temporary, and as Christians, we have a bright and glorious future to look forward to. Unless we've experienced something, we won't understand it as well and won't be as equipped to help others who are going through the same thing. Perhaps helping others is one of the purposes!

Did you know that everyone feels like they are handicapped in one way or another? It might not be physical or mental, but perhaps it's an inability to do something or understand something. Perhaps, for example, someone loves music and has always wanted to sing, but never had the ability to. Or loves science, but just can't understand how certain things function concerning the current knowledge of black holes, etc. no matter how much they study it. They feel as if they don't have the capability of learning it. Or perhaps they have always wanted to climb a mountain, but their body is just not strong enough. I use to want to be a runner, but gave out of breath too easily. Most of us have something that prevents us from being able to do things we would like to do. I once knew a lady who wanted to play the piano, but had such bad arthritis in her hands, that she was unable to. We all have areas of our hearts, bodies, and minds that just don't work the way we want them to.

Now I realize that these types of inabilities don't affect our daily lives like disabilities do, but God has a purpose for each individual and we are perfect for it or He wouldn't have chosen us for the job. God created each of us perfect in all ways to complete His purposes and help grow His kingdom. Doing things for His kingdom is very important and our purpose as humans. He loves all of us very much and created each of us for a specific reason. We are all very important to Him no matter what our abilities, inabilities, and disabilities are. He sees us all as perfectly formed, beautiful beings. He "knit us together" in our mother's womb, exactly as we were to be.

He is not seeing as we see, but as the Lord only can. In His eyes, there are no disabilities, only children chosen to fulfill a different task. All He asks is that we help one another to do so.

Prayer

Dear Loving Heavenly Father, and Awesome Creator, we thank you for creating us with various abilities that You can use to fulfill Your purposes. What a blessing to be able to serve You. Thank You for creating us with a purpose that we can use throughout the various stages of our life. We love You and trust that we can always fulfill Your purposes, no matter what. Amen.

Mrs. Roselyn O'Brien

February 25, 2018

Scripture

“You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.” – Leviticus 19:14

Reflection

When I think about Lent as a time to acknowledge our shared humanity, I can't help but also think about the times in life when people with disabilities have felt less than human. I do not think this is done maliciously, but instead comes from a lack of awareness and understanding. So often people who are not affected by disability think and act in ways that they do not realize are harmful to people who are affected by disability.

I will never forget an experience that I had while attending a conference with a friend of mine who has Multiple Sclerosis. During worship we were all invited to stand and sing together, but she was not feeling particularly well that day and chose to remain seated while everyone else stood up. She then turned to me and asked whether I had any idea what it felt like to be the only person who stays seated in worship when everyone else stands. As a person who has lived my whole life without a physical disability, I had never considered that before, so I decided to sit down next to her. I do not know that I will ever be able to find the words to articulate how insignificant I felt in that moment when everyone around us was standing and we were not. Even with my friend sitting next to me, it was a really lonely moment when I felt as if I didn't matter.

My experience of remaining seated at that conference prompted me to consider times in my own life where my words and actions have led to people with disabilities feeling less than human. And it continues to prompt me to be mindful of my words and actions today. God calls us all to not only talk about welcome and respect, but to actually practice it in everything that we say and do.

Prayer

Creator God, we know that we are all created in your image, and that your image manifesting itself in unique and different ways has made for a messy shared humanity. Help us to always be aware of the ways that our words and actions affect those of us who have disabilities, and help us to always speak and act in loving and affirming ways for all of your children. Amen.

Rev. Anais Hussian

March 4, 2018

Scripture

“I am poured out like water, and all my bones have fallen apart; my heart is like wax; it melts inside of me; my strength is dried up like a piece of broken pottery. My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you’ve set me down in the dirt of death.” – Psalm 22:14-15

Reflection

I chose to write this reflection because in the last few months I have sat in hospital rooms of my son. This past fall what he was writing off as the flu continued to get worse until he fell into unconsciousness and was taken by life-flight to the local trauma unit. He was diagnosed with endocarditis and because of the damage done to his heart and his brain we were told that he had maybe 72 hours to live.

Thankfully, because God answers prayer, the doctors were wrong. But, what was once a very healthy young man is now winded by getting out of his chair. His body has been stretched to its limits. And although he is pale, weak, hurts in places he didn’t know he had and his memory is questionable at times, we are encouraged that his disability is only temporary. But at this time it is every bit as debilitating as a permanent disability.

His pain has been great and his body has been broken. His life path has been altered. The words of Psalm 22 are very apt. But daily we see him return to the land of the living. He gains strength and capacity. He moves more steps forward than back.

Lent is a time when we look at Jesus’ ministry. As we read in Matthew 15:29-31 *Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.*

Jesus healed in many different ways, people with many different disabilities. But the one thing we see over and over again is that in all instances Jesus saw the people far beyond there disability. He saw each person as what they could be as a whole individual.

In Matthew, we recognize disabilities that could have been life long and others that may have been only temporary. But we instantly see that Jesus didn’t heal them differently. He healed them all equally. If only we could see as Jesus sees. Not the outside, not the temporary, but the inside the heart, the soul that reveals the true person that Jesus calls us all to be.

Prayer

Creator God, you gave us life and bodies to inhabit here on earth, some are not as we would like them to be from the very beginning, others have been damaged, bruised and broken. But you see us though different eyes. You see the beautiful, creation that you love. Help us see others through your eyes. That we may see all the wonderful diversity and creativity of your world. Amen.

Rev. Denise Mains

March 11, 2018

Scripture

Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?" Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world's Light." - John 9.2-5

Reflection

Perhaps it is because we do not understand and are uncomfortable, yet, too often we put the responsibility on adapting and fitting into our society on the individual with the disability. That mindset is also asking the wrong question. We need to ask and live into the answer of how we as a church, as part of a society can improve our hospitality, our welcome, our access. Too many persons with disabilities find our churches places of stares and too many stairs; too often labels instead of love; and stereotypes instead of understanding the person first and foremost as a child of God, which is how we each want to be known.

Let us be energetically at work making our places of worship, our homes, our shared society places where all have access, all are invited, all received, and all involved in our work of being light and love to our world.

Prayer

Hospitable God, you come to be with us. Your Word calls us to welcome the stranger. Forgive us for making persons with disabilities feel like strangers in our midst and by our structures and our attitudes unwelcome in our churches. Lead us to live Your lessons of hospitality. Show us ways to remove the hurdles that block our welcome. May a new light of understanding shine and may that light open our eyes and hearts to see all persons not by our perceptions of their abilities, yet, as beloved children of God. Amen.

The Reverend Sally Jo Snyder

March 18, 2018

Scripture:

“As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.” Galatians 4:13-15

Reflection:

Take a moment to think about all of the hopes and dreams that come with the birth of a new born baby. Think of the things that are possible for that child, the life that child will live, the experiences that child will have.

Now take all those dreams and hopes, crumble them up and throw them away.

That’s kind of what it is like when you come to discover that your child is significantly handicapped. There is a child that you were expecting. That child is not the child you now have. Things will not be as you had planned. Life is going to be difficult. Your heart will break a thousand times as your child struggles with things that other children do easily.

It’s not something that people like to talk about, but it is true. We expect stoic bravery from parents of special needs children. We want to be inspired. We want to know just enough, without getting into the details of daily living which makes life so extremely difficult and frustrating for parents of special needs children. People want to see the happy ending without enduring the challenges along the way.

I believe it is healthy to acknowledge our grief for the loss of what was expected. Too often parents of special needs children are expected to put aside those feelings of grief and are made to feel guilty because life didn’t end up as we had planned. It is hard when well-meaning people say, “God only gives special needs children to special parents.” No thank you. We’d have rather not been so special. We’d have rather had the easy life.

But after the sting of loss subsides, then one can truly appreciate the blessings. One can appreciate the amazing workers who help disabled children to do things which had previously seemed impossible. One can appreciate that there are many ways to say “I love you,” even if the ability to form the words with one’s mouth is lacking. No, God doesn’t ‘give special needs children to special parents.’ More often than not, the stress on one’s marriage when raising a special needs child can be overwhelming. But God does equip and empower us to do the hard work of every-day living, and draws near to those who call. And if one pays attention, one will find the blessings of raising a special needs child will become too numerous to count.

Prayer:

All-loving God, by your grace, you give us the strength we need to face each new day as an opportunity to experience your blessings anew. You know the challenges that face us when those we love experience challenging circumstances. You love our children more than we could ever imagine, and draw near to them in their moments of challenge and difficulty. Thank you for placing in our lives people who encourage us as we walk along our life’s journey. Help us to

receive the blessings you have for us with gratitude and praise. We pray this in the name of your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rev. Jim Sands

March 25, 2018

Scripture

David asked, “Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan’s sake?” Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and he was summoned to David. The king said to him, “Are you Ziba?” And he said, “At your service!” The king said, “Is there anyone remaining of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?” Ziba said to the king, “There remains a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet.” The king said to him, “Where is he?” Ziba said to the king, “He is in the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar.” Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. Mephibosheth son of Jonathan son of Saul came to David, and fell on his face and did obeisance. David said, “Mephibosheth!” He answered, “I am your servant.”⁷ David said to him, “Do not be afraid, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan; I will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul, and you yourself shall eat at my table always.” He did obeisance and said, “What is your servant, that you should look upon a dead dog such as I?”

Then the king summoned Saul’s servant Ziba, and said to him, “All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master’s grandson. You and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him, and shall bring in the produce, so that your master’s grandson may have food to eat; but your master’s grandson Mephibosheth shall always eat at my table.” Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, “According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so your servant will do.” Mephibosheth^[d] ate at David’s^[e] table, like one of the king’s sons. Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in Ziba’s house became Mephibosheth’s servants. Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king’s table. Now he was lame in both his feet. - 2 Samuel 9

Reflection

I am friends with people because we share the same interests, we share in good conversation, they are good listeners, they make me laugh and they make me think. I do not identify them as Sarah, with the one dimple; Bill, with the mustache; Sue, who is blind; or DJ who uses a power chair. No. I call them by the names they want to be called. Just as they would never introduce me as, “this is Sally, she wears glasses.” Nor would I ever even think to introduce them by saying, “this is DJ, she uses a power chair.”

The important identifier we share is friend. Because they are my friends I honor their individuality and uniqueness and I respect the relationship we share as friends. Because they are my friends, I want what is right for them and will bring them happiness. Because I know them, I want them to have the opportunity to reach the fullness of their humanity and I will do whatever

I can when the opportunity arises to make that happen. I have experienced them doing the same for me because they are my friends.

Persons with disabilities don't want nor need our actions of good will and care for them coming from a place of pity. That is offensive to both the giver and the receiver. As we all do, act for our common good and our wellbeing, because it is the kind, just, human way to be with one another.

Prayer

Holy One, You have made us to be in relationship with one another. We need each other to be and to become more fully who we are made to be. We connect with one another based on shared interests and likes and with those with whom spending time is a gift. Thank you for making all of us to be children who need each other. Bless our friendships and our relationships that they may be honorable and bring fullness to us and to the broader communities of which we are a part. Amen.

The Reverend Sally Jo Snyder

March 29, 2018

Scripture

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. ¹³ "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Jesus Predicts His Betrayal

"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: 'He who shared my bread has turned against me.'

"I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am who I am. Very truly I tell you, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me. - John 13:1-20

Reflection

I have been in the community with people with obvious and varying levels of disabilities in places where they are served by others. There are times people directly talk around the person, there are times when things are just automatically done for people – even when they can do for themselves, and there are times these individuals are mocked. Then there are the times someone clearly takes the time to listen, there are the times help is *offered* not forced, and times where a handshake and an extra five minutes is given.

How does God call us to serve those with disabilities? Jesus gives an example of how to serve with this story of washing the disciple's feet. God in human form literally makes himself equal with the lowest servants – washing feet was one of the lowest jobs. Jesus did this job not just for one, but for all, including the one who He knows will betray Him later that night.

Later when discussing this action – prior to letting everyone present hear the prediction of His betrayal Jesus explains that this action was to set an example – His disciples are to do for

others what Jesus has done for them. We are, as Christians, called to serve others. Jesus also shows us that we are to teach and lead others by serving. To truly serve we are to serve with love.

To serve those with disabilities one must first remember that they are most importantly *people*. Talk to the individual, not the interpreter, ask if the person wants help and what help they want and respect their wishes, and no matter what the person may or may not understand, serve them with love and without mocking them. A listening ear, loving conversation, and five minutes of time is sometimes all that is needed.

It is also key to remember that Jesus tells His followers to serve others and this includes all followers – not just those without disabilities. A person with disabilities can be an important part of the service a church provides – they are part of the body of Christ. From asking them to pray with and for you, helping greet at a service, or any job they want and are capable of doing within the life of the church (both local and universal) we are truly allowing all of the body to *be the body*.

Jesus not only shows us how to serve others, but with His interaction with Peter, how to let others serve us when we need it, which can in turn be a means of service to the other person. When we are open and willing to serve others – those with and without disabilities – we are becoming more like Jesus.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, bless those I serve and those who serve me. Help me be the kind of leader who serves those they teach. Show me how to accept help and service of others. Guide my thoughts and actions to be more like you every day. In the name of your son Jesus Christ, the great servant. Amen.

Mrs. Patty Bogdewic

March 30, 2018

Scripture

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!" Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this. Luke 22:14-23

Reflection

I have a mental picture of the Last Supper. It's probably not like the picture you're used to seeing. To be honest, I've never seen a depiction quite like it either, yet I'm relatively certain it's a whole lot more accurate than the perfect picture we are used to seeing.

I doubt that the Disciples all sat in a nice neat row on one side of the table. I doubt that they all had perfect vision, perfect hearing, perfect speech, perfect gait, or any of the other things society expects from its leaders. I doubt they had perfect hair, perfect smiles, and perfect manners, like society expects from its elite.

My picture of the Last Supper includes this rag-tag bunch of disciples passing the loaf around, peering closely to see what it was, straining to hear Jesus' words, blindly grabbing what was handed to them, awkwardly handing it to the next disciple.

My picture of the Last Supper also includes someone holding the cup for their neighbor who wasn't agile enough to do it themselves, quietly repeating Jesus' words to one who didn't understand, or gently guiding the one who couldn't quite see.

All of the human race, created equally in the image of God, was represented around the table that night. Everyone was reminded that the body would be broken for everyone, and blood would be shed for everyone, not a select few. And that Christ would come again, not for those whom the world deemed worthy in their perfection, but for those who are willing to see their brothers and sisters as Christ did, and to offer to them the nourishment of faith and hope.

Prayer

Savior God, Forgive us for those times when we seek to define perfection by our standards and expectations, rather than in the love for all people as you do. Amen.

Rev. Bev Roscoe

March 31, 2018

Scripture

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. - 2 Corinthians 12:7b-9

Reflection

The twenty something year old woman danced around during the staff song at the close of camp worship. She was part of the special needs week for those with intellectual disabilities and had Down's syndrome. After the third chorus of the staff worship song she ran to the stage and began joyfully dancing with the staff as a means of worship. Her joy and exuberance in worship remains in my mind an example of how to worship full of joy and for God – not for myself. During that worship activity she was a very active member of the worship and church life that night.

God made me different, and for that I am thankful...even though those differences can often make me feel weak – like a lesser person. These weaknesses can be a blessing as they also make me rely on God, not myself. When I cannot handle something on my own I need to rely on God – in fact even when I think I can handle something on my own I need to rely on God.

When I was younger, I wanted to be "normal" and would have loved to not have my attention issues. Now, despite the times I still struggle with attention difficulties I would not give away my ADHD for anything – it is a key part of who I am. I have learned to use the unique gifts God has given me to be who God made me to be, and to contribute to worship and the life of the church in accordance to the gifts God has given me – not what I think I *should* be like, or even what others think I should be.

Everyone can contribute in some way to the life of the church – from the young woman who demonstrated joyful worship to the emotional person who can be the loving and prayerful listening ear that someone needs in a time of pain. God can use what we feel is a weakness to help us grow. We may beg God to take our challenges away, and sometimes the answer may be "yes" but often the answer is "no." And that "no" from God helps us grow in faith and trust in God, and can in fact be for the benefit of the entire Kingdom of God, even if it is not the answer we desire.

All people are imperfect and need Jesus – and though all have different struggles and areas they need to grow in, God uses *all things* for His glory. As members of the church we must listen to God's voice to determine how the church is to function and grow. Part of this is using the gifts God has given to each part of the church – even gifts that may not be considered *normal* – because God has given all His people gifts – including those who have a disability. By remembering that all people are part of the church – disabled or otherwise – we remember that God made us all and redeems us all.

If I was able to wish away and rid myself of my ADHD I would not. Sure, it would make many areas of my life easier and rid myself of major stressors, but it would also completely change who I am and strip me of some of the gifts God has given me as part of my identity. In

the same way, we must remember that to take out key people from our church community we would not be the church God has made us to be. God made us, not how we may want to be, but how He in His perfect wisdom knows we must be for the growth of His kingdom. We all need Jesus and He came for all of us, no matter what disabilities we may or may not have.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, remind us that we are wonderfully made by you. We are who you designed and need to be true to the gifts you gave us. Show us how to love and accept all those in and out of the church. Guide us to ways we can continuously include those who we may otherwise exclude. Continue to enlighten us of ways we can show your love and acceptance of everyone. In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Mrs. Patty Bogdewic

April 1, 2018

Scripture

“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’”

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’” – John 20:19-29

Reflection

When many people think of the resurrection, they think of the joy that comes with the forgiveness of sins and the promise of life everlasting. Throughout this devotion, you read Scripture and reflections on disability and how they affect people on a daily basis, so we will be looking at this Scripture from a disability perspective.

For many, to be disabled is to be overlooked, to be unseen, or worse, to be seen and judged. There are as many different types of disabilities as there are people, not one disabled person is the same. But, we as a community of disabled individuals have a voice, and our voice needs to be heard.

In the Scripture, we have Jesus coming to his disciples after his resurrection, but there is something different about Jesus. He shows the disciples his hands and his side; the wounds that remain. Jesus, the Son of God, in His glorified body, is disabled. This should bring hope to people to people with disabilities, because our God has experienced disability and is forever the disabled God. According to, Thomas E. Reynolds, “At the cross, Jesus subjects himself to disability, and his resurrected body continues to bear his scars as a sign of God's solidarity with humanity.” I would add, solidarity with those often forgotten or pitied by the larger society.

Those of us with disabilities can find comfort in the truth of the disabled God, the God that is scarred for our sake, for our transgressions, not so that we would become non-disabled, but to find solidarity among those who have disabilities, and with all of humanity. Throughout Scripture, God often uses the limited to do the unlimited. What if God is speaking through the disabled community to get the attention of His people? What if God became human, became disabled, to spread the message that the non-disabled need to look at the disabled to find the truth of the Gospel?

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, let us not forget one of the deeper truths, the truth of the disabled God. Jesus is the God who chose disability to be in more solidarity with people, especially the forgotten in society, and to bring the gift of salvation to all people. When you want to see the face of the resurrected God, look at your neighbor, even your disabled neighbor, and you will see Jesus, you will see the resurrection.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have taken our sins upon yourself, you have taken disability upon yourself, for our sake. You have lived the full human experience, you understand us better than we understand ourselves. You know the importance of all people and how we contribute to Your body. Help us see that truth in all people, no matter what their ability. Help us to see each other as people of sacred worth, freed from sin and death, because of you, because you died, because you rose, because you live, and because you will come again. Amen.

Rev. Chad Bogdewic