



"And when they could not bring [the paralyzed man] to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him..." —Mark 2:3-4 (paraphrased)

WORSHIP SERVICE

Call to Worship

Friends of good faith, we have worked through the years for a world and a church that is more like what God would have it be. We have fought for equal rights for all of God's children, regardless of skin color. We have sought inclusion and balance among genders. We have worked to recognize and value differences of language, culture, and nation that can separate us as God's very own. In these worthy acts and more, we have experienced a large measure of success. Thanks be to God!

Yet, even as we affirm the value of racial, gender, and cultural diversity, we often live under the illusion that physical and mental differences do not matter. In well-intentioned efforts to treat everyone the same, we fail to accommodate special needs. We gloss over the uniqueness and life-giving beauty present in our communities in those who are different in this way. We can do better. We will do better!

Invocation

God of all people, we know that your perfect image is reflected in all people. Help us to be aware of the beauty in front of us. Give us the energy to discuss difficult topics, and the courage to risk being misunderstood. May we act with renewed confidence, in the hope and promise that any difficulty and misunderstanding will be overcome by love; a love that began and is rooted in you. Amen.

Sermon Starter: "So God created humankind in his image"

Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27

Message: We are all created in God's image.

Disabilities Awareness Month

March 2011

Food for Thought: I am created in the image of God. You are created in the image of God. We are all created in the image of God. How do these proclamations affect the way you look at yourself when you look at the image staring back at you in the mirror? How about when you see a beautiful person on the cover of a magazine? What about when you see a toddler with Down Syndrome or an adult with multiple amputations? All different, all created in God's perfect image.

Textual Insight: The scripture is clear that both men and women are created in God's image. We usually don't have a problem with this; we understand that God is big enough to encompass both genders. But do we see God so clearly in those whom have been labeled as disabled, whether in mind or body? How might we expand our vision of "created in God's image" so that we might see God in all of humankind?

Illustration: He had a bird's eye view of the world. Well, this corner of the world anyway. From his desk in this building that sat on a busy intersection he could really watch the world go by: the walkers and runners out making the most of the day; the shoppers and parents, lugging groceries and pushing strollers; the business folk out at lunch, kids playfully pushing and shoving their way home from school.

Then one day he saw her on the corner, in a wheel chair. It was actually more than a wheel chair, with a motor on the back that propelled it at what looked like break-neck speeds. Observing another moment he saw that she had no arms or legs below elbow and knee. How sad, he thought, I wonder how she does anything?

Days later as he was coming out of the mini-mart she almost ran him down. After apologies, she struck up a conversation. As they were parting ways, she stuck out her nub inviting a "hand" shake. Taken aback, he tried to act as casually as possible in meeting her outstretched arm which he shook. He could feel the unusual construct of bones beneath—bones that had been operated on many times—and the rough texture of skin that saw its share of work.

As they formed a quick friendship, he came to know that she had been born with her extremities. But more importantly he came to know that she was the proud mother of a young man of true promise, a smoker who wanted desperately to quit, the owner of a big heart who felt a bit guilty because she didn't do more for the poor in their town (much as he felt). She had a wickedly sharp sense of humor, a love for chocolate milk and independent films. In short, she was a lot like him, but also more than he was in some ways; and less in others. He was who he was, uniquely crafted by God. And she was who she was, uniquely crafted by God.

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