

## February 4, 2024 Sermon Manuscript

### Leviticus 21:16–24 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> The Lord said to Moses, <sup>17</sup> “Say to Aaron: ‘For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. <sup>18</sup> No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; <sup>19</sup> no man with a crippled foot or hand, <sup>20</sup> or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. <sup>21</sup> No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the food offerings to the Lord. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. <sup>22</sup> He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; <sup>23</sup> yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the Lord, who makes them holy.’”

<sup>24</sup> So Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

<sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”

<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we

think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

### Mark 2:1-12 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. <sup>2</sup> They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup> Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup> Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>6</sup> Now some teachers of the law\* were sitting there, thinking to themselves, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

<sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ <sup>10</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, <sup>11</sup> “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>12</sup> He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

\* Or *scribes*

### Disabilities and Deconstructing “Normalcy”

This week, my study of the gospel passage directed my sermon to the subject of disabilities of the body or mind and how we as Christians think about them, whether it’s one we deal with ourselves or that we encounter in others or even how we think about the possibility of becoming disabled that our bodies

are always vulnerable to. Today, I want to acknowledge (and empathize with) how disabilities of the body or mind often cause great difficulty, sorrow, and even outright suffering, but any shame or stigma or marginalization that would result from it is failing to see what God sees. The good news is that nothing we experience in our bodies prevents us from being beloved by God, gifted with His Holy Spirit, and a valuable contributor to His kingdom. A disability could be a condition one is born with, or it could result from an accident or trauma or disease, or from aging, but estimates are that 15% of the world's population have some kind of cognitive, physical, or developmental disability.<sup>1</sup> And there are an endless number of disabilities that can beset a human body or mind, from macular degeneration, to quadriplegia, to bipolar disorder, to hearing impairment or deafness, to PTSD, to a learning difference, to Down syndrome, to depression, to a condition that limits our diet, to cerebral palsy, to chronic pain - we might even do well to consider addiction as a disability - but the list could go on and on.<sup>2</sup> Obviously the significance of a disability - the impact of it on one's life - can vary enormously. In fact, there may be a condition like these I listed that you suffer from, but *you've never thought of* as a 'disability'; and I'm not looking to label anybody or any condition. However, the way I'd invite you to think about disabilities for the purposes of this sermon - as you consider any conditions that you or those close to you deal with - is not what *you* would label that way, but as any condition of the body or mind that you think *our culture or society* would view as diminishing of one's life experience. And this is because - like it or not, as we will see - whatever is the prevailing attitude in our culture about a particular condition will tend to be what *our* attitude is about it prior to being educated on it or giving it much thought.

As a result of being sinful human beings and living in fallen societies, many of our attitudes about disabilities have been shaped by the largely unspoken code every society has for what is "normal". Every society is prone to order people as being *more or less valuable* based upon a *standard of normalcy* - what is imagined to be a normal body and normal mind - and to train us in stigmas and biases that reinforce all of this.<sup>3</sup> Last week we talked about how the influence of groups and society can cause us to unwittingly cooperate with evil purposes or oppose the purposes of God, well this can absolutely occur when it comes to disability. And the Church is not exempt!

I'll never forget when I was probably in my late teens, I attended a healing service at a church in Decatur, Alabama led by a Pentecostal evangelist named Reinhard Bonnke. And when it came time for healing prayer, some people were going up to the front and having Bonnke pray for them. But, what got my attention was when some folks sitting near me began praying for a boy with Down Syndrome who was in attendance *to be healed of his Down Syndrome*. And I recall being viscerally disturbed by this, because to me it was one thing to pray to be healed of cancer, but this felt like a rejection of who this boy was, who God had made him to be.<sup>4</sup> Well, upon reflection, what I believe was motivating people there

<sup>1</sup> (O'Halon, "Religion and Disability," 2013). [Roden]

<sup>2</sup> This survey list of disabilities adapted from Brock <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/23312521.2021.1912684?needAccess=true>

<sup>3</sup> For example, a disability might be defined as a physical or mental condition that hinders a person from what most consider "normal" human functioning. But even that definition - and the use of the word 'normal' - implies that a disability renders someone as lesser than those without it.

<sup>4</sup> An excerpt from an 8/28/22 sermon that provides some background to an experience that had shaped my perspective on Down Syndrome:

*Gene Stallings was the head football coach for Alabama from 1990 to 1996. And when I was about ten years old, my mom managed to bid on and win a day with Gene Stallings for my dad and I to enjoy. And it was certainly one of the coolest days of my childhood. Stallings had recently coached Alabama to a National Championship, and we got to go to his office, where Coach analyzed a little film for us; we went to the stadium, where I got to go into the players' locker room and walk out to midfield. That day probably has a lot to do with me being as fervent an Alabama fan as I am today. But what I actually remember most about that day is coach Stallings' son, John Mark, and the time I spent with him. John Mark was about 30 years old at that time, but he was born with Downs' Syndrome and a severe heart defect. Doctors hadn't believed he would live more than a year, but he ended up living to the age of 62! And while his dad was the coach, Johnny was pretty much always nearby, hanging out on the sidelines at games and riding around on a golf cart at practice. That day, my dad and I got to ride around on the golf cart with Johnny. But later I read in Coach Stallings memoir about how much having Johnny as his son had taught him. Stallings explained that having already had two daughters, he was overjoyed when the doctors said "it's a boy"; and he had expected to have a big strapping son to carry on the family tradition of playing football. But when the doctors then determined that Johnny was born with Downs, he and his wife were initially devastated and depressed. And of course, back then doctors strongly urged them to institutionalize Johnny. But Gene and his wife refused; they pressed into their faith in God. Now initially Coach Stallings prayed that God would change Johnny and make him a normal, healthy little boy, but instead he said God changed him, and left Johnny the way he was. Gene says eventually he - and his wife - would come to just fall in*

was the societal definition of what is ‘normal’ and the belief that ‘normal’ was best and anything else was worse, therefore God must be for it.<sup>5</sup> But this mentality falls short of God’s heart about disabilities and to great harm, because while disabilities of the body or mind often cause great difficulty, sorrow, and even outright suffering, any shame or stigma or marginalization that would result from it is failing to see what God sees. The good news is that nothing we experience in our bodies prevents us from being beloved by God, gifted with His Holy Spirit, and a valuable contributor to His kingdom.

But all of us are vulnerable to being blinded by our society’s normalcy code and having this mindset that being physically or mentally ‘normal’ is *better*. And one contributing factor may actually be our tendency to read Jesus’ miracles of healing as Him restoring a disabled person to a state of ‘normalcy’.<sup>6</sup> But if we take, for example, a miracle like we read about from Mark’s gospel this morning - the healing of the paralyzed man - this story is **much more** about this man’s faith bringing him forgiveness and into communion with God - and Jesus restoring his sense of dignity & value in the community - all of these are much more significant results of his healing than the physical curing of his paralysis.<sup>7</sup> And let me explain...

You see, it’s difficult for us to appreciate how socially and religiously devastating this condition would’ve been for a first century Jew. Of course, this man suffered from the physical difficulties that came with being paralyzed, and in those days it likely would’ve consigned him to a life of poverty, since he was unable to work. And none of this should be minimized. But in the religious climate of his day, he also would’ve experienced tremendous stigma, as society would’ve assumed His disability was a punishment from God for some sin He or His parents committed. And, because of his condition, the religious leaders would’ve prevented him from entering the temple. Now, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit and we know God is with us wherever we go and we can pray to Him wherever we want. But for a first century Jew, they drew close to God by going to the temple and making the appointed sacrifices. And yet, this man wouldn’t have been allowed to do any of that because of his disability.

But why? Well, this prohibition for the blind and the lame had actually developed over many centuries as a result of a misapplication of scripture. I would imagine many of you found the passage Leviticus 21 to be pretty disturbing. In it, God prohibits anyone with a physical deformity from serving in the tabernacle or temple.<sup>8</sup> But the reason for this had not been because God disapproved of the blind or the lame or dwarfs or those with hunchbacks. Instead, God was instituting an object lesson, a visual metaphor. Just like God required that only unblemished animals be sacrificed to Him, God also required unblemished priests - priests without deformities - as a visual reminder representing His holiness and perfection, as well as the moral purity He was calling the Israelites to.<sup>9</sup> But even though disabled priests were disqualified from this most sacred priestly duty, there were still countless other ways they could serve and things they could do that non-priest could not.<sup>10</sup>

However, what had originated as an object lesson had devolved into much more by Jesus’ day, as these restrictions on disabled priests from Leviticus 21 had come to be applied to *all people*,<sup>11</sup> such that

---

*love with Johnny; Johnny was so loving and unselfish - he realized that his life wouldn’t have been nearly as rich if he hadn’t had the privilege of raising a child with Downs Syndrome.*

<sup>5</sup> Kate Bowen-Evans calls this the “cult of normalcy”.

<sup>6</sup> Just because we have been trained to understand His healing miracles this way, doesn’t mean that’s how they should be understood.

<sup>7</sup> Myers: “Nonphysically disabled readers must be aware of the biases we unconsciously bring to biblical narratives of “healing.” Obviously any interpretation that stresses the biomedical definition of “wholeness” excludes the physically disabled from the good news. If, however, we focus upon the broader socio-symbolic meaning of illness and healing, the stories address us all equally. After all, in Mark the true impediments to discipleship have nothing to do with physical impairment, but with spiritual and ideological disorders: “Having eyes can you not see? Having ears can you not hear?” (8:18).

<sup>8</sup> (later on)

<sup>9</sup> It could be argued that God was *accommodating* (a theological term) to the society’s normalcy code.

<sup>10</sup> But despite being disqualified from this most sacred priestly duty, there were still 36 ways that priests with disabilities could serve and things they could do that non-priest could not. And their physical needs were still provided for. (Roden)

<sup>11</sup> For more on the role of the 2 Samuel 5:8 (in particular the Septuagint’s translation of it) in the development of this prohibition, see page 8 and following of Razafiarivony’s article: <https://www.biblicalthology.com/Research/RazafiarivonyD04.pdf>

the blind and the lame were not allowed to appear at the temple before the Lord *at all!*<sup>12</sup> So, when the paralyzed man's friends go to great trouble to get this man in front of Jesus, Jesus intends to heal his paralysis to eliminate the unjust impacts - economically, socially, and religiously - on his life.

Verse 5 says that when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now, the scribes aren't happy about this, and they feign like they're being defensive on God's behalf, but really Jesus is stepping on the authority they've had to be the ones to say who and when God forgives. So Jesus tells them a riddle of sorts. So in verse 9 He asks them,

"9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?'"<sup>10</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man,<sup>11</sup> "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

Of course, it's actually easier to say "your sins are forgiven" than to heal someone of paralysis. But in an age when magicians and miraculous healings were commonplace,<sup>13</sup> what's even harder is to *actually* forgive someone's sin; because the scribes are right about that: only God, or the Son of God, can forgive.

It's not that this man being able to walk is insignificant, but even more significant is *the economic and social and religious justice* it brings him. And Jesus was performing miracles of healing like this to point to an even greater spiritual reality that His death & resurrection would usher in: where disability does not disqualify anyone from the priesthood of all believers or diminish their potential as a minister for God's kingdom.

You see, at the cross, Jesus would fulfill the Old Covenant requirements of being *both* the unblemished lamb<sup>14</sup> *and* the unblemished priest<sup>15</sup> that Leviticus 21 requires. But, in submitting to the cross, He would also allow *His body* to become disabled. Just listen to how Isaiah describes Jesus as the Suffering Servant, and ask yourself if this doesn't sound just like the way the world views & responds to those with disabilities? Isaiah writes,

<sup>53:14</sup> Just as there were many who were appalled at him—  
his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being  
and his form marred beyond human likeness...  
<sup>54:2</sup> He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,

<sup>12</sup> Razafiarivony reports the blind & lame were not allowed past the Beautiful Gate, which meant they were not able to view the offering of their sacrifices like their peers could from the Court of Men. Keener basically affirms this, with less detail (p.97).

<sup>13</sup> Myers: "We forget that the discourse of the 'supernatural' was hardly extraordinary in antiquity. Even 'historians' like Herodotus and Josephus regularly invoked cosmic signs and miraculous, super-human actions to explain or justify the events they narrated. So common were 'magical' feats that Mark clearly wishes to discourage us from construing Jesus' work in such terms."

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 12:5 - "The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats."

- Also note Exodus 13:2 - "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal."

- 1 Peter 1:18-19 - "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

- Hebrews 9:14 - "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"

<sup>15</sup> Hebrews 14:4 - "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,[a] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess."

stricken by him, and afflicted. (end quote)

So Jesus, as the spotless lamb, allowed His body to be broken for us. But then, in His resurrection, He was raised with a body that was transformed, yes, but *still disabled*: still with the marks of disability in His hands and feet,<sup>16</sup> such that His disciples could see and feel where the nails had been hammered in.<sup>17</sup>

Provocatively, disability theologians like Amos Yong & Brian Brock question the prevailing assumption that in the afterlife all signs and effects of disabilities will be erased. This belief may once again be an indication of how our imaginations are held captive to society's normalcy code. They suggest, instead, that "in much the same way that Jesus' resurrected body, though glorified, still bore the marks of his crucifixion wounds"... disabilities we have might in some sense "be *retained*, albeit in a *transformed or redeemed way*."<sup>18</sup>

Take, for example, what Chantal Huinink imagines. Chantal was born with cerebral palsy and has never walked, but uses a motorized wheelchair. "Rather than picturing herself in the eternal state *without* a wheelchair, Chantal envisions the possibility of riding around heaven in a 'souped-up' wheelchair, much as God himself is portrayed in Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 7:9 as moving on a wheeled throne. As Chantal puts it, 'More than the ability to walk, I think I would like a wheelchair equipped with jet packs!'"

While disabilities of the body or mind often cause great difficulty, sorrow, and even outright suffering, any shame or stigma or marginalization that would result from it is failing to see what God sees. The good news is that nothing we experience in our bodies prevents us from being beloved by God, gifted with His Holy Spirit, and a valuable contributor to His kingdom.

So how can all of this impact the way we think about any disabilities we have or encounter? Well, in our passage from First Corinthians 12, St Paul is trying to tell us. There, he is using the body as a metaphor for the Church and writes in verse 22 that "those parts...that seem to be weaker are (actually) indispensable,<sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honorable (or so the world has trained us to think)

<sup>16</sup> Lamar Hardwick via Matt Tebbe

<sup>17</sup> ● John 20:19-20 - "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"<sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

● John 20:26-27 - "A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"<sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

<sup>18</sup> (There are) two main views in the literature addressing the question whether disabilities will be "healed" in the resurrection. On one side is what we might call the "traditional view," according to which disabilities are a "tragic effect of the fall" (to borrow Brian Brock's phrasing) that will be fully eliminated or erased in the resurrection. At the risk of oversimplifying, the basic logic of this traditional view runs something along the following lines. The fall profoundly impacted all of creation; indeed, the creation itself came under a curse as a result of humankind's sinful rebellion against God. Sin, disease, and death—and all the attendant difficulties of life, disabilities included—thus came into the world. In the eschaton, all the effects of the fall, sin, and the curse will be reversed or eliminated. Accordingly, if disability is one of those effects, then disability, too, will be erased in the eschaton.<sup>3</sup>

More recently, some disability theologians (such as Amos Yong, Brian Brock, and others) have suggested an alternative approach to understanding the nature of disability as it relates to the resurrection and the eschatological state. In general, these authors have argued that in the resurrection, disabilities will (in some sense) be retained, albeit in a transformed or redeemed way. The basic idea here is that while the pain, discomfort, frustration, social exclusion, marginalization, and even outright oppression that are often either the cause of or associated with disabilities will no longer be present in the eternal state, the resurrected bodies (and minds) of individuals who experienced disability in this present life may still (in some sense) bear the "marks" of those disabilities—marks that will, in turn, serve as powerful testimonies to the depth and breadth of God's transforming grace in much the same way that Jesus' resurrected body, though glorified, still bore the marks of his crucifixion wounds.

One of the principal motivations for taking this sort of position is the concern that how we think about disability in the afterlife can have significant ramifications for life in the "here and now." As Yong explains in a 2009 article:

Asking the right questions about the afterlife has implications for how we conduct business in the present life. If we think that the afterlife is a 'magical' fix for all the challenges posed by disability, then we may be more inclined to simply encourage people with disabilities (as has long been done) to bear up under their lot in life and await God's eschatological healing for their lives. Yet this assumes that the task of responding to the issues of disability belongs to God, and it also assumes that disability is primarily (perhaps only) an individual affair. I have maintained throughout this essay, however, that there is an intractable social dimension to disability, and how we think about the afterlife shapes our vision for the present one. If life in the hereafter manifests the divine and cosmic justice we all hope for, and also includes people with disabilities in a sense just as they are—see, for example, the parable of the eschatological banquet at which the blind, lame, and deaf are included (Luke 14:1–24)—then such notions of justice and inclusion should also guide our present efforts.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15665399.2009.10819997>

we treat with special honor.” With this, Paul exposes the world’s normalcy codes as being blind to how God views us,<sup>19</sup> and he asserts that the disabled are of no lesser value for the disabled are gifted with the same Holy Spirit as everyone else. In fact, those with disabilities are indispensable, because they are going to have perspectives and sensitivities that others do not have!<sup>20 21</sup>

Brock reminds us that “it is possible for the Holy Spirit to use people with all forms of dis/abilities for God’s revelatory work and divine love.” And this provides an important corrective, because often the Church fails to view those with more significant disabilities as a gift. The Church thinks of them as people who can be served, but doesn’t have much expectation for God to use that person to love others in grace & truth. Indeed, Jesus’ suffering & death remind us that God can do even greater things through disability. Someone the world may view as healthy and ‘normal’ may be incapable of achieving what God can achieve through another’s seemingly weakened state.<sup>22</sup>

While disabilities of the body or mind often cause great difficulty, sorrow, and even outright suffering, any shame or stigma or marginalization that would result from it is failing to see what God sees. The good news is that nothing we experience in our bodies prevents us from being beloved by God, gifted with His Holy Spirit, and a valuable contributor to His kingdom.

So nothing I’m saying here today is meant to minimize the tremendous struggle that can be experienced from living with a disability of the body or mind. And I’m also not saying one should never pray to be healed or use therapeutics of medicine or other treatments to lessen that struggle: by all means!! But to the extent that we or a loved one’s disability has to be accepted, my prayer is that God would give us His eyes. As one writer on disability has suggested, “God does not see people with intellectual or physical disabilities, and say (what we often do:), ‘That’s so sad’ or ‘that’s so hard.’ God sees people with disabilities and says, ‘Beloved.’ God says, ‘Blessed are you.’ God says, ‘You belong with me.’”<sup>23</sup> And when God’s Spirit is involved, we should anticipate surprising and unexpected blessings! My prayer is that God would help us as individuals and as a parish to recognize the biases and stigmas of society’s normalcy codes for the lies and harm that they are. And if there are blind spots in how we’re doing things here at St Matthias - not if, I’m sure there *are!* - so, if you detect any of the blind spots we have for how we value all people and recognize their gifts, please let me know. Because the good news is that nothing we experience in our bodies prevents us from being beloved by God, gifted with His Holy Spirit, and a valuable contributor to His kingdom.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

## Sources

Becker, Amy Julia. “Are People With Disabilities ‘Less Than’ in Leviticus?” March 3, 2023.

<https://amyjuliabecker.com/are-people-with-disabilities-less-than-in-leviticus/>

Becker, Amy Julia. “How God Thinks About Disability.” October 31, 2022.

<https://amyjuliabecker.com/how-god-thinks-about-disability/>

<sup>19</sup> Normalcy codes are all hiding the obvious fact that no matter how functional someone’s body or mind is, they’re still vulnerable to death. We’re all disabled by the fact of our mortality.

<sup>20</sup> Particularly from a spiritual perspective, provided that the pill of worldly sorrow hasn’t proven too powerful and they’ve been able to turn to God in their difficulty.

<sup>21</sup> Kate Bowen-Evans

<sup>22</sup> Kate Bowen-Evans

<sup>23</sup> Amy Julia Becker, “How God Thinks About Disability.”

Bowen-Evans, Kate. "How Brian Brock's Hermeneutic of Disability is Relevant to All Marginalised Bodies." Journal of Disability & Religion, 26:2, 165-175, DOI: [10.1080/23312521.2022.2046526](https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2022.2046526) [Article available upon request.]

Brian Brock (2022) What is Research on Disability? Looking Backward to See Forward, Journal of Disability & Religion, 26:4, 390-413, DOI: [10.1080/23312521.2021.1912684](https://doi.org/10.1080/23312521.2021.1912684)

Healy, Mary. The Gospel of Mark. Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Baker, 2008.

Myers, Ched. Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus Anniversary Edition, Kindle Edition. Orbis, 2019.

Ralston, Christopher. "Disability and the Resurrection: An Introduction." April 21, 2022. <https://henrycenter.tiu.edu/2022/04/disability-and-the-resurrection-an-introduction/>

Razafiarivony, Davidson. "Exclusion of the Blind and Lame from the Temple and the Indignation of the Religious Leaders in Matt 21:12-15." The American Journal of Biblical Theology Volume 19(34) August 26, 2018. <https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research/RazafiarivonyD04.pdf>

Roden, James. "The Ministry of the Disabled to the Church: The Imperative and Benefits of Disability Ministry in the Church." (Thesis for: Doctor of Ministry Advisor: Gary McIntosh, Ph.D. and Alan McMahan, Ph.D., Biola University). [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360551603\\_The\\_Ministry\\_of\\_the\\_Disabled\\_to\\_the\\_Church\\_The\\_Imperative\\_and\\_Benefits\\_of\\_Disability\\_Ministry\\_in\\_the\\_Church](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360551603_The_Ministry_of_the_Disabled_to_the_Church_The_Imperative_and_Benefits_of_Disability_Ministry_in_the_Church) May 2022.

ANGLICAN MOMENT:  
A FEW TIPS ON CHOOSING A SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR LENT

Choose a practice that is measurable, meaningful, & manageable...

- Measurable - it's easy to know if you do it or not
- Meaningful - it matches an area of life where you would like to make more space for God or be less reliant on an earthly thing
- Manageable - be realistic about something you could actually do, given your life circumstance

Some words on fasting...

Some possible ways to fast:

- Fasting from food: drinks, chocolate, desserts, coffee/caffeine, and alcohol.
- Fasting from media: cell phone, TV, radio, music, email, computers, and games.
- Fasting from habits/comforts: shopping, looking in the mirror, elevators, parking in a close spot, finding the shortest line at the store, reading, and sports.

Fasting is not...

- A way to suffer for God.
- A spiritual practice that demonstrates how pious or devout you are.
- Righteousness (i.e. it doesn't equal holiness or sanctification).
- A way of trying really hard spiritually so that God will respond.

Fasting is a way to place ourselves in the way of grace by withdrawing our reliance on earthly things so that we can feast on God's presence and power.

Sundays in Lent

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. Traditionally, the forty days of Lent include Holy Week but do not count Sundays, making Sundays a day one can break from a fast.

*Portions adapted from [www.gravityleadership.com](http://www.gravityleadership.com)*