



2020 Access Sunday Celebration Guide

Access Sunday is celebrated on the second Sunday in October which, this year, is on **October 11th, 2020**. Inside this packet you will find preaching and worship resources for the celebration of Access Sunday 2020. These resources were submitted by past and present members and supporters of the [United Church of Christ Disabilities Ministries](#) Board of Directors to inspire and assist in the celebration of Access Sunday throughout all settings of the [United Church of Christ](#). For more information, or to be in touch with the UCCDM Board of Directors please refer to uccdm.org, email secretary@uccdm.org.

Possible Themes:

- **Who is welcomed into the Christian family and at our church? How?**
- **What is Inclusion?**
- **What is our call?**
- **God heals all.**

Lectionary Readings for Access Sunday:

First Reading and Psalm: Exod. 32: 1 - 14, Ps. 106:1-6, 9 - 23

Alternate Reading and Psalm: Is. 25: 1- 9, Ps. 23

Second Reading: Phil. 4: 1-9

Gospel Reading: Mt. 22: 1 - 4

Do You Celebrate Access Sunday?

Submitted by Rachel Chapman

Member of the UCCB and Former UCCDM Member

The second Sunday of October of each year is designated on the UCC church calendar as Access Sunday. Does your church celebrate it? Do you even know what it is? This is to be a day when all of the United Church of Christ is meant to join together in celebrating the contributions and gifts of persons with disabilities as well as the progress the church as a whole has made in being more accessible and inclusive. It should also be a day of recognition of the work yet to be done in order to extravagantly welcome people living with disabilities into all areas of the full life of the church. There is much work to do.

A tagline of the UCC is “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here”. Sadly, not all are welcome in our churches. Another popular UCC saying is that “Jesus didn’t reject people and neither do we”. However, we know that in many churches attitudinal barriers are more prevalent than physical ones at keeping people who are living with various disabilities from full participation in our church settings. Even the disciples needed to adjust their attitudes as Jesus reminded them that “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s work might be revealed in him” (John 9:3).

October, Disabilities Awareness Month, is the ideal time to learn about disabilities rights pioneers of the United Church of Christ such as the Rev. Virginia Kreyer and the Rev. Harold Wilke. Ms. Kreyer, born with cerebral palsy, was ordained in the UCC. As an activist she influenced change by encouraging the UCC to assess its own participation in disability discrimination. Mr. Wilke was born without arms but did not let that stop him from answering his call to ministry. He offered the

invocation at the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, accepting a ceremonial pen from President George H. W. Bush with his foot. Wilke encouraged the UCC to change language it used to talk to and about people with disabilities. Both Kreyer and Wilke were instrumental in the formation of what is known today as UCC Disabilities Ministries.

Disability Inclusion Sunday Resource 2020

Submitted by Rev. Kelli Parish-Lucas

Former UCCDM Chair '15-'17

Scripture Readings: Exodus 4: 6-8 and 10-20, Luke 17:11-19

This brief resource is designed for pastors wishing to celebrate Access Sunday in the United Church of Christ (Second Sunday in October), or Disability Awareness Sunday in other traditions. This particular resource is designed for those who may be using the narrative lectionary. October is Disability Awareness Month and the narrative lectionary this year on Access Sunday is the story of Moses and the golden calf, this resource replaces that scripture with another little-known story of Moses.

Call to Worship

Worship Leader/ ALL One: God knows the troubles we encounter in life.

All: Let us turn to God and worship the One who understands our fears and who hears the words we dare not speak aloud.

One: God created all people to be a community. God never let the way a person walked or talked excuse them from responding to God's call in community.

All: God calls all people into community. Let all those come who wish to be welcomed in community!

One: Jesus saw those who were excluded. He told them to enter the temple and be welcomed. It was risky for them to break the taboo and law to enter. But faith led them to risk the holy trouble it might cause.

All: Let us receive the works of God and of Christ in our own lives. Let their works transform us and our community. Let this be our worship.

Unison Prayer Worship Leader/ ALL

Holy One, we come before you as imperfect people and we all seek your presence in our lives. Help us to live comfortably in our own lives. Help us to accept the ways in which we are different. Be with us as we grow and as our abilities change throughout our lifetimes. Grant us the courage to care for one another and to include one another as you include us. Be our voice Lord as we call for justice for your people, and teach us to be a voice that calls for justice for those who live with disabilities. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION Worship Leader/ ALL

Still Speaking One, We hear Your voice and still we doubt. We oftentimes cannot make sense of what You are truly calling us to do. We are grateful for your patience. We ask that you would forgive our unbelief. Amen.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION Pastor People of God, God waits for us to understand God's call and to respond. Live knowing that you are a forgiven people.

READING FROM THE HEBREW BIBLE Exodus 4: 6-8 and 10-20

READING FROM THE GOSPEL Luke 17:11-19

SERMON THOUGHTS

This is a story about Moses that we do not often hear. It appears neither in the

Revised Common lectionary nor in the Narrative Lectionary. Why do we leave this part of Moses' identity out of the narrative? Is it because it reveals Moses to be a person with disability? What might it mean that Moses had a speech impediment, and specifically that he had a stutter? Why do we ignore that God made an accommodation to make Moses' religious leadership possible? Why do we ignore Aaron's role as a personal assistant, and God placing Aaron in that role? How might these considerations challenge and change the church?

Here we have a story of a great leader in our faith tradition who experienced disabilities--leprosy and speech issues. This gives the preacher the opportunity to talk about how society treats people with speech issues. People with speech issues are often assumed to be less intelligent than others, or others assume they have a developmental or cognitive disability. People with speech issues are regularly mocked in the media. Society needs further education that speech issues, slurred speech, and stuttering have nothing to do with developmental or cognitive issues and can be symptoms of other illnesses. Yet speech that creates justice is why we have come to know about Moses at all.

A disability justice point, particularly for those who may wish to preach on the intersectionality of race and disability and police brutality, is that police are not trained in disability issues. This becomes an issue that increases bias when police encounter people who have speech issues because police often assume drunkenness or drug involvement which leads to unnecessary arrests and even medical emergencies that are not properly responded to. This has shaped our current legal understanding of cruel and unusual ¹ punishment. The background behind the UCC's 2015 Synod resolution "Toward Disability Justice: A Call to the Church and Churches" pointed out that studies indicate ² that half of persons killed by police in the line of duty have a disability.

This resource was designed by Rev. Kelli Parrish Lucas, Pastor of First Congregational Church, UCC in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Rev. Parrish Lucas is a clergywoman with disabilities and is the North American Regional Coordinator of the Ecumenical Disabilities Advocacy Network (EDAN), a program of the World Council of Churches. She is a former Chair and Secretary of UCC Disabilities Ministries. kelli.parrish.lucas@gmail.com

¹ "More Perfect--Mr Graham and the Reasonable Man" Radio Lab Podcast accessed September 15, 2020 on-line at

<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/radiolab-presents-more-perfect-mr-graham-reasonable-man>

² Melber, Ari and Marti Hause, “Half of People Killed by Police Have a Disability: Report”, *NBC News*, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/half-people-killed-police-suffer-mental-disability-report-n538371> (March 14, 2016) accessed December 5, 2016.

Many Gifts, One Spirit

Submitted by Dr. Kevin Petit, Commissioned Minister

Former UCCDM Board Member

First Congregational UCC

Boulder, CO

June 28, 2020

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 13 ... & 27 - 31

Video Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=13&v=_tsemW9VFUY&feature=emb_logo .

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRELUDE Romance

Kajsa Teitelbaum and Rebecca Flintoft

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

PASSING THE PEACE

HYMN Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

A PRAYER OF AWARENESS Light within all light

Soul behind all souls

at the breaking of the dawn at the coming of the day

we wait and watch.

Your light within the morning light,

Your soul within the human soul,

Your Presence beckons to us from the heart of life.

In the dawning of this day

let us know fresh shinings in our soul.

In the colors of the new beginning all around us,

In the great diversity and in the interdependence of all creation let us

know you, the first lights of our heart.

Great Star of the morning

Inner Flame of the universe

let us be a color in this new dawning.

Silva II

Rev. Pedro Senhorinha

SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 12: 4 – 13 ... & 27 - 31

Sermon : “Many Gifts, One Spirit”

Dr. Kevin Petit

The scriptural reading for today is a well-known passage from the Bible. I'm sure that many of you remember at least the gist of this passage. Perhaps few of you, with a better memory than mine, might possibly also recall the comparisons made in the 14 intervening verses which we skipped reading today. These verses spell out that “[i]ndeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many” (v 14). Paul of Tarsus does this by portraying a nonsensical argument between various parts of your body regarding their own superiority or importance. In this way, Paul elucidates that “...there are many members, yet one body” (v 20). Indeed, many people understand this to be one of the most beautiful and affirmative statements in the vast collection of texts we call the Christian Bible.

Oh, but how frequently do we disregard passages from the Bible!

In contrast to the meaning of this passage in our Bible, let me explain to you that, as I wrote this sermon recently, I had just read an article written several years ago in a journal of theology by Thomas Reynold, a professor of theology working in the University of Toronto system. In the article, Dr. Reynold relates his hearing a lecture given by an articulate, successful businessman who stated that

“some years ago, as he approached a church altar for communion, a priest singled him out, exclaiming loudly and with disgust, ‘We don’t serve drunks here!’ True, this man talks with slurred speech and moves with a jolted gate. Yet he does not drink. He has cerebral palsy.”

Though usually not so apparently contrayer to the church's teachings, the welcome felt by many, if not most, people who live with disabilities at most churches is very frequently far from inviting! I ask you this: how many times would you tolerate insults like this before you stopped attending religious services?

Now, I don't believe that at this church we have dismissed visitors or church members with a disability as rudely as was mentioned earlier; though I have seen situations occur to visitors whose disability (a wheelchair in the side aisle which blocked passing of the collection plates) caused considerable confusion and the visitor felt, I imagine, a somewhat off-putting welcome.

Indeed, of churches in the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ, this church has blazed a trail of inclusion: from our first in the state adoption of the **Open and Affirming Covenant** in 1987, to the adoption of an **Accessible to All** (or A2A) Covenant more than a decade ago, a commitment to "to understand, include, and empower people with all differing abilities and disabilities, apparent or unapparent". The A2A covenant that we drafted and approved has become a national template for A2A Covenants. The same is true of our **Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive and Engaged** or (W.I.S.E) **Covenant** which we signed in 2014 that acknowledges that "[p]eople with mental health challenges have gifts to be offered in our faith community, and we want everyone to feel fully welcomed, included, supported and engaged in the life, work and leadership of our church." However, we shouldn't be content simply to rest on these laurels because **the spirit calls us to extend our welcome more thoroughly and completely, for we cannot restrict the love of God!**

It is interesting that this sermon which addresses the reality of "Many Gifts, One Spirit" will be delivered on the day the First Congregational Church of Boulder will celebrate **Access Sunday**, which, this year, is the **fourth Sunday after Pentecost**. I will remind you that Pentecost is the celebration of the event when, after his death and ascension into heaven, the followers of Jesus were gathered in one place.

And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability (Acts 2:2 – 4).

What came upon the disciples, and other followers of Jesus gathered there, was **essential difference** and **variety** . This suggests, to me at least, that **God intends variety** , a variety which leads to a more diverse Godly kin-dom.

Many of Paul's writings (though not all) emphasize the importance of difference and variety amidst a unity of spirit and the important fact that, as we each are all members of one body, we should not all see ourselves as more important than the other parts of the body. This message has been demonstrated to us all alive today by the COVID-19 pandemic. Clearly, we realize that we all are a lot more connected than we've thought in the past. Because of this crisis, workers of jobs that were formerly considered "menial" and "unimportant" – jobs like letter carrier, meat packing plant worker, grocery store clerk, waste water treatment engineer, IT technician, and bus driver – have been determined to be "essential".

As a quick side note: I will mention that of the workers that have been deemed "essential", the majority of them are paid less than the median income in this country and a greater than average fraction of them fulfill jobs with inadequate (or no) health insurance benefits or coverage; but I leave it to those who understand our economy to explain to me why "essential" employees deserve lower income and fewer working benefits. It is not helpful that many people whose skin color is brown or black fill these jobs that are deemed "essential" are not afforded the respect within our larger culture that one might expect to be given to such important people. Indeed the failure of some to extend human rights to all detracts significantly from the advancement of humankind. Nevertheless, as the world wide death toll due to the CORONA virus approaches a half a million, one essential lesson that

many of us have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic concerns the importance of the diversity, variety, and the interconnected nature of everyone in a well-functioning economy.

Just as we've all learned lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, people with disabilities frequently have learned a great deal about themselves and about our world as a result of their impairments, real or perceived by others. One of the most common lessons learned as a consequence of living with a disability is that **we all** rely upon our communities, or societies, to exist.

The reason I can make such a bold claim rests in part on the definition of the word "disability" itself, which can be understood to imply our interpersonal connection and reliance on others to live. In the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act (the [ADA](#)) defines a disability this way:

"The term 'disability' means, with respect to an individual, a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such an individual".

Though I don't usually resort to the laws of our government to prove anything, I believe this definition of "disability" is clear and helpful; it doesn't specify anything about the causes of disability, only the effects, namely the inability to live without the assistance of aid or help from others.

The inability to live a reasonable quality of life without the assistance of other people or significant technologies can be rather obvious when considering people who are unable to ambulate unassisted, or ever express their needs clearly; however, to consider the meaning of the word "disability", one need consider more subtle (and common) situations: How many of us could survive without the assistance of other people or technologies? How long would you live alone and unassisted on a small, isolated island? (I don't think it would be long before most of us found ourselves talking to volleyballs like Tom Hanks' character in the movie "Cast Away"!)

Without considering it for

terribly long, I believe that we all can see that **we humans are deeply related and connected to others** . We are a tribal species of animal.

Our interconnection and reliance on others to survive is very frequently and immediately apparent to people who live with a disability (or PWD). This is a **fact** of their continued existence! The presence in our lives of PWD makes obvious the fact that **we are all one** , we are related on a very deep level, and the vitality and societal contributions of PWD shows us the fact and importance of the connections we all share to stay alive!

Often many people (even including some people who live with a disability) understand a disability as a problematic thing – something to be avoided in, or even excluded from, our society. However, I am here to tell you that, though living with a disability can involve challenges requiring creativity to solve; living with a disability can also beckon dormant abilities to manifest in a person. Without a disability, I would be just one of many, many physics professors; because of my disability, I work as a CEO and congregational consultant of [Faith4All](#) , a rather unique interfaith organization that helps faithful communities learn to better invite, embrace, include and empower PWD into congregations. This congregation is a very generous benefactor to Faith4All! We thank you greatly for the support and office space that you donate to our efforts!

While people might question, or think doubtful, my previous statements about the contributions of PWD and remind me that the definition of disability implies that these people require external assistance to live and can be understood to weigh our society down, **nothing can be further from the truth!** Because of the limitations of time, I will only be able to show you one case of the tremendous contributions of a person with a disability. This person is Dr. Steven Hawking. Despite having an early-onset, slow-progressing form of motor neuron disease known as [ALS](#) (or Lou Gehrig's disease) that gradually paralyzed him over decades of his life, Steven Hawking worked as the [Lucasian Professor of Mathematics](#) at the University of Cambridge between 1979 and 2009. When he died in 2018, he held

the position of director of research at the Centre for Theoretical Cosmology at the University of Cambridge.

After receiving a Traumatic Brain Injury in 1998, when I was teaching physics back at Carleton College, I communicated with Dr. Hawking via email because a great experimental physicist and family friend of mine named Kenneth Evenson, who was a very famous physicist himself, had contracted ALS too. Ken's family lived 3 houses (or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on Poorman Road west of Boulder up Sunshine Canyon) away from the house in which my family resided as I grew up. Ken developed (and later died) from ALS.

While Ken was still alive and battling this disease, I was able to communicate with Dr. Hawking via email and learned from him how we might best care for Ken. During this brief email exchange that I had with Dr. Hawking, I asked him if his restrictions consequent to his ALS were **entirely** negative or if, with the help he was given, his ALS actually allowed him to concentrate **more** intensely on his theoretical work. Dr. Hawking agreed that his discoveries and success in physics were not **despite** his disabilities, but partly **because** of his disabilities!

However, most of us don't stop or and take time to listen to PWD and learn of their experiences. We don't take the time to learn what these people can do for us and how they can contribute, not detract, from the advancement of our world. Indeed, even when requiring more tax monies from us and the higher costs of our insurance premiums, people with disabilities help sustain communities of care and medical services that **we all** will use, at least on occasion. We can **all** thank the people with disabilities who fought for certain requirements to be included in the ADA. Curb cuts at pedestrian crossings and automatic door openers must have been a significant financial cost to install when the ADA was enacted; but **everyone** enjoys their use now.

I have shown you how all humans are not independent; but, rather, how we function as various parts of a body -- dependent upon each other for the livelihood of us all. I would also like to suggest that we all

need to learn to slow down and listen to PWD because they often have a wealth of experiences that they can share with us. Though we can often feel awkward when carrying on a discussion with someone who is apparently quite different from ourselves, we need to relax and recall that we can most certainly learn from their perspective which differs so greatly from our own.

Now, I ask you all to recall the television series **Star Trek** which was first aired in the late 60s. This somewhat campy show was very intentionally written to point out the ways in which life aboard the starship Enterprise paralleled our lives in these United States of America. The creator of Star Trek, Gene Roddenberry, wanted viewers to observe that most of the successes of the Starship Enterprise (like many of the successes of this country) came about because of the **diversity** of life experiences and opinions of the crew of the starship Enterprise, not their uniformity! As we continue to wrestle with the many challenges of today, namely the COVID-19 pandemic and the global protests made in hopes of broadening and extending human rights to **ALL** people, please remember what I said earlier in this sermon:

God intends variety, a variety which leads to a more diverse Godly kin-dom!

I invite you all this week to consider deeply your own motivations for the actions you take, to imagine that similar impulses might be motivating the actions of people with whom you disagree, and see these people as different from you as your foot is from your hand, as different as your brain is from your stomach.

PRAYER OF JESUS (taken from the New Zealand Prayer Book):

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be,

Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world! Your
heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

ANTHEM Wonderful World

INVITATION TO COMMUNITY LIFE

Dr. Kevin Pettit CEO of Faith4All

by John Philip Newell and adapted by K. Pettit

Leonard Barrett Jr.

HYMN Blessed Assurance

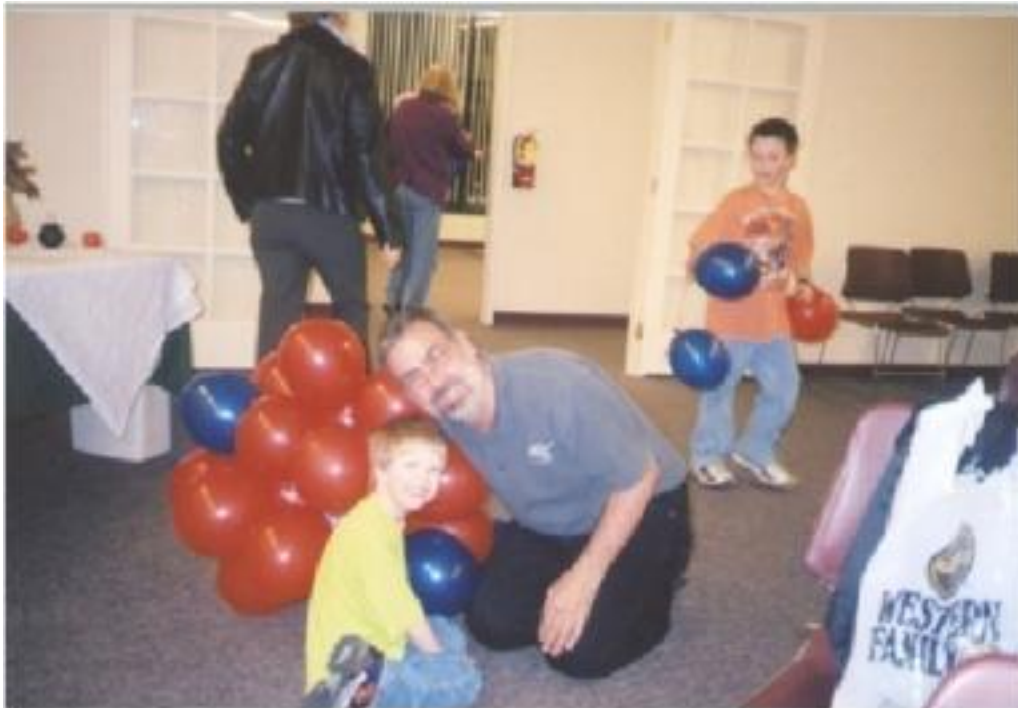
BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE Sonata in A-flat Major, Op. 110, Mvt. 1 Ludwig van
Beethoven

"What Does Leadership Look Like?"

Sermon given by Ben D. Anderson

Commissioned minister of Disabilities Education and Advocacy
United Church of Christ



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Video Link: <http://bendanderson.com/What%20Does%20Leadership%20Look%20Like.htm>*

"What Does Leadership Look Like?"

Dee and I appreciate the covenant we have with this congregation for Break Through Inc. We thank you for all the support and gifts to help Break Through mission.

Let me paint a picture for you this morning. Twelve years ago I gave a presentation in Washington State to a parent group while I was on tour. After my presentation a bunch of balloons dropped down from the ceiling.

You are right. It was election time and the balloons were red, white and blue. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a little boy playing with the balloons.

I decided to go and get down on my hands and knees with the little boy and play with him and the balloons. It reminded me as when I was a little boy that enjoyed playing with these balloons. I noticed very quickly that the boy had physical disabilities. His grandmother was close by and watching over him and soon I got up and introduced myself to her. We engaged in a conversation. She asked me a series of questions based

on my own experience. She was concerned not only for the boy but for herself. She was not a young woman and she was "up in age" taking care of a 4-year-old energetic individual who had some physical challenges. She began to enter into the conversation with this series of questions because she was deeply concerned not for her own well-being but for his.

She could have told me about her life and how her freedom was robbed by the poor choices other people made but she stood to the task and focused her energy to his well- being.

Johnny was a boy of 4 years old. He had cerebral palsy and living with his grandmother. Apparently his parents were more interested in their lifestyle than taking care of this cute little boy that was born with cerebral palsy.

The grandmother was anxious to talk with me about concerns she had about his life beyond being a "cute little boy" that loved to play with balloons. There were many questions that she asked me. What happens when the cuteness rubs off? Will people pay attention to him? Doesn't everybody ask that question of what kind of future they would have? Would they get a good education? Would they get a good job; would they get married; and would they be happy?

As I reflect on Johnny's situation with his grandmother I am speculating that sixty three years ago my parents were faced with those same questions when they realized that I was born with cerebral

palsy. My parents made a very hard decision at my age of 4 years old to send me to the crippled children's school 250 miles away. For them it was the best decision for that time. I was there for eight years and I had physical therapy and speech therapy. The kinds of questions that parents and loved ones have are about what kind of a successful life that each one of us have is a concern. But, is it more important to ask that question or is it "what would make that person's life successful" that would go beyond money and status?

The thing about Johnny was that the Grandmother asked was "Will he be happy?" My parents probably thought beyond my success would I be satisfied as a person.

Isn't that the real question that people have as how would people get along in life? It is more than the surface things you see as it is the satisfaction deep down inside of how you feel about yourself. In my case, how do I feel as a person beyond what is visible to other folks? I am very satisfied about who I am. I am satisfied for the accomplishments I have made to show because of my hard work and determination of who I am. I was given up to be a person with a low IQ but I am a person that has great worth with myself because I am at peace with myself. I went beyond expectations diagnosed by medical people. I hold a college degree, CEO and founder of a non-profit organization. I am also an author, a public speaker and a commissioned minister.

My conversation with that grandmother that night was that she wanted to know if Johnny would be okay when the "cuteness" rubbed off. My concern will be will Johnny be okay with himself? Can he be at peace with his disability?

What are we learning with the children's sermons on Sundays when Pastor Susan talks to the children? What lessons can we as adults learn from them? What kind of values are we trying to teach these children that don't have high profile jobs or status yet in their young life? I think that we have a great deal to learn from children and what we did as children when we lived a simple life. As a child I had fun and I knew who I was. Yes, I struggled as a child as a person with a

disability but I learned very quickly that I had to be at peace with myself before I could go beyond and to extend my feelings to other people. That is what I hope for Johnny in that no matter what he does in life that little boy inside of him would say I am at peace with myself and everything else is extra. This is what I believe Jesus was getting at when he said "let the little children come to me". I hope we do have great lessons that can be taught by these little ones that come in front of us every Sunday. Let them become our teachers.

The real question is what does leadership look like and who are our leaders? I think that the real question Johnny's grandmother was asking was could "Johnny be a leader?" My answer is that Johnny is already a great leader because he is teaching every human being (that is in touch with him) a lifelong lesson on who you are in spite of anything you cannot do. I have been told by people that have been around me and other people with disabilities that they learned so much by being a part of our lives. I have friends of mine that are now in professions and they come up to me and said "I am a special education teacher because of you or I am a physical or speech therapist because of you. You never know when that "teachable moment" becomes reality. Every Sunday we have a teachable moment as the children give us that gift. The question is what do we do with it? I can also say that people learn from what I am even if I only share a few words with the simple fact of my disability as the "teachable moment" to everyone that comes in contact with me. It is their attitude of how they will respond to me. They need to make that choice. We need to make that choice every Sunday morning what leadership do these children give us? Therefore, rather than asking "what is going to happen when Johnny gets older?"; "Will the cuteness rub off?";

but rather ask "what is he teaching you now?" Have we 8

ever thought this way before? Perhaps. Children challenge us to become better people in how honest they are and innocent.

Leadership comes in interesting packages. Who would ever consider "Johnny" to be a leader? He is a leader not because he appointed

himself as one. People that work with him are in that setting of the "teachable moments" which can happen. That teachable moment is only there because Johnny is the one that is teaching them (at that moment). It may not be apparent at that time but within that person's lifetime they will reflect back to that time with Johnny and they will realize they were taught by him. That is so much of our human gifts and the "giver" was not even aware of it. You as parents receive that every day from your children.

We as a congregation receive that every week from the children's time with Pastor Susan. Can I say that leadership comes in different forms but can be as powerful as anybody can imagine.

During my tenure of being the director of Break Through I have been involved in many conversations like the one I had with Johnny's grandmother.

The thread here is the conversations about "what is going to happen?" to my son or daughter. We can fill in the blanks. One conversation that haunts me is a conversation that I had with a parent that was threatened by her son and had to keep her bedroom door locked at night. She was concerned about her son's future. As I was listening to her I had nothing to say but to be there to listen to her. She knew that her son was in trouble. Here is a parent who was concerned about him but did not want to give up on him. She also needed to be concerned not only for his safety but her own and her family's safety.

I want to leave you with this picture in your mind of a very bright seventh grader who was at a retreat with me about thirty years ago. About an hour and half after I had given my presentation, she came up to me with tears in her eyes. She was not a parent, but she was concerned about her future with her friendships and her relationships because she had a big deep secret. She was beautiful and very intelligent individual but her deep secret was that she could not read. In the conversation we had together she said she was afraid to tell her peers that she could not read because she thought they would leave her and make fun of her.

We have a deep problem in this Country about how youth see themselves because of the attitudes of other people. Over the last 38 years I have been fighting against these stereotypes by helping the general public to become more understanding about persons with disabilities. Fortunately, in this congregation we have time with children, and they are the key for these teachable moments. Can we all agree that they can be our greatest teachers of the day.

Break Through, Inc.

"Our mission is one of rehabilitation education and advocacy for and about people with disabilities to encourage and enlighten the public about people with disabilities in that they are people first and have rights and needs and that they also have gifts and talents to bring to the community."

Website

<http://bendanderson.com/>

715-554-1179

Sermon: The Good Samaritan Paradigm

Delivered as Keynote Address at Super Saturday, March 2019

by Bekah Anderson

Vice Chair of UCCDM `19 - Present

God of love and justice, be in the midst of your people, your church. Your kingdom come, your will be done. Your kingdom come, your will be done—and may we know your will of love. Amen.

I'm about to break one of your favorite stories.

I'm really sorry about that—it's one of my favorites, too—but I promise to try and put it back together for you when I'm done. And honestly, I think we'll all be a lot happier with it once we separate what we think we know about it, from what it's really made of.

The story I'm going to break is the story you just heard: the Good Samaritan.

It's a parable illustrating love of neighbor, told by Jesus when a man asks him, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells the story of a man beaten by robbers and left for dead; of the priest and Levite who pass by on the opposite side of the road; and at last, the Samaritan, who puts the beaten man on his own animal and takes him to an inn to have his wounds treated. Jesus then asks his questioner, "Which of these was a neighbor to the man?" To which his questioner answers, "The one who showed him mercy." To which Jesus answers, "Go and do likewise."

And so the story has been told, generation to generation: Christians, followers of Christ, are told to go and do likewise, to be Good Samaritans. Supposedly, it's one of the simplest parables in the Bible. Oh, if you want to go a bit deeper, you can talk about how Samaritans were marginalized in Roman Palestine, and had every reason to hate Jews like the man on the side of the road. In which case, the message that seems to come across is, help even those who hate you.

This is the story of the Good Samaritan as I grew up with it, as it was taught to me as a child.

I don't remember when I started being uncomfortable with it. Maybe it was when I was ten, and my church began putting accommodations in place for their legally blind church school student—accommodations I didn't ask for, and which didn't help me. Maybe it was when I was fourteen, and realized that my church camp friends didn't talk to me about the things they talked to each other about; they only asked what I needed in order to get around. Maybe it was everything, and nothing. Maybe it was the subtle, growing feeling, all my life, that many of my church family members who offered help to me didn't know *me*; they knew the girl who needed help.

It wasn't until about three and a half years ago that I could put words to it. All my life, I had been striving to be a Good Samaritan, to help others, as I was taught. But everyone around me was also trying to be a Good Samaritan, and to them, I was not a fellow Samaritan. I was the man on the side of the road.

As soon as I realized this, the story of the Good Samaritan took on a new, disturbing quality. Have you ever noticed what a non-presence the man at the side of the road is? We know nothing about him, and he takes absolutely no agency in the story. He is an object of others' actions: a body to be robbed, beaten, picked up, treated, left at an inn. You can say that the man was unconscious, but does that really make it better? Can it, when this is *the* story so many turn to talk about love of neighbor? I began to see the similarities between this man and the experiences of people with disabilities today. I'm not even talking about the people who exploit and abuse us, although I could. I'm talking about the people who genuinely think they have our best interests at heart, but don't bother to ask us what we need or want. I'm talking about the people who are so proud of themselves for helping their new blind friend find a pew in church, but never bothered to ask her name or offer theirs. I'm talking about all of us—and I do include myself in this—who forget to treat disabled people, and so many others, like people, because we are so caught up in our Good

Samaritan fantasy and never learned the danger in it. I call this, the fantasy and the danger, the Good Samaritan Paradigm.

The Good Samaritan Paradigm is a way of dividing humanity, based on the axis of help need. According to this paradigm, there is a divide between the Good Samaritans, and the men on the side of the road. The helpers and the helped. No one can be both. This is what I felt when others helped me without asking what I needed or wanted from our interaction. I was not a person in those moments, because people are Good Samaritans, and I, by virtue of needing help, was not one. This paradigm harms us all. It harms the helped—people with disabilities, people living in poverty, people who are homeless—because we are deprived of agency and humanity. It harms the helpers—everyone else—because they come to believe they can never accept help. I struggled with this paradigm for years without knowing what I was struggling against. I wanted so desperately to be independent, to do everything by myself, even when I patently could not. I was sensing the Good Samaritan Paradigm, teetering on the edge between helper and helped. I knew—knew—that I had the capacity to help others, and everything I learned from living in a capitalist, ableist society—and yes, what I learned in church—told me that I needed to hold tight to that helper identity, or I would not be a person in the eyes of the state or the church.

I'm not saying any of this to condemn or shame us. If you feel these things, pay attention to them, but please don't let them consume you, because we have more work to do here. Primarily, I'm saying this to highlight for us all that the story we have been telling is not good enough. Love your neighbor? That's a fine message. But what good does that do us if we don't know how to love our neighbor? When we follow the Good Samaritan Paradigm, helping is actually hurting. It is a subtle, pervasive psychic weapon. Those of us who are tuned into social justice movements are becoming more and more aware of the harmful and unnecessary demands capitalism and ableism make upon us. What we talk about less are the ways the church has collaborated with and enforced these demands. This pressure is greater or lesser in different places, and on different body minds. I've

been to churches where the Good Samaritan Paradigm had almost no impact on my experience of community. On the other hand, I've been to churches where the Good Samaritan Paradigm ruled all our interactions, without anyone realizing. If you haven't felt it, ask yourself whether you've ever felt that you had to help others in order to be a worthwhile human; or that you couldn't ask for help because that would make you lesser; or that the majority of your interactions with someone were about what you needed from them. The Good Samaritan Paradigm is there.

So there you have it: I've destroyed your favorite story. I wish I didn't have to do it, but I can't allow marginalization to continue masquerading as love. I trust that we all want to love one another; let's figure out how to live into it.

For all that I've just deconstructed a Bible story, I truly believe that the seeds of truth and love can be found in this collection of texts we call scripture. I find the solution to the Good Samaritan Paradigm in two places: the letters of Paul, especially Galatians and Romans, and the actual text of the Good Samaritan itself.

First, Paul. I'll admit, I've never been a huge fan of Paul. He writes beautiful words about love and unity one minute, then says something homophobic, imperialist, or simply incomprehensible the next. But this semester, my New Testament class, and the scholarship of my teacher Brigitte Kahl, has been showing me another side of Paul, one that proclaims diversity as a marker of God's ideal community. Paul spends a great deal of his letters addressing the conflicts between Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers. In Galatians, he is furious that Gentiles believers would consider circumcising themselves and taking up Jewish law. In Romans, he admonishes different Gentile believers for looking down on Jews who observe Torah Law. On a first reading, these two positions can seem completely at odds. Is it okay for Christians to observe the law, or not? But when you pay close attention to context and tone, you realize that that isn't Paul's point at all. It's that Gentiles shouldn't seek to become Jews, and Jews shouldn't have to become Gentiles. Both are welcome, as they are, in

the community of believers. In fact, the community of believers is only complete when everyone is living into their group and individual identity, being who they are with the gifts only they can bring. This connects to Paul's oft-quoted words about spiritual gifts and the body of Christ, in which the head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you."

Which brings me to Paul and disability. The more I study Paul's letters, the more convinced I am that he was disabled, likely visually impaired. Am I projecting my own disability onto the acclaimed author of half the New Testament. Maybe, but I think I have some grounds for doing so. In both Galatians and 2 Corinthians, Paul makes mention of an "infirmity" or "thorn in the flesh" that is clearly both physically troubling, and causes social unease. Also in Galatians, he uses an interesting metaphor about the Galatians tearing out their eyes and giving them to them, and comments on his own handwriting, "See what large letters I make!" Paul also indicates that his ability to spread the Gospel is in some way linked to his infirmity or thorn, that this state of embodiment gives him some new way to approach ministry.

In the ancient world, people with disabilities were outcasts, seen as unclean, cursed, or sinful. Would identifying Paul as disabled change how we read passages where he talks about all people being sinners, like in the first seven chapters of Romans? It rings differently to me, to imagine a disabled man who had been called a sinner proclaiming that not only is he a sinner, but all are sinners, then it does for a non-disabled man to say the same. He is reclaiming language, redefining what in fact it means to sin.

So too would Paul's identity change how we read 1 Corinthians 12, in which he talks about spiritual gifts and the body of Christ. This passage is not only about what particular people bring to the community. Still less is it about "what part of the body represents you." It's about interdependence.

And what does that have to do with disability? Absolutely everything. Those of you who have never experienced disability community might

have a hard time imagining it. How can people who society considers limited meet one another's needs? The answer is both very complicated, and very simple: we understand that we can't do it alone. Even in a group of people with the same disability, our needs and skills are never the same. The blind actually can lead the blind, if one person has a guide dog, or knows the area. When all of us, with our varied needs, adaptations, skills, and passions get together, we have an abundance of resources for supporting one another.

Most of the communities where I have been most supported have been disability communities. I have been on multiple leadership teams for disability organizations, and every time, I feel comfortable and able to say plainly what I need and what I can offer. No one judges anyone else for something they say they cannot do, and no one asks, "Does your disability really affect that?" We trust each other to know our needs. We trust each other with our vulnerabilities, our insights, and our pride.

A small example. One of my best friends from high school is hearing impaired, and he has a virtually telepathic ability to figure out when I'm struggling with something visual. For instance, he knows that whenever I'm served a snack in an unfamiliar room, I am vexed by the eternal question: "Which corner did they put the trash can in?" One day in class, he saw me crinkle up my napkin and begin looking for that ever-elusive trash can. Without a word, he took the napkin from my hand and went to the corner of the room, presumably to throw it away. I made a small noise of protest, but otherwise didn't object. It's a small thing, but sometimes I like to do small things myself, like throwing away my own trash. Even when you're dismantling the Good Samaritan Paradigm, sometimes you just want to do things yourself, to feel that you have power to effect your world, even in so small a thing as cleaning up your desk. Still, I said nothing, because really, what did it matter?

But my dear friend either heard me, or saw my expression, and understood me. I heard a sound from the corner of the room, and when I looked up, he was in front of me, holding the trash can in one

hand and handing me my napkin with the other. I grinned at him, and threw my trash away.

I don't know what sense this story makes to people who don't know me and my friend, whether it rings true to disabled or non-disabled people. What it meant to me was that my friend saw my need to do something, not to have something done for me. He enabled me to do what I wanted—not by myself, but interdependently, both of us together. What he did could have been hokey or demeaning done by someone else. He knew, and I knew, that I could have gotten up and found that trash can. He also knew, and I knew, that it would have cost me mental energy that I don't always have. So he worked with me, and in that moment, we were one body.

That is interdependence. That is what Paul means by many members, one body. He means that we have capabilities beyond what we know, and needs beyond what we will admit, and that when you put us together, we find creative solutions to problems that no part alone could solve. As a disabled person, Paul would know that the body is a complex metaphor for a community. Sometimes the parts we rely upon most fail us, and then we must rely upon other parts—or other bodies. As the body works—complexly, interlocking one part to another—or we must work, meeting one another's needs not because it is what we are called to do as Christians, but because that is the only way each part, and the body as a whole, thrives. We must be creative, because no body—or community—always works perfectly, and we must build the skills that allow us to work beyond the way things have always been done, toward the way we need to do them in order to inhabit this body, this community, to the fullest.

In sum, Paul still angers and annoys me sometimes, but humans are complex, after all. You can be a theological luminary, a potential beacon for disability justice—and also an egocentric jerk. Sorry, Paul. If I ever meet you at the disability meet-up in the sky, we can hash it out.

In any case, I'd like to turn back once more to the Good Samaritan, because I did promise I would put this beloved story back together for you.

To do that, I want to remind you what it means to be a Samaritan in ancient Palestine. It means being outcast from Jewish society, seen as unclean, or sinful. Does that sound familiar? What if the disabled figure in this story is not just the man at the side of the road? What if it's the Good Samaritan, too?

The question Jesus is trying to answer in this parable is, "Who is my neighbor?" In other words, who must I love? Who must I support? Who must I be in community with? We tend to see the story from the perspective of the Good Samaritan, which prompts the answer, "Everyone. Even those we hate." That's a good answer, but it doesn't go far enough, and it doesn't entirely line up with what Jesus says. After the parable, he doesn't ask, "Who was the Samaritan's neighbor?" He asks, "Which of these three (the priest, the Levite, or the Samaritan), do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" This is a question about who is the neighbor of the man by the side of the road. In one sense, this is the same question: if you live next door to someone, they live next door to you; you are both neighbors to one another. But on another level, it is a fundamental relocation of the center of the text. The focus is not on the helper, but on the person being helped, the person who is silent and possibly insensate. The focus is not, "Who do you love and share community with?" It's, "Who loves you? Who shares community with you?"

I see so many ways to read the Good Samaritan from this vantage point. In one reading, both characters are allegories for disability, and their encounter is one note in the glorious interdependent symphony of disability community. In another reading, the Samaritan is the rare non-disabled person who understands the needs of the man by the side of the road on a deep, one-body level. And on yet another reading, the man on the side of the road is a privileged person who never expected to be assisted by someone marginalized, someone

who had every reason to hate him—someone with the markers of disability. Whatever way you read it, the message remains: need and assistance come in unlikely times, and from unlikely places.

What I'm saying is, you cannot—*cannot*—*know* who it is you need in your life, in your community, until you need them. You cannot judge based on their disability, perceived intelligence, economic status, race, gender, or anything else you care to name. When in doubt, assume that you need them, and perhaps—perhaps—hey will put you on their animal and bring you to the inn. And then they'll go on their way, because you are not the only person they need to care about. And now it's up to you to continue being a neighbor—truly a neighbor—o everyone in your life. With humanity-affirming love, interdependence, and justice.

This address is not meant for individuals alone. I speak to you all as leaders of the church that is, and stewards of the church that will be. Right now, the church is lying at the side of the road to Jericho. It has many skills and abilities, but it needs help. We, the present and future of the church, need to be open to wherever that help will come from. We need to embrace interdependence, love, and justice, more than we ever have before, and condemn the Good Samaritan Paradigm that keeps us from recognizing the gifts of some of the people we need.

This. Requires. Change. I don't just mean we need to alter how we think about charity, or put more ramps in our churches, although we certainly need to do that. I mean we need to think about what it means to be a leader of this thing we call church, this body mind made up of diverse, skilled, and adaptive body minds. Change is coming. The margins are expanding, and will continue to do so until no one is marginalized. The center is being eroded. When change comes, it takes the traditional structures of leadership, and alters them beyond recognizability.

Are you ready, friends? Are you ready to give up some of your power? When we live interdependently, we live fuller, more meaningful

lives—but we also live knowing we do not fully control our fate, or the fate of the communities we claim to lead. To live disabled, interdependent, is to know that all that keeps you going where you want to go are bodies before and behind you, holding you up, leading you on. Needing one another is frightening. Needing one another is exhausting. Needing one another can feel like powerlessness. And yet, it is also freeing, energizing, and powerful. It all depends on your perspective.

Are you ready, friends? I will be your Good Samaritan, if you will be mine. I will hold your hand in the frightening world of relying on the expected, if you will accompany me across busy streets. I will encourage you in finding adaptations you never knew you had, if you will stand up against ableism and the Good Samaritan Paradigm when I am not there, or too exhausted from my work to do it myself. I will cook you dinner, if you will bring me the trash can. Are you ready, friends? Because the kingdom is coming.

God of love and justice, be in the midst of your people, your church. Your kingdom come; your will be done. Your kingdom come, your will be done—and may we know your will of love. Amen.

Meditation: The Body of God
by Bekah Anderson
Vice Chair UCCDM `19-Present
March 17, 2018

Imagine the body of God.

Imagine it with all the genders and races and physical descriptions of the world. God is male and female and both and neither and all. God is black and red and olive and tan. God has hair in long braids, slanted eyes, flat nose, big lips, long beard, curvy body, long arms, short legs. God wears flowing dresses, and blue jeans, and saris, and turbans, and tuxedos, and lots and lots of jewelry. God has tattoos of every animal of the world, and a single heart-shaped stud in their right ear.

And God has every ability, and every disability in the world.

God walks, God limps, God rolls, God crawls. God gets where God needs to be, gets to us, however God can.

God's mind works with the speed—and sometimes the randomness—of ADHD. God feels pain with the depths of depression, and energy like an episode of mania. God hears voices: the voices of all people and all living things. God has no one way of solving problems. Sometimes God moves from step to step with the most analytic of minds. Sometimes God makes great intuitive leaps that cannot be explained. Sometimes God gets stuck in a loop because the present, whether good or bad, is the time where God lives.

God paints with their feet and reads with their hands. God can dance by swaying and shuffling, and sing by making noises that are not words, but express emotions that words cannot.

God is too busy reaching out to us to be concerned that they cannot see. God is too busy feeling the rhythms of music in their bones to worry about what it sounds like. God is too busy loving, loving with all

God's arrhythmic heart to be anything but grateful for the body they have.

Is it any wonder that we have trouble grasping God, when God's body does not move the way we expect a body to move? Is it any wonder we have trouble understanding God when God speaks with the slurred words of Cerebral Palsy? Is it any wonder that we cannot comprehend God, who bares the chronic pain of the suffering of the world?

How can we come closer to this being beyond our comprehension, this bodymind that meets none of our expectations?

By freeing ourselves of expectations.

By searching for God in the unique bodyminds of our fellow human beings.

By seeking to understand that which challenges us, and confuses us, and frightens us.

By accepting ourselves, and the bodyminds that make us who we are.

When we pray that all of this may be so; when we pray to love all bodies and minds; when we pray to be both broken and whole at once: we are praying to be more like God.

Hymn Suggestion: "For Everyone Born"

Additional verse written by Bekah Anderson

For all bodies born, a place at the table,
All bodies and minds, remaking the world,
Offering gifts, and receiving access,
With all bodies born, the kingdom is whole.

Scriptures for Access Sunday

Exodus 32:1-14

32

When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, “Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”² Aaron said to them, “Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.”³ So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron.⁴ He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!”⁵ When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a festival to the Lord.”

⁶They rose early the next day, and offered burnt offerings and brought sacrifices of well-being; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to revel.

⁷The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’⁹ The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. ¹⁰Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.”¹¹ But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹²Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people. ¹³Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will

multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”¹⁴ And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

Psalm 106

¹Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

²Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord, or declare all his praise?

³Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

⁴Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people; help me when you deliver them;

⁵that I may see the prosperity of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory in your heritage.

⁶Both we and our ancestors have sinned; we have committed iniquity, have done wickedly.

¹⁹They made a calf at Horeb and worshiped a cast image.

²⁰They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass.

²¹They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt,

²²wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea.

²³Therefore he said he would destroy them— had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the breach before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them.

Isaiah 25:1-10

25

O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.

²For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. ³Therefore strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you. ⁴For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, ⁵the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled.

⁶On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. ⁷And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. ⁸Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken.

⁹It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

³he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Philippians 4:1-13

4

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. ²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Matthew 22:1-14

22

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. ¹¹“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.”