



Cultivating Community

“...With Diverse Abilities”

Matthew 21:12-17

Sunday, October 21, 2018

1. Sunday Summary: This Sunday we considered what it means to include, and how to include those in our communities whose abilities differ somewhat from the typical person. Sometimes we call these people, people with disabilities.

In our world today we know that we need to work to include people with disabilities in some way, but sometimes the ways we do that are insensitive. These insensitivities can lead to a breakdown of community, like when we only celebrate people with disabilities when they do what able-bodied people can do (think of the video we watched). What’s missing is that we don’t recognize that we actually need people with disabilities, and we need to make a space for them, simply because they are people made in the image of God, who have something to contribute on their own terms and in their own way. This is why Jesus drives out the moneychangers from the temple.

The Court of the gentiles, where the moneychangers were set up, was a place where anyone could come and be a part of the community and worship the Lord. But, being set up there meant that there was no room for Gentiles, and those who, because of purity laws, could not be in the rest of the temple. So, Jesus drives the moneychangers out, and brings the least and the last in. There is a necessary place for people like this in community, and God says something really important about himself and us through them: 1) First, weakness, and disability rightly and powerfully orient us to God. We’re all broken more than we care to admit, and when compared to God’s power and perfection, the distance between “typical” people and people with disabilities is actually very small. 2) God shows himself powerfully through disability. The incarnation was the most disabling event in history.

2. Connecting Questions: (Interactive, life sharing, thought & feeling type stuff)

- Talk about your experience of/with people with disabilities. Have you ever thought about including someone with disabilities in your small group? Ever invited someone with disabilities out for dinner or over for coffee? If not, what’s stopped you?
- This morning Pastor Mike talked about gifts that people with disabilities have to share with us, and that we need people with disabilities in our community because they have much to teach us. What have you learned from a person with a disability? What gifts can people with disabilities bring to us?

- Talk together about how important our language is when we're discussing cultivating community? Have you ever been hurt by how others have talked about you? Did it lead to a breakdown in community?
- What insights from today's message were most helpful for you?

3. Truth Questions: (What does the Bible say?)

- Think together about some other passages in Scripture that refer to disability. Can you think of any?
- Read Genesis 1:26-27. Talk about what it means to be made in the image of God. How can someone who has a disability be made in the image of a perfect and Holy God? How well do able-bodied people image God?
- Read John 5:1-15 together. What is this passage about? Some people suggest that verse 14 seems to suggest that disability is the result of sin. Is that correct? Talk about it.

4. Formation Questions: (Taking it further, How does the Truth change the way I live?)

- What concrete steps can you make to sink the gospel truth that we dealt with today deeper into your life throughout this week? What will you do about the message you heard today?
- How can you make someone with a disability feel more like a part of the community of the church this week? Talk about what we can do better together as a church to include them? Are there barriers that somehow need to come down in order to fully include people with disabilities? If so, what are they?

5. Resources for Further Study:

1. De Jong, Terry A. & Stephenson, Mark, *The Inclusion Handbook: Everybody Belongs, Everybody Serves*. (Faith Alive Christian Resources, Grand Rapids, MI, 2013).
2. Yong, Amos, *The Bible Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God*, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 2011).
3. <https://www.crcna.org/disability/breaking-barriers>