

**Sunday 27th September –
Morning Worship for
Disability Sunday**

Led by Sue Nelms, LLM

<https://zoom.us/j/82311473640>

LORDSBRIDGE TEAM
OF CHURCHES



Opening Words

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you
and also with you.

Gathering Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,
We have so much to thank you for:
Thank you for making us in your image, and loving us so much!
Thank you for giving each of us gifts and abilities.
Please help us to use them well,
to live for you and bless those around us.
Thank you for making us each a part of Jesus' body, the church.
Thank you for our brothers and sisters in Jesus all around the world.

**Please help us to love one another,
and share the good news of your wonderful
rescuing love with those around us.**

**In Jesus' Name,
Amen**

Hymn – Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine

I Blessèd assurance, Jesus is mine:
 O what a foretaste of glory divine!
 Heir of salvation purchase of God;
 Born of his Spirit, washed in his blood:
 Chorus: This is my story, this is my song,



Praising my Saviour, all the day long.

2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture burst on my sight;
Angels descending bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love:
Chorus

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest -
I in my Saviour am happy and blest -
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with his goodness, lost in his love.
Chorus

Frances Jane van Alstyne (Fanny Crosby) (1820-1915) (Public Domain)

Saying Sorry

God the Father forgives us in Christ and heals us by the Holy Spirit.
Let us therefore put away all anger and bitterness,
all slander and malice,
and confess our sins to God our redeemer.

cf Ephesians 4.30,32

**Almighty God,
long-suffering and of great goodness:
I confess to you,
I confess with my whole heart
my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments,
my wrong doing, thinking, and speaking;
the hurts I have done to others,
and the good I have left undone.
O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you;
and raise me to newness of life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,

heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Readings by Ann Griffiths

Psalm 150

- ¹ Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
- ² Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
- ³ Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
- ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
- ⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- ⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!

For the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

One Body with Many Members

- ¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.
- ¹³ For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.
- ¹⁴ Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body', that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But as it is, God

arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you', nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' ²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Reflection by Triona Brading, Through the Roof

"I have a friend who I met at an autistic ladies' group at my church. We would meet and take it in turns to share information about our special interests and then we would look at the Bible together.

This friend knew everything there is to know about the human body, particularly muscles. Like, did you know that your tongue is the only muscle that is attached at just one end?

Well, as cool as muscles are, if the whole body was only muscles, as well as looking a bit strange, we might find it difficult to function!

How do our muscles get energy to move without a mouth to eat?
How could our heart be protected without ribs? What shape would we be without any bones?

Bodies are made-up of so many different parts that are all really important. And in the Bible, in a letter to the Corinthians, Paul talks to us about how as the Church, we're a bit like a body.

We can see in verse 12, right at the start of our passage, that many parts make up the body. Well, that does make sense... My fingers are a part of my hand. My hand is connected to my arm, my arm to my torso. It's starting to sound a little bit like a song that I knew as a child: "The foot bone's connected to the leg bone, The leg bone's connected to the knee bone..." Do you know the one?

All of our parts belong to one body. And Paul writes that it's like that for us because we're all baptised by one Holy Spirit and it didn't matter if we were Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, we were given the same Spirit to drink.

So when this letter was written, people were putting themselves into a couple of different groups and not mixing... Jews were a group; Gentiles were anyone who wasn't a Jew; slaves were a group and free people were a group.

You can think of it a little bit like opposing football teams. Growing up in Newcastle, I knew that you couldn't be both a Geordie and a Mackem! But the Bible is saying that, for Christians, we don't have these divisions. We're part of one body. Whatever our differences, we're united.

On Disability Awareness Sunday, we might particularly want to remember this, as it applies to our abilities and disabilities and neurodevelopmental differences. We might be different, but we are all united.

The letter goes on to explain that every part is needed. Verse 21 gives quite a funny visual to imagine! This is the part of the Bible reading where, as an autistic person, I might chuckle to myself, because I'll be imagining it literally happening:

The eye cannot say to the hand I don't need you. The head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. In fact, it's quite the opposite."

Can you imagine it? Body parts going rogue and breaking free of the body, hopping away and trying to live independently of one another.

I can't think of a single body part that could thrive alone without support from the rest of the body. It's a silly idea. And that's the thing about us as the body of Christ. We need each other. We can't do it alone, and we can't say to any other Christian that we don't need them.

We might be different, but we're united and we need every single one of us. OK, so that might be true, but surely there are somebody parts that are better and so we might think that some people in our churches are better or more useful than others. Absolutely not!

This passage describes parts that may seem weaker and parts that we think are less important. The Bible says those are the parts that we can't do without and that we treat with special honour.

There's some really interesting points to be made here. Firstly, the parts that seem weaker or that we think are less important. What humans view as weakness or lack of importance is often not in line with how God sees things. It's not the parts that are weaker or are less important, they're parts we're wrongly thinking of.

Putting that into the context of disability, it really flips everything on its head, doesn't it?

Our whole framework and understanding of disability is that someone's not able to do something the expected way, whether that's through physical or social barriers. If these barriers are not broken down, or accommodations are not made correct, support not put in place, then people are excluded from participation and belonging.

It may seem that someone is weaker because they need help to access a building, a service, a coffee morning, but are they really weaker? Are they less important in God's view?

Well, this passage would say everyone is united, everyone is needed and everyone is honoured. But particularly the parts that we might think seem weaker.

We need to give special honour, we need to provide accommodations and support so that our body, the body of Christ, can function fully and thrive.

One of the ways we see this lived out is through Through the Roof's Wheels for the World programme, where donated wheelchairs and mobility aids are distributed in developing countries. Parts of the body of Christ geographically far from us, are receiving mobility aids they need, along with a Bible, one part of the body giving special honour to another because we need them.

Or perhaps more locally, we can think of the Roofbreakers project? Individuals in local churches looking for ways to enable Access, Belonging and Commission for disabled and neurodivergent individuals in their church. That is the body of Christ working together to make sure every part is being included and honoured because we need every part.

This passage is just so exciting and important because it shows us how necessary every single one of us is for one another, for the whole body, and for God's glory.

As it says in verse 27: "You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it."

Let's be one body with all parts united, needed and honoured. Join the journey at throughtheroof.org

Affirmation of Faith

Let us declare our faith in God.

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and on earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith,
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession prepared by Rev John Beauchamp and Becki Harbour

Creator God,
you made humankind in your image
and ordained each person to reveal a glimpse of you in the world.
You hold all human diversity in your heart
and bless each of us with the sacred potential
to reflect your glory in our lives.
In the wounded and disfigured body of Jesus Christ
all human bodies are redeemed
and we are each empowered to be your witnesses today.
May your church be a place where this truth is revealed
and the full diversity of humanity is able to co-exist as one body
with every part named and celebrated.
Lord, challenge your church to see you in all people
regardless of the labels that the world tries to give us
or the judgements that are made about us.
And show us how we can bring heaven down to earth
and become the Body of Christ

where all of humanity can find reconciliation and peace.
Lead us into a new understanding
of what it means to be a blessed community
where all are welcomed and liberated.
Pour out your Spirit among us
that, as one body made up of many parts,
we may together be Christ for the world today.
In Jesus name we pray. **Amen**

Rev John Beauchamp

Heavenly Father,
Thank you that in Christ we are one body with many parts.
Thank you that by your Spirit you have made us one,
different yet united,
unique yet belonging together.
Lord, on this Disability Awareness Sunday,
forgive us for the times we have judged by appearances,
or believed that some parts are more important than others.
Your word tells us that the parts that seem weaker
are indispensable,
and that every part is worthy of honour.
Thank you for the gifts, perspectives, creativity,
and faith of disabled and neurodivergent members of your church.
Thank you that we are dependent on one another —
that we are both in need and needed.
Help us to be a church where barriers are removed,
where support is given freely,
where differences are welcomed,
and where every person can belong, serve, and flourish.
If one part suffers, teach us to suffer together.
If one part is honoured, teach us to rejoice together.
Make us a community that reflects your heart —
a body that thrives under Christ our head.
We are one body.
We are all needed. We are all honoured.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Becki Harbour

Collect

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself,
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:
Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Hymn – Amazing Grace (My chains are gone)

- 1 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
 that saved a wretch like me
 I once was lost, but now I'm found
 was blind, but now I see.
- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 and grace my fears relieved;

how precious did that grace appear,
the hour I first believed!

My chains are gone, I've been set free,
my God, my saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy reigns,
unending love, amazing grace.

- 3 The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

My chains are gone, I've been set free,
my God, my saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy reigns,
unending love, amazing grace.

My chains are gone, I've been set free,
My God, my saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy reigns,
unending love, amazing grace.

- 4 The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine,
but God who called me here below
will be forever mine,
will be forever mine
you are forever mine

John Newton (1725-1807), Edwin Othello Excell (1851-1921), John Rees (1828-1900)

Arranged and additional choruses by Chris Tomlin (born 1972) and Louie Giglio

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(CCLI 4768151)

Notices

Conclusion – Blessing by Revd Canon Timothy Goode

Blessed are you who have seen the breaking –
and did not turn away.

Blessed are you who have listened to the wounded –
and heard the voice of Christ.

Blessed are you who have lingered at the torn veil,
Who have wept at the inaccessible altar,
Who have stayed with the silenced story.

Blessed are you who have not sought a perfect church,
but a faithful one. A risen one. A breaking and blessed one.

Now go – go in the name of the Disabled Christ,
Whose hands bear scars that are now thrones of mercy.

Go in the name of the Spirit who stirs in every interruption,
every tremor, every sacred pause.

Go in the name of the God who makes all things new –
not by erasing our wounds, but by filling them with glory.

Build spaces wide enough for wheelchairs and wonder.

Shape liturgies slow enough for trembling hands and hesitant prayers.

Tell stories that are messy, marvellous and true.

Break bread that tastes of lament and laughter.

Lift voices – stammering, silent, singing – into one great hallelujah

Remember: the body is breaking.

And still it is blessed. Still it is rising.

You are not alone in this work.

You are surrounded by a great cloud of disabled saints –
seen and unseen –

Cheering you on, calling you forward,

Teaching you the dance of the not-yet and the already.

Go. Build the Church you have not yet seen.

It will not be perfect.

It will be better. It will be holy. It will be home.

Amen