

SEARCHING SCRIPTURE

Jesus' Care & Compassion



BY CHRISTOPHER MARONDE

In one of the congregations I serve, there is a young man— five years old—with Down’s syndrome. I love to see his smile at the communion rail or hear him speaking parts of the liturgy with me. This young man doesn’t know it, but he is a survivor. The vast majority of children who are prenatally diagnosed with Down’s syndrome are aborted, along with many others diagnosed with physical or mental disabilities. Those who survive the womb with physical or mental disabilities later in life feel left out, and those with mental illnesses like depression or bipolar disorder are isolated, separated from their families and their peers. Does this even happen in our churches? May it not be!

How should Christians view their neighbors? Is there any class of human beings that is beneath another in the eyes of God? Read Gen. 1:26–28 and Matt. 5:2–12. What does the Fifth Commandment have to say about how we are to treat all people, including the disabled and mentally ill?

Read Gal. 3:26–28 (see also Col. 3:11). Are disabled people “second-class citizens” in the body of Christ? What do they share in common with all other Christians? Read Rom. 3:22b–26.

Read Rom. 10:17. Where does faith come from? Does it begin on the inside or is it given from the outside? Lutheran theology emphasizes that the Word, when it is proclaimed and heard, creates faith. What is this faith? Read Mark 10:13–16. Is faith answering test questions right, or is it something else?

What implications does this view of faith have for the disabled, especially those with profound mental disabilities? Can they, too, have faith?

What was the attitude of Jesus toward those who were looked down upon by the world? See Matt. 9:1–8; 15:29–31; 18:10–14; Mark 2:13–17; 10:46–52; Luke 4:18–19; 10:25–37; 15:1–7. How does Christ’s example and teaching inform how we care for the disabled and mentally ill? (See Gal. 6:2; 1 Thess. 2:7–8.)

Read 2 Cor. 12:7–10. Describe Jesus’ care and compassion shown toward those who bear the burden of mental illness or who are caregivers for the disabled. How can we encourage them with these words?

Read 1 Cor. 12:12–26. Do the disabled have a place in the Church? On what basis does Paul make this claim (see especially verse 13)? Read James 2:1–9. How does James instruct us to treat those who are “outsiders” in the eyes of the world?

The body of Christ is anything but boring; it is a kaleidoscope of different personalities, experiences, cultures, abilities and disabilities. John’s vision of heaven is of “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation ... standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9). What a glorious vision! “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”