

My Body Is Not A Prayer Request

If I am "sweating like a pig" - how sweaty am I? You likely thought "a lot." But pigs don't actually sweat. That's why they lay in mud. Mud helps cool them down. So, if I'm sweating like a pig, I'm actually without sweat.

Let's try another - I'm "blind as a bat." We usually mean this as I cannot see at all. But bats aren't blind! They have eyes and use them. They just also use echolocation to rapidly make a mental image when flying through the dark.

Creative story-telling is best with these kinds of phrases. The words paint mental pictures. ('See' what I did there? Paint. I didn't actually put paint inside your heads. Nor did you 'see' them with your eyes.)

But this creativity can be misunderstood, or its meaning can change - such as in the case of bats and pigs.

The author of John today is creatively linking blindness and knowledge. He, or she, has stated Jesus is the light of the world. Receiving the light is receiving Jesus. Seeing the light is understanding Jesus. The pharisees are called "blind" because they cannot perceive who Jesus is. The blind man is healed, cured, through encountering Jesus and receives sight - literally, and also figuratively.

This is beautiful writing. Complex. Full of analogies and comparisons and allusions. It takes old ideas that light shines into your eyes, into your mind, and with it is knowledge. It is where we draw the idea that eyes are windows – windows into the mind, into the soul. It is poetic.

Now imagine you listened today to the story and are physically blind.

Why are you blind?

The disciples suggest - Because your parents sinned. Maybe they didn't get you to the doctor in time when you were ill. Maybe it is some kind of karma - God paying them back for their sins by harming their child - you.

Or maybe you sinned. Maybe you crashed your car and lost your eyesight. Maybe it is your karma for all the sins over your life - and God is punishing you for your sins.

Jesus counters the disciples and draws them away from sin. He says maybe people are just born that way – perhaps it is so that God's glory could be shown.

In what manner, Jesus? This is where we get into theology.

Is God known in the healing? If so, we just have to believe enough and we'll receive sight. If we remain blind, it means our faith isn't sufficient. Or maybe we need others to believe we can be healed, and so need a whole prayer request change to do a faith healing. If it hasn't worked, then there were just too many spiritually blind people still. That theology, that way of understanding God, doesn't seem life-giving to me. It doesn't seem like what Jesus would argue.

I think Jesus was arguing that sometimes, people are just blind. There is no fault. No sin. God's glory is known in bodies that are what the world considers "broken" and "not

whole.” God is known in the human experience of bodies that, despite our best efforts, refuse to stay perfect.

John expands Jesus’ message to talk poetically about blindness and sight, visions and understanding, lack of understanding and lack of sight.

As poetry. Not as theology.

If we want to think about the theology of blindness, we could turn to the work of Amy Kenny who wrote the book, "My Body Is Not A Prayer Request."

Kenny talks about her experience of being a disabled person in a world that sees her as a problem to be fixed. Just enough doctors - and she can walk - just enough treatments and experimental medicine - and it will cure her. She writes, the “world and the church teach us that we are not enough, that we need to be ‘fixed’ (read: cured) to be whole, that we have all the makings of a ‘before’ picture of a prayer makeover.” Just enough faith, enough prayer, enough trust in God – and the transformation will be complete.

But if all things are possible through God; if it just takes faith the size of a mustard seed - why don't amputees grow back limbs?

And... she asks, why did Jesus resurrect still with his wounds?

Being wounded, being disabled, is a key part of the human condition. Jesus didn't skip it. And therefore, God is disabled. Kenny argues that “God doesn't see you as disabled” or “you'll walk in heaven” are both insulting. God doesn't see the wholeness of who I am? I am less in the image of God because I do not walk? Or, as the religious leaders in our reading today proclaim, “We're blind?” and are insulted.

Kenny states people with different abilities are just that – different. The diversity of who God is, is known in the diversity of humanity. And that includes both seeing, and not seeing, with eyes. It includes traveling with no legs and traveling with wheels. The diversity of God, the image of God, is all of us – and that very good image is people with disabilities not INSPITE of those, but BECAUSE of them.

We wouldn't say God is exclusively white skinned. Or exclusively male. Or exclusively old. Why do we insist God is exclusively only “whole” when God hasn't a pacemaker, a port, or needs insulin?

Being healthy is a temporary state. It takes constant maintenance. It isn't our default. By default, there's always something "wrong." But that is our labeling. If instead of labelling it wrong, but rather saying this part of myself is different than most others - then we can embrace our differently abled bodies.

Health as a temporary state means we're all going to be disabled or differently abled throughout our lives.

We're going to need, or already need, glasses.

We're going to need, or already need, mobility support through canes or walkers or chairs.

We're going to need, or already need, braces.

Some of these conditions go away over time, and some do not.

A prayer request need, a faith healing, is absolutely a real and valid thing. I have witnessed miraculous healings through prayer and intercession. I regularly pray for others and with others for healing.

The issue is when health becomes our theology, our way of understanding God. The issue is when we think of health as this Olympian ideal, static, perfectly buff and without blemish.... instead of thinking of health as a temporary state that looks and is different for each person.

Jesus was healthy - with crucifixion wounds on his hands and feet. After the resurrection he was up, okay, eating and drinking. The wounds were part of his new normal health.

I am healthy – with scars across my body, and glasses on my face, and a leg that hates the weather change we’re having. This is my healthy.

You are healthy. Using glasses, or a chair; needing medicine – these are healthy. Healthy is our normal. And it is abnormal from others!

So Kenny's argument is when we approach texts like today's, we don't make blanket assumptions – “O Lord - heal all the blind. Heal all the deaf. Cure all the lame!”

Actually, many people who are blind, deaf, or lame are just fine and don't need, or appreciate, that kind of self-serving prayer. Many people would appreciate we change our churches to honour health as a temporary status.

Change by changing our language.

Change by changing so ramps are the normal.

Change by changing worship so it isn't all visual, or all auditory.

A common phrase among the differently abled community is that when accommodations stop being accommodations, and become the norm, everyone benefits. Because if you don't need that change now, odds are you will later.

Because health is temporary.

We serve and follow a crucified, permanently wounded, God. The image of God is one that is disabled, differently abled, and so, that is the image we take throughout our lives.

There is no sin in it. No shame. Just holiness and the human condition. Amen.

Scripture Readings – March 15, 22, 2026 - LCUCPC

Ephesians 5:8-14 - NRSV Ue

⁸ for once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, ⁹ for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!

Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

John 9:1-41 - A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. ² His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶ When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, ⁷ saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. ⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am he.” ¹⁰ But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹ He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹² They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

¹³ They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴ Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵ Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” ¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. ¹⁷ So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹ and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰ His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²² His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

Spiritual Blindness

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

May God’s spirit shape our understanding of these words.

And may they awaken in our hearts

