

## UM disability blog and INUMC lectionary for Lent 5B

Reading: John 12:20-33

In the lectionary passage for Lent 5, we are reminded that the season is a time for renewal of our faith. We often do this through spiritual disciplines that look toward simplifying or re-focusing on the primary elements of our faith and practice. As we approach Indiana's statewide Disability Month in March and conference-wide Disability Sunday in the season of Lent, we are near the climactic point of the gospel, and the lectionary turns to the impending death of Jesus.

In this chapter, Jesus is on the way to Jerusalem. In the preceding chapter, the Sanhedrin (ruling religious council) has decided to seek the death of Jesus. In response, Jesus withdraws with his disciples to a remote village. As Passover approached, Jesus went to Bethany, where he had raised Lazarus from the dead, and the place where the opposition coalesced. John writes what we would today call an evangelistic tract, highlighting an ongoing conflict belief and unbelief. In the lectionary, the sequence points to the passion narrative of Lent 6.

This death is increasingly portrayed as a battle between the powers of the world and the power of God. On our side of the resurrection, we know the story and can take comfort that God's power was victorious. But on the side of those who lived through it, this was a time of intense conflict and doubt. Even Peter denied that he was one of those Galileans who knew Jesus. People were pitted against each other, as were beliefs and power systems.

And yet Jesus looks to what is to come, in a statement that carries great meaning for people with disabilities, who have often been excluded from the church. In John 12.32, Jesus states that "when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." The Disability Ministries team believes that the hallmark of a church is inclusion. This is not merely the evangelization of an unreached target group, but a belief that Jesus does indeed bring everyone to him. We are not engaged in ministry "to" but ministry "with" that strengthens the body of Christ by bringing many gifts, abilities, and graces into the mix that is the church. Just as God created us in variety, we come together in variety. We are no longer abled, disabled: as Paul reminds us in Galatians 3.28, in Christ the old distinctions are gone, and the church is complete and enriched by the various gifts that come from people of all physical, mental, and developmental abilities.

What better time to proclaim this inclusion of all abilities than the day of preparation for the passion?