

Disabled Access Day Eucharist
Saint Paul's Cathedral, 16 March 2019

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It is a good thing for us to meet together in this glorious building, in the middle of the day, to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God. It is good to be here.

It is especially good to be here marking Disabled Access Day. As someone who has found myself disabled by the physical barriers that the world can often present to someone in a wheelchair, I am delighted that Saint Paul's Cathedral, one of the great focal points of our nation, one of the places we look to at times of joy and sorrow, is taking so seriously this important day.

I want to say two things briefly about God, and one thing about the world.

Firstly something about the world. I firmly believe that it is the world that often disables us, that often provides barriers for those of us who don't move, or hear, or think in quite the same way as the majority. I don't particularly feel like I am disabled, but I do feel disabled by the world sometimes. It is a really good thing that awareness days such as this one are taking place. The provision of access for all is vital. It is also a basic necessity for human dignity. Praise God that the world is getting better than it has been at that. And praise God for the wonderful lift here in Saint Pauls! But we're not there yet. We have to work harder, we have to do better, we have to be more aware of our brothers and sisters and ensure that everything we do is accessible, and that that access is prioritised over heritage or financial considerations.

That's the one thing about the world. Two things about God:

In our first reading we heard Ezekiel's vision of seeing God in a place where the people were in absolute despair. And it's really interesting that his vision is basically of God in a wheelchair. The picture that Ezekiel uses to describe a God who is *mobile*, who can follow his people and be with them wherever they go is of a God in a chair with wheels. This is really the first point in the Old Testament where we have a really clear picture of a God who is with us wherever we go. God is not God of this land, or that land. God is not God only of one group of people or another. God is interested in all of us, and in every one of us. And so he follows us, with his angels, with his glory, with his blessing. God is always with us.

And the second thing: God knows about our pain as well as our joy. When Jesus appears after his resurrection he is disabled. His hands and his side have holes in them. The promise of the kingdom of God, the promise of glory, is not that the things that define us will be swept away. Jesus in his resurrection glory still has holes in him. He remains who he was. And so do we. God is interested in who you are. Who I am. Wheelchair and all. It is that, it is me, it is you, and everything that you are, that he loves, that he knows, and that he will glorify.

Amen.