

*John's notes on*

## **Disabilities and the Divine**

By John Van Sloten

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[CBS AUTISM/BASKETBALL CLIP] **(1)What is it that rises up inside of you when you see a scene like that? PAUSE...** that strikes such a **deep** and **resonant** chord?... such joyful mayhem!... this overwhelmingly heart felt compassion... **PAUSE...** there's just such a **rightness** to an event like that... an out of this world kind of **beauty, truth** and **wisdom** at work... and a powerfully redemptive kind of **glory!**

**PAUSE...** I think what rose up in you **was the heart of God!...** his deep joy at seeing **brokenness redeemed...** at seeing **weakness in it's glory...** at seeing the **lost, the least and the last** come in first!

God's heart is for these things... for the **needy**... for the **alienated**... for those who **fall short**... **"(2)** You're here to defend the defenseless, to make sure that underdogs get a fair break; Your job is to stand up for the powerless, and prosecute all those who exploit them." Says God to the Judges in Psalm 82:3-4, MSG

God's heart for the **poor**, the **lost, disabled** is all over the Bible God **sees them... feels** for them... **understands** them... **does something for them...**

**"(3)** But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless." Psalm 10:14

**When feelings like the "feelings that just rose up in you" surface, God's Spirit is moving in love!...** That's a good thing!... positive thing!! **PAUSE...**

But I think there's also a **negative** in that news story for people w/ disabilities... **PAUSE (4)**It has to do with our insistence that the disabled are only valid when they do what we 'able bodied'

people can do... [**Linda Larson** polio/very demeaning to her, **"(5)When you get to heaven you'll be able to run, dance, move... (6) just like me!"**

**PAUSE...** Can you see how demeaning that could be? where validity is tied to **performance/or conformance** to the norm/ideal... "who we are" is primarily based on **what we do... how able to contribute... are same!**

When we make the '**disabled boy does good**' mindset the validating **only** factor we **sell disability** short!... very **ungracious imposition**... blinds us to the good/ beautiful and true that is present **in** disability...

Larson spoke of there being '**(7)blessing in disability**' whole lecture carried undercurrent of '**validity in the midst of disability**'... **PAUSE...** **(8)INVALID"** **PAUSE** How could we ever call anybody an invalid?

**"(9)** In 1996 the World Health Organization estimated that 10 to 11% of the world's population has a disability — "up to 600 million."

World Health Organization. Declining Resources for Rehabilitation: A Matter of Concern. January 30, 1996

So where is there blessing in disability? **PAUSE...** two ways to answer that!... **1. Disability powerfully orients us to and connect us to God** (easier answer) **2. God reveals himself through reality of disability...**

This week phone interview with New Hoper with Schizophrenia... "Drives him to **pray**, to **depend** on God, to **focus on God** more, to **humbly trust** him... [**PRIDE/Schiz connection**]" There is something about knowing 'need' that drives us into the arms of God... [**(10 -12)** PAUL reading 2 Corinthians 12]

**[JVS depression – PRAYER at start of NHC... he's answered many times... often just hold on... all I can manage... in those times very, very weak!]** in those times most amazing things happen - inside me or in the work I do... **"(13)** Christ is God's ultimate miracle and wisdom all wrapped up in one.

Human wisdom is so tinny, so impotent, next to the seeming absurdity of God. Human strength can't begin to compete with God's "weakness." I Cor 3:23-31 MSG

This wk read a lot about mis-treatment of the disabled **avoid them** b/c can't handle their brokenness...

tease/belittle/pejoratively treat them b/c insecurities!

can you imagine God treating us in those kinds of ways... with all our brokenness?... disability relative to his perfection?...

**[Distance between you /DS person]**

**disability is a mirror, affirming that none of us are perfect PAUSE affirming that only God is...**

**“(14) If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at.”**

In this church believe that all **good, truth, beauty, justice** GOD's!!!... anything of **value, importance, significance** comes from him!... Life is **from him and through him and for him...** Holds **everything together, every moment, every day...** all things!

**[(15-26!!!) Colossians READING]**

**Who gets that more?...** person who can't get up in the morning b/c mental illness... paralyzed legs... brain injury... congenital disability... OR someone who has it all together... in control... is perfect?

Paul may not be far off GIFT! if greatest, most beautiful thing Knowing God more disability does offer that!... **PAUSE... [Not trying to glorify suffering CAVEAT... huge door to grace here!]**

**OK... so now what about the other way that there is blessing in disability?... “God revealing himself through the reality of disability.” PAUSE...**

This wk kept thinking about “Kenosis” **[EXPLAIN] “The greatest di-abling event in history!”**

Jesus losing/putting aside omni-everything... all power all knowingness... his very Godness to do what he did!... (Did Voluntarily different than how many end up disabled!)... but still he did it.... **PAUSE...** JVS used to always think **downward** move... **loss** to God... **negative** direction... **cost to be paid** for human sakes!

While part of this may be true also wondering if place of **weakness, dependence, poverty, out of control** – “(27)That the place itself isn't the epitome of the wisdom of God!”... That all that we think of as having **no value...** as being **invalid** filled with an otherworldly kind of **meaning/beauty...** (totally beyond current metrics... way we measure performance/value) **PAUSE**

I can hardly put words around this... but I see it **[(28)EDWARD's FLY pulled up** totally at home with another serving you...]

**[(29)Bed Ridden incontinent man** found deep meaning in care of his wife]...

**[(30)JVS carried a physically disabled... arms held so tight... complete trust... no pretense/pride...]** **[(31)“Mask free” friendship environs** acceptance, authenticity, no inhibitions, profound freedom, deeply genuine community, total giving of self to others...]

**God let us dress him** (as toddler Jesus!)... **We changed his diapers...** he was more authentically human/uninhibited than any other... MORE REAL than any reality we could imagine!... **PAUSE... his realness let us be real** (Just like disabled often do!)

There is something about weakness(chosen or not) carries with it the deeper wisdom of God!**[ICor 3 again]**

ONE MORE STORY **[HOYT TALE SET IT UP** huge evidence of the existence of God/ divine heart powerful revelation beauty of being carried] <http://cjcphoto.com/can/>

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 "Because of the extravagance of those revelations, and so I wouldn't get a big head, I was given the **gift** of a handicap to keep me in constant touch with my limitations. Satan's angel did his best to get me down; what he in fact did was push me to my knees. No danger then of walking around high and mighty! At first I didn't think of it as a gift, and begged God to remove it. Three times I did that, and then he told me,

My grace is enough; it's all you need.

My strength comes into its own in your weakness.

Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness. Now I take limitations in stride, and with good cheer, these limitations that cut me down to size—abuse, accidents, opposition, bad breaks. I just let Christ take over! And so the weaker I get, the stronger I become."

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### Christ Holds It All Together

15-18 We look at this Son and **see the God** who cannot be seen. We look at this Son and see **God's original purpose** in everything created. For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels—everything got started in him and **finds its purpose in him**. He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it all together right up to this moment. And when it comes to the church, he organizes and holds it together, like a head does a body.

18-20 **He was supreme** in the beginning and—leading the resurrection parade—**he is supreme** in the end. From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone. So **spacious** is he, so **roomy**, that everything of God finds its **proper place** in him without crowding. Not only that, but all the **broken and dislocated** pieces of the universe—**people and things**, animals and atoms—get properly fixed and **fit together**

**in vibrant harmonies**, all because of his death, his blood that poured down from the cross.

Colossians 1

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From Sports Illustrated, By Rick Reilly]

I try to be a good father. Give my kids mulligans. Work nights to pay For their text messaging. Take them to swimsuit shoots.

But compared with Dick Hoyt, I suck.

Eighty-five times he's pushed his disabled son, Rick, 26.2 miles in Marathons. Eight times he's not only pushed him 26.2 miles in a Wheelchair but also towed him 2.4 miles in a dinghy while swimming and Pedaled him 112 miles in a seat on the handlebars--all in the same day.

Dick's also pulled him cross-country skiing, taken him on his back Mountain climbing and once hauled him across the U.S. On a bike. Makes Taking your son bowling look a little lame, right?

And what has Rick done for his father? Not much--except save his life.

This love story began in Winchester , Mass. , 43 years ago, when Rick Was strangled by the umbilical cord during birth, leaving him Brain-damaged and unable to control his limbs.

"He'll be a vegetable the rest of his life;" Dick says doctors told him And his wife, Judy, when Rick was nine months old. ``Put him in an Institution."

But the Hoyts weren't buying it. They noticed the way Rick's eyes Followed them around the room. When Rick was 11 they took him to the Engineering department at Tufts University and asked if there was Anything to help the boy communicate. ``No way," Dick says he was told. ``There's nothing going on in his brain."

"Tell him a joke," Dick countered. They did. Rick laughed. Turns out a lot was going on in his brain. Rigged up with a computer that allowed him to control the cursor by touching a switch with the side of his head, Rick was finally able to communicate. First words? "Go Bruins!" And after a high school classmate was paralyzed in an accident and the school organized a charity run for him, Rick pecked out, "Dad, I want to do that."

Yeah, right. How was Dick, a self-described "porker" who never ran more than a mile at a time, going to push his son five miles? Still, he tried. "Then it was me who was handicapped," Dick says. "I was sore for two weeks."

That day changed Rick's life. "Dad," he typed, "when we were running, it felt like I wasn't disabled anymore!"

And that sentence changed Dick's life. He became obsessed with giving Rick that feeling as often as he could. He got into such hard-belly shape that he and Rick were ready to try the 1979 Boston Marathon.

"No way," Dick was told by a race official. The Hoyts weren't quite a single runner, and they weren't quite a wheelchair competitor. For a few years Dick and Rick just joined the massive field and ran anyway, then they found a way to get into the race officially: In 1983 they ran another marathon so fast they made the qualifying time for Boston the following year.

Then somebody said, "Hey, Dick, why not a triathlon?"

How's a guy who never learned to swim and hadn't ridden a bike since he was six going to haul his 110-pound kid through a triathlon? Still, Dick tried.

Now they've done 212 triathlons, including four grueling 15-hour Ironmans in Hawaii. It must be a buzzkill to be a 25-year-old stud getting passed by an old guy towing a grown man in a dinghy, don't you think?

Hey, Dick, why not see how you'd do on your own? "No way," he says. Dick does it purely for "the awesome feeling" he gets seeing Rick with a cantaloupe smile as they run, swim and ride together.

This year, at ages 65 and 43, Dick and Rick finished their 24th Boston Marathon, in 5,083rd place out of more than 20,000 starters. Their best time? Two hours, 40 minutes in 1992--only 35 minutes off the world record, which, in case you don't keep track of these things, happens to be held by a guy who was not pushing another man in a wheelchair at the time.

"No question about it," Rick types. "My dad is the Father of the Century."

And Dick got something else out of all this too. Two years ago he had a mild heart attack during a race. Doctors found that one of his arteries was 95% clogged. "If you hadn't been in such great shape," one doctor told him, "you probably would've died 15 years ago." So, in a way, Dick and Rick saved each other's life.

Rick, who has his own apartment (he gets home care) and works in Boston, and Dick, retired from the military and living in Holland, Mass., always find ways to be together. They give speeches around the country and compete in some backbreaking race every weekend, including this Father's Day.

That night, Rick will buy his dad dinner, but the thing he really wants to give him is a gift he can never buy.

"The thing I'd most like," Rick types, "is that my dad sit in the chair and I push him once."

And the video is below....