



cbm
christian blind mission

“Grant me Justice”

Draft service on Luke 18,1-8



photo: CBM



↑ CBM-Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Rainer Brockhaus

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**Dear pastors,
Dear readers,**

The sermon text from the Gospel of Luke reminds us on the penultimate Sunday of the church year of the power of prayer and the rights of the disadvantaged. The Christian Blind Mission (CBM) cordially invites you to celebrate this service in your church community.

We have designed building blocks for a service for you. For the sermon we offer two texts: one from Germany and one from Kenya. The authors reflect the parable of the widow and the judge from their own perspective plus the perspective of persons with and without disabilities, moreover giving us insights from two different cultures.

In its advocacy work, CBM is committed worldwide to the rights of persons with disabilities, who are often as disadvantaged and rejected as the widow in our sermon text. CBM works to strengthen international advocacy and alliances with the aim of ensuring human rights for persons with disabilities and promoting inclusive development cooperation.

CBM invites you to take up the collection of the service for its worldwide work. We would also be happy to provide you with further materials for this purpose.

Kind regards
Yours

Dr. Rainer Brockhaus
– CEO –

The judge and the widow

NIV: Luke 18,1-8

1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

2 He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought.

3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think,

5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says.

7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”



photo: CBM

The act of love

New International Version (NIV): Mt 25, 31-46

31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. **33** He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. **34** “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, **36** I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

37 “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? **38** When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? **39** When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ **40** “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. **42** For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, **43** I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’

44 “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

45 “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ **46** “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” .



photo: CBM/Trenchard

Prayer for justice

Father in heaven, we pray for this world,
which is riddled with injustice and unfairness.

Bring justice where there is lawlessness.
Turn the plight of the poor and the weak, Be their advocate and helper.

Help people not to hide behind the façade of their own strength,
but to trust in you and so heal their wounds.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

God, the righteous judge

Today's parable from Luke's Gospel describes how God is a much fairer and empathetic judge than worldly courts, if we trust in him. It is not only in this parable that God's care is described. Already in the Psalms of the Old Testament, the longing for God's rule and His justice is addressed. Psalm 2 describes the greatness of God's rule and that of His King and Son, before which all worldly rule seems ridiculously small and helplessly agitated.

This Psalm radiates a lordly serenity and exposes the language of power. It can help us to stand up to unjust rule and to allow the longing for God's final good kingdom.

1 Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain?

2 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying,

3 "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles."

4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them.

5 He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,

6 "I have installed my king on Zion, my holy mountain."

7 I will proclaim the Lord's decree: He said to me, "You are my son; today I have become your father.

8 Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession.

9 You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

10 Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear and celebrate his rule with trembling.

12 Kiss his son, or he will be angry and your way will lead to your destruction, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him!



photo: CBM/Hayduk

↑ A chronic bone inflammation in her right leg has prevented Angela (on the left) from living an independent and self-determined life for a long time. Now she is a teacher ensuring that her students are prepared for their future.

Introduction to the sermons

The Christian Blind Mission (CBM) presents herewith global, inclusive sermon perspectives for the first time. Two shorter sermons on a pericope bring up aspects from different contexts that can be enriching in the respective other context. The texts are read inclusively by pastor Samuel Kabue from the perspective of an affected person, as he himself is visually impaired. Samuel Kabue is an evangelical pastor from Kenya and an activist for the rights of persons with disabilities. He has been internationally and ecumenically active in this field.

Christoph Barnbrock is a Lutheran pastor and professor of practical theology at the Lutheran Theological College in Oberursel/Ts in Germany. He is particularly interested in bringing the biblical texts into one's own contextual reality.

Bringing a theology of inclusion into practical application is what these sermons are intended to do. This project supports CBM's mission to implement global development cooperation based on inclusion and a Christian rationale.

No-one can touch me

Sermon by pastor Christoph Barnbrock

For many of us, it is true that our lives proceed along well-oiled paths. We more or less cope, whether in our jobs or in our private lives. We have enough time and money for both our holidays and our hobbies. It is politically correct to know and admit that we belong to the privileged portion of the world's population. Of course, we profit from the unequal global distribution of commodities – definitely not an optimal situation, but that does not really faze us by any means. Yes, something should be done about changing this state of affairs, but that is not necessarily our job. We seem to have clear-cut roles – in comparison with the rest of the world's population, many of us are rich.

Sometimes, we are faced with challenges in life which suddenly open up quite different perspectives. In her dealings with the relevant responsible authorities, a professionally successful woman tries to claim rights for a severely disabled member of her family, rights to which he is entitled. In doing so, she recurrently runs up against obstacles. Although used to being successful and knowing how to assert herself, she finds herself powerless. This changes her view of the world. She starts to listen to what the Bible says with different ears and can sense what people experience who are deprived of very fundamental rights.

An unscrupulous judge gets weak knees

In this parable, Jesus presents us with several surprising changes of perspective. On the one hand, there is this judge. He is apparently more interested in his own interests than in enforcing justice. The fact that he is not at all bothered as regards what people think about him could prove to be a definite bonus for him in his job as a judge. After all, independence is a judicial virtue. On the other hand his disregard for any authority can raise our eyebrows. This clearly shows that the only things that matter to him are his personal interests and well-being.

However, ultimately, he is not so strong and superior or indeed so shrewd and laid-back as he appears. He gives way because he is afraid of losing face. The mere thought, at that time, of being given a black eye by a woman who had no rights at all! The folk in the local taverns would have something to laugh about in the evening! And he has to avoid that at all costs! All of a sudden, he is no longer the one who is in charge – instead he has to react. He who was supposed to be strong has become weak.

A disadvantaged woman – but with courage!

On the other hand, we see this disadvantaged woman. As a widow in Biblical times, she was the epitome of dependence, disenfranchisement and defencelessness. Following her husband's death, there was no-one to speak up for her and her interests – or for those of her children. If her deceased husband's family more or less elegantly washed their hands of her, then she just would have to see how she could manage. And the chances of getting the judge to enforce her rights to maintenance were definitely not auspicious, as is illustrated in the first half of the parable.

In those times, petitioners in similar situations usually humiliated themselves, trusting in the pity of those responsible and thus hoping to get at least something.

In this parable, the widow acts differently. Although the society in which she lives has assigned her the invisible label “no rights”, she does not even think of leaving things to stand as they are. With downright self-assurance, she claims what she is entitled to – and she does that so vigorously that the otherwise fearless judge becomes afraid. All of a sudden, the situation becomes reversed. It is the judge who is now weak. And she, who was supposed to be weak, is now strong and can assert her interests and the rights to which she is entitled.

“God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.”(Luke 1.52)

It is one of the recurrent statements throughout the Bible that God stands up for the disenfranchised and helps them to gain their rights, that He ensures justice wherever people suffer from or even because of injustice. This is particularly illustrated in Luke’s Gospel: “God has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.”

When, at the end of the Christian year, we focus on God’s judgement day, we are also reminded that God does not simply resign Himself to this world’s injustices and lawlessness but that He puts things right and that includes ensuring that the disenfranchised regain what they are entitled to. Yet not because He feels pressurised to do so, as is the case with the unscrupulous judge, but because helping the humiliated in their needs corresponds to who He is.

This is Mary’s joyful reaction when she hears about the forthcoming birth of the Messiah, her son Jesus Christ. It is one of the apparent contradictions of His way that He does not bring salvation with strength and a show of force. Instead, His salvation comes into the world in concealed form. In the absolute powerlessness of His death on the Cross, Jesus puts Himself on the side of those who are helpless. In doing so, He overcomes the guilt and injustice which pervades the world and opens up a perspective of a new, different, better, eternal life.

Accepting our weaknesses in the light of faith

However, faith in Jesus Christ is interwoven with the need to acknowledge, and not to suppress, my own weakness and vulnerability. If I go through life with the arrogant attitude of the unscrupulous judge, totally selfish and apparently impregnable, there will be no room for faith. I trust God because I know that I do not have control over everything



Despite his clubfoot 52-year-old Richard from Camerun runs a small kiosk, selling sweets among other things, thereby supporting his wife and his three children.



but that I am dependent on help. Even if many things and aspects in life proceed according to schedule and I frequently tend to lose perspective of my sense of need in a western-oriented affluent society, I am still primarily part of global humanity. That applies to me and to everyone else, regardless of where they live in this world. Ultimately, we are all dependent on others, on other people who are there for us, who help us and who give us what we need – and we are dependent on God who gives us life and sustains our life. It is this fragility of life which binds us all together.

At the same time, it is this weakness in which what is decisive is manifested in faith. Reminded of a prayer of supplication, the Apostle Paul can quote what Jesus said to him: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Cor. 12.9).

This does not romanticise the weakness and the misery of this world. This too is a lesson which can be learnt from this parable. The widow simply does not come to terms with her plight. Nor does she accept it without any complaint, possibly in an attitude of false humility dressed up in a religious garb. Instead, she raises her voice, stands up for her own rights and the rights of those in her care. 10 In faith in God who has overcome this world’s sin and injustice, my own struggle for justice is not hopeless but is embedded in this greater sphere of God’s action.

I do not have to be strong in the first place but can, in a position of weakness, discover how, with God’s help, much more is possible than I perhaps initially expected.

Struggling against the injustices of this world already starts in prayer – and that is what Jesus calls us to do in this parable. Such prayer does not fade away unheard but is heard by God as a judge who is both just and not unscrupulous.

In Jesus’ name, we can repeatedly confront God with our concerns, pester Him with our issues, not relent with whatever burdens us – either what is directly facing us personally or what is in the



↑ Following a polio infection Tchouto lost her ability to walk and had to leave school. With the help of CBM she was provided with a tricycle and is undergoing an apprenticeship.

greater world. God will not elude us. It will not always be the case that we can see the results immediately. Like a seed sprouting underground, some things take time. But God will bring about justice – not only for the disenfranchised and powerless throughout the world but also for those who, even though they are hiding behind a façade of strength, desperately need God’s help and who put their trust in Him.

Waiting for God

Sermon by Pastor Samuel Kabue, Kenya – Luke 18,1-8

The message in Luke 18:1 – 8 is that of persistent prayer and trusting in God as a righteous judge who will unlike the earthly judges bring justice to people he loves. It is about waiting upon God with trust that His will and judgement are good for the believer. The passage contains a parable and an application on the theme of Jesus' return. Verses 7 – 8 keeps our focus on the attitude we should have about his return. The passage portrays the importance of prayer for God's vindication of the saints. We live in an unjust World and Jesus in this passage teaches us how to deal with this injustice that we have to go through every day. Persistent prayer is seen as necessary to keep in touch with God. It is important to maintain faith in the light of patiently awaiting his return.

Never give up

We find two characters in this passage who are very different but with whom it is easy to identify. The widow who needs help represents a person helpless in society, whose only appeal for justice comes from the authority of the judge. Though we probably think of her as an old woman, she represents many of us, among them persons with disabilities who undergo injustice from day to day and who are considered by the world as dependent on the mercies of others in authority over them. These people in authority, like the judge in our text, will dispense justice at will and not necessarily because it is deserved. They live at their own convenience without love or consideration of those over whom they have authority. The woman in the passage is seeking justice and appeals to this kind of a judge, (in this case a man in authority over her) for help. This likely involves some type of vindication involving money or property as is the case where I come from and where widows will be unfairly deprived of their husbands property by the relatives once the husband passes away. The woman is persistent, a quality Jesus makes exemplary in the story. The judge is a fiercely independent man and represents

the opposite of a loving God who responds to the cries for justice from his people. Jesus' argument goes that if a judge, who is no respecter of persons, hears the cry of the widow, how much more will a compassionate God hear the cries of his people!

The fact that the main petitioner in the story is a widow means that the judge does have a cultural and moral obligation to be sensitive to her. The widow makes her appeal again and again. She intends to get the justice she is entitled to receive from her adversary.

For some time the judge does not act, but he eventually relents. Her persistence wears him down. Anyone who has experienced persistence in a request can understand how the judge feels. The woman is "bothering" him constantly meaning that her actions cause him trouble. He is not worried for his reputation here, since he does not care what others think of him. But he is tired of her persistence, so he will act.

The Lord asks us to „listen to what the unjust judge says,“ that is, to reflect on his reaction to the persistent requests of the woman. The remark is stated emphatically with a double negative: God will definitely vindicate his people. If an unjust judge responds to such pleas, God will certainly respond to such cries from his own chosen ones. He will not delay, but will vindicate them with “justice, and quickly.”

Praying in awareness of God's love

As Christians we are God's elect, created in his image and redeemed by the Son of God. Because of who God is and who we are, there is no reason to frantically assault his door or nag him for a response.

The Apostle Paul engaged in such prayer when three times he pleaded with the Lord for the removal of his thorn in the flesh (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-



↑ 13-year-old Julienne is nearly blind. In her home village there was no school that could meet her special needs. With the aid of a CBM partner she is now able to visit an inclusive school and is learning Braille.

9). These were three sustained, passionate times of intercession. Paul did not think that his repetitions were due to a defect in his faith. In the end, the thorn was still there, but God gave him something better to go along with it — more grace!

Paul’s story is in a way reminiscent to my own life. I am reminded of when I lost my sight at the age of sixteen and a half. The impression I had was that the World had come to an end for me. No consolation could be given by the encouragement to start life anew by learning Braille and continuing with education as was being offered by the School for the Blind. My understanding was that I was sick and what I needed in order to continue with life was a cure. The doctors had surrendered in their efforts to cure me and had recommended that my place henceforth was the school for the blind, a place I had heard very little about and could not imagine how people lived let alone learned there. The failure of the doctors ignited my yearning for a cure through religion, and I put my hope in prayers and miracle healings. There were many in religious circles around me who considered this a viable option and even long after the onset of my blindness, their reminder that God owed me a cure kept

on following me. I did with all earnestness seek faith healing over a long time before I came to understand and accept that blindness had become a part of me. Thus, it took me long to accept the fact that although God can heal, He does so only at his own will and timing. All the same, He is able to sustain me with his grace and uplift me to heights I could never imagine even in my condition of blindness. There are times such as I went through when tragedy strikes or when critical decisions are at hand and we lose faith in the prayers we make. Jesus in the parable is reminding us that God has his own timing while Paul is reminding us our seeming weakness is a reminder that there is a God who is in charge and who strengthens us.

Through the centuries, many believers have struggled with the seeming silence of God to their prayers. But here Jesus says that God answers all pleas for justice, and does so quickly: “And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly” (v. 7, 8a). How can this be? The next sentence Jesus spoke refers to his coming, which makes it clear that “quickly” does not mean

“immediately.” The idea here is swiftly – that is, when God acts it will be quick or swift.

God hears all pleas and prayers

When we consider God’s timing, we must keep in mind Peter’s wisdom regarding God’s promise: “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness” (2 Peter 3:8, 9a). Jesus’ parable teaches the certainty of speedy action when it comes. We need to learn that in the silence our loving God is answering, whether we see his working or not, for he delights to answer his children’s prayers. Sometimes the silence means that God’s answer is a loving no. Perhaps we asked amiss, or though the request was good, a better way is coming. Far better for Paul than the removal of his thorn was God’s sufficient grace, which was perfected in his weakness. This is why he could write, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Also, sometimes the silence means that God has a bigger answer in store than we could ever have dreamed of or asked for.

In the case of Paul, he was left with his thorn so that he would lean entirely upon God. We are so prone to independence that the granting of certain of our requests would lead us to self-sufficiency, pride, and independence. There can be no better way to cultivate a sense of dependence upon God than the need for persistent or determined prayer. Sometimes the silence is a delay to allow our prayers to mature. If God had answered our prayers according to our schedule, our prayers would not have been honed by the Spirit for our greater good and his glory.

In conclusion, Jesus’ closing question has the same force as it did when he walked on earth: “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (v. 8b). Jesus’ question implies that such faith will not be found on earth unless his disciples learn to “always pray and not give up” (v. 1b). The God to whom we pray is not like the unjust judge who could only be bothered into responding, for our God is loving and gracious. And we are not like the nameless widow, for we are his chosen ones. “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” Yes, he will, if we have learned to live a life of prayer as we await his coming.

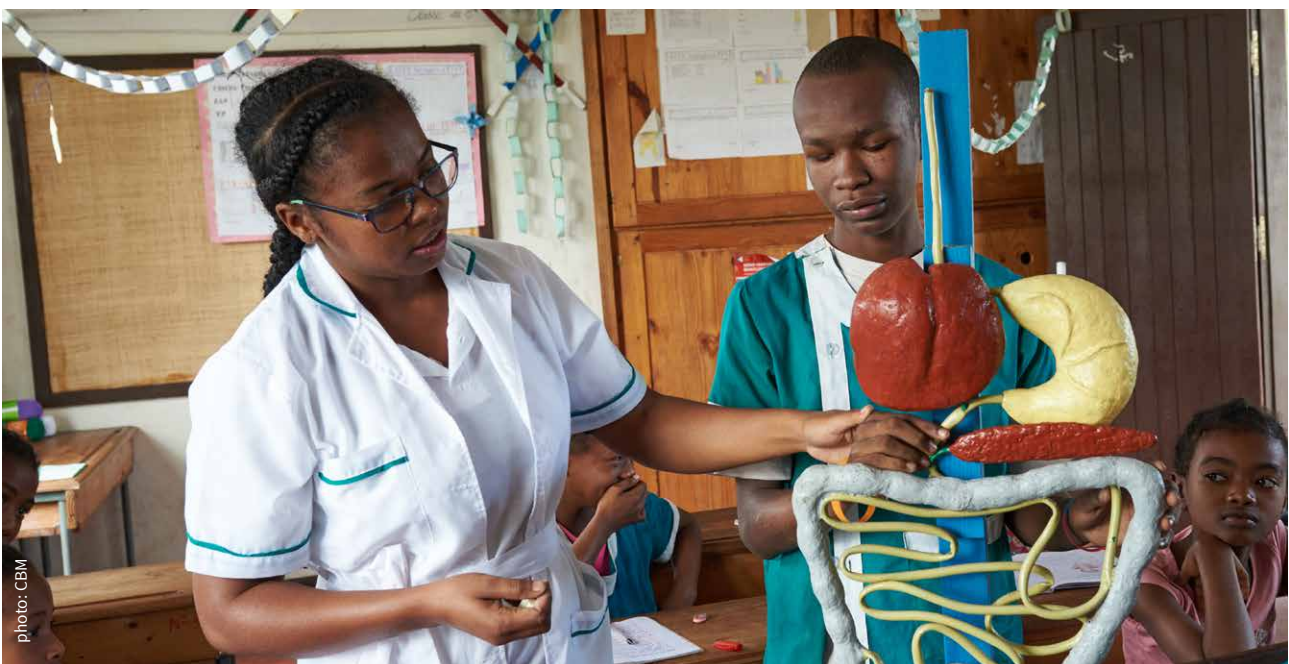


photo: CBM

↑ 17-year-old Germain from Madagascar has been blind from birth. In his poor native country he would have had no chance to receive education unaided. Thanks to a CBM sponsored school he can participate in class and is one of the best students.

Human rights in the law and in the gospel

CBM as a Christian organization emphasizes theological foundations for inclusion

God creates man „in his own image“ (Gen 1:27). This likeness constitutes the inalienable dignity of every human being. All human beings are equally valuable simply because they are human beings. The image of the triune God is particularly evident in the relationality, the relational capacity of the human being, which is inherent in the trinity itself. In the encounter with the other, the human being experiences his or her divine image. The fact that all human beings are different, e.g. as persons with or without disabilities, is wanted and good from the perspective of the image of God. One complements the other. Alone, no one is entirely in God's image. Inclusion as an affirmation of diversity thus takes seriously the knowledge that human beings are made in God's image.

CBM emphasizes the human rights-based approach in development cooperation.

From the inalienable dignity of every human being, Christians have always derived the obligation to turn to their neighbour. Human rights are derived from this dignity. Based on this dignity, the handicapped or otherwise needy person has the right to such support that makes him or her not a recipient of charity but a „fellow human being at eye level“.

In its work, CBM thus pursues a human rights-based approach: it works to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise their fundamental rights to participation, inclusion, equal opportunities, security and dignity - regardless of nationality, skin colour, gender, religion or age. Its goal is an inclusive society, including an inclusive church. In this society, all persons, whether disabled or not, should have the same rights and opportunities.

Development cooperation and human rights are thus inextricably linked. There can be no sustainable development without respect for human rights and it is also impossible to strengthen human rights if there is no development. Therefore, it is so important for CBM to apply a human rights-based approach.

Christian realism

As Christians, we know the brokenness of everything we do. „The relational richness of human life therefore always remains vulnerable to violations and break-offs. A realistic commitment to inclusion therefore does not reckon with a fully inclusive society but knows that inclusion always remains fragmentary.“

Thus, we understand the effort for inclusion not as law, but as a principle of the gospel. On reflection, we believe that the human right of inclusion is deeply rooted in the Christian understanding of God and humanity, in the witness of Christ and in the shape of the Church, and that an inclusive world and Church would be very beneficial for all of us. Just as God promises at the end of our sermon text in Lk 18:1-8 to bring justice to his elect, we should champion the cause of the disenfranchised/disadvantaged. We also believe that where Christians are wholeheartedly committed to inclusion, the Gospel begins to shine brighter.

Free of charge for you to print and order

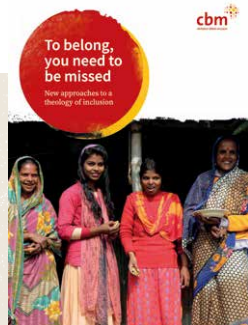
We invite you to download these materials.

Or you can order them from Marzena Gergens, phone: +49 6251 131-295, e-mail: material@cbm.de

NEW

To belong, you need to be missed

One can only speak of inclusion when everybody belongs. But how do we know that someone belongs? By the fact that he or she is missing. We explain this theologically and report on the experiences of people from development work and the church.



NEW

Community Based Inclusive Development Report 2022

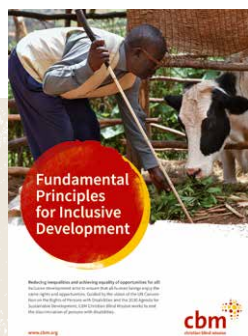
Learn more about how CBM has shaped the Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) approach in our CBID Report 2022.

www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/CBID_Report_2022.pdf



Inclusive development aims to ensure that all human beings enjoy the same rights and opportunities. This publication outlines key principles for inclusive development.

www.cbm.org/principles-for-inclusive-development



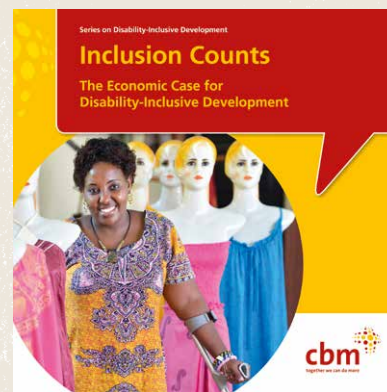
CBM's Series on Disability – Inclusive Development

This book series introduces readers to main facts and figures, key concepts, and challenges in disability inclusive development. All publications are available in German also.



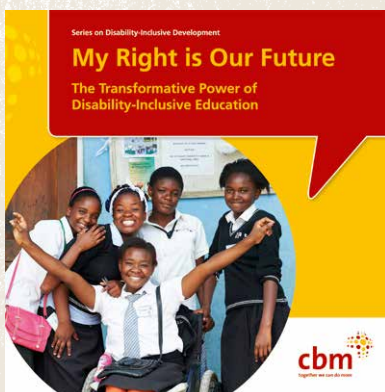
This report covers **key facts and figures** on the situation of persons with disabilities living in low-income countries and also presents the reasons why development and humanitarian actions must be disability-inclusive.

www.cbm.org/the-future-is-inclusive



Can governments afford to keep women, men, girls and boys with disabilities excluded? The answer is “no”. Indeed, society as a whole **benefits from inclusion**, and that is true even of the poorest countries.

www.cbm.org/inclusion-counts



This publication explores challenges and practical suggestions on how to support **disability-inclusive education systems** that can better meet both the general and specific learning needs of all children with disabilities.

www.cbm.org/my-right-is-our-future



Foto: CBM/argum/Thomas Einberger

Christian Blind Mission (CBM)

CBM is an internationally operating **non-governmental organization**. It fights on the basis of Christian values in the poorest regions of the world: It ensures that the quality of life of persons with disabilities improves. And it works to prevent disabilities.

In Germany, CBM inspires many people to pursue this goal. At present, thanks to its supporters CBM facilitates **492 projects in 46 countries**.

Christian Blind Mission was founded more than 100 years ago by the Protestant pastor **Ernst Jakob Christoffel**. „The deed of love is the sermon that everyone understands“ was his guiding principle. Christoffel’s life was marked by many hardships and privations. His deep faith in God moved him to assist the blind, differently abled and outcast.

Further information at www.cbm.org



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