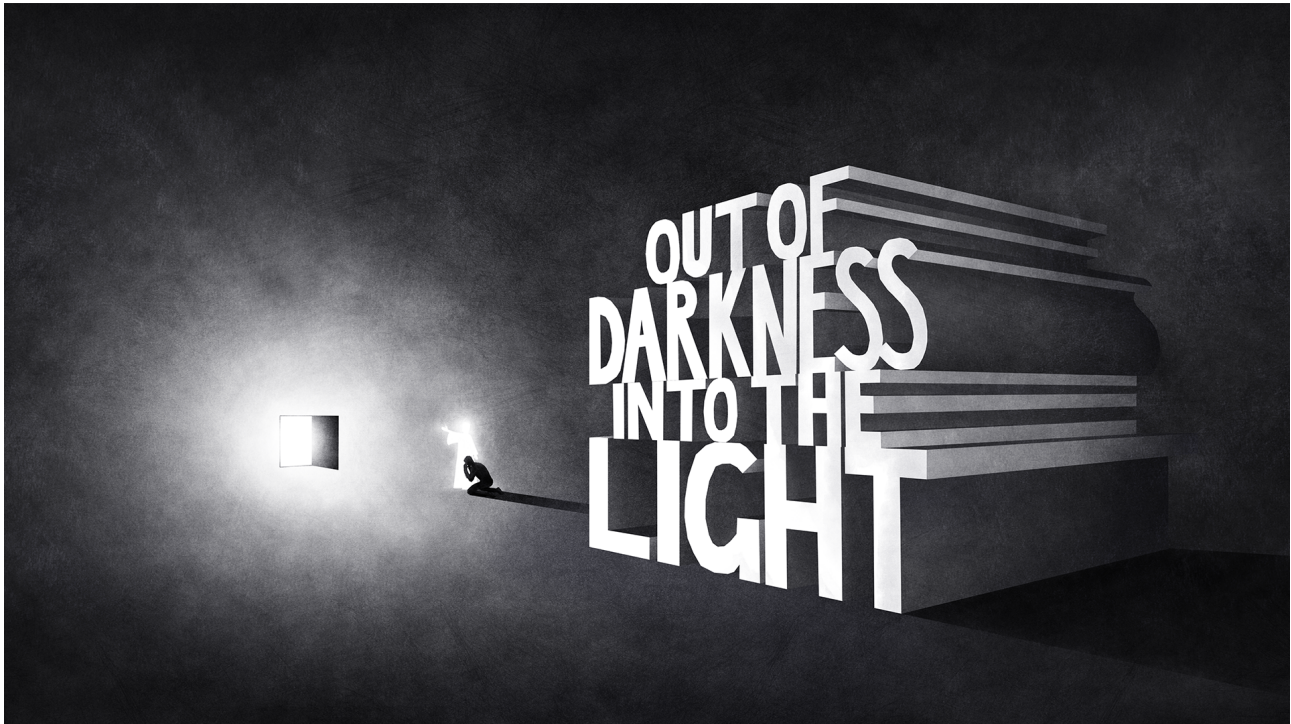


OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

October 2021 (3-30th October)



During the month of October we would like to use the story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) as an analogy to tap into the general feeling we have that there is a longing in many people's hearts to regain their spiritual sight. The readings in the lectionary this month are centred around some key passages from Job with additional daily texts supplementing them. We have divided the story of Bartimaeus into different sections that will help us place ourselves in the story and then we will use the lectionary texts to help us reflect upon how we can praise and serve God in the midst of suffering and spiritual blindness.

Please read the following blog piece which will be published in the *Life and Work* October edition. This will give you a feel for the tone of the reflections during the month.

Take Heart He's Calling You

Albert Bogle

When I read the Gospels I'm aware that the narratives that highlight the healing of a blind person often have a dual meaning. The more you read the more you realise Jesus comes to give spiritual sight to women and men. It is this spiritual sight that is the more important because it changes a person's perspective in life. Jesus often talked about having eyes and seeing, or not seeing things as they are, or will be.

I think it is interesting to look at the story of the healing of Bartimaeus and see how it might be used as a parable for us in the church today. Many of us have been spiritually blind for a long time. But since lockdown we long to have our spiritual sight restored.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

We long to see things as God sees them and that we might have the faith to believe we can see the church we love, renewed in our time.

Bartimaeus wasn't always blind. Something had happened in his life that had robbed him of his sight. But something now was stirring within him as he makes his prayer to Jesus to have mercy on him.

If we agree the church is not simply made up of the gathered congregation on a Sunday but includes those who are unable to attend because of so many different reasons – including their mistakes or the mistakes of others – we begin to realise that our ministry goes far beyond the circle of committed people attending on a Sunday. There is a vast diaspora of people like Bartimaeus looking to have their spiritual sight restored.

As congregations begin to make preparations to return to Sunday worship we need to be aware that something has changed. Many are longing for something more. It's as though an awareness of our spiritual blindness has brought about a longing for a new set of eyes to see the way forward. In order to understand the new spiritual direction that has to take place in the life of many of our congregations.

During lockdown the internet has uncovered the prayers of many seeking healing and renewal. The thing we all need to take hold of in the story of Bartimaeus is Jesus answers his prayer.

I love the way the story is related in Mark's Gospel. The word that Jesus is willing to respond to his prayer comes from the crowd. The word to Bartimaeus is, "Take heart he is calling you". Notice Bartimaeus pays attention to the call. He gets up and leaves his cloak and comes to a face to face meeting with Jesus. For that day on he had a new perspective on life.

So who is it in the crowd that is telling you "He's is calling you,"? I bet it's the most unexpected of people. That is often when you know it's time to listen.

These discussion questions adapt our monthly themes for small Connect Groups or personal Bible study (look up the [Out Of The Darkness Into The Light Resource Pack PDF](#) for more information on this month's theme). The questions are divided into 4 parts to correspond with the 4 weeks of the Daily Worship theme. They are offered as a guideline and there is no need to go through all the given questions in a single session, or in the following sequence. Feel free to pick and choose, or adapt to what interests you or your group.

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: Living with faith in times of great trouble

This month we are going to return to our key story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) multiple times, sometimes focusing on just one particular verse. Each time we revisit the story we hope to gain new insights as we consider all the layers going on in this moving sequence...

Read Job 2: 1-10 and Mark 10: 46-52

What do you think of Job's life philosophy? You've got to *take the good with the bad*. (Compare it with Bartimaeus's philosophy in Mark 10: 47-48.) Job sees this as the integrity of faith. In other words, is Job asking are there two sides to the coin of faith?

What lessons of faith can we learn from the suffering of Job and Bartimaeus?

Read Genesis 2: 18-24 and Galatians 6: 2

The integrity of companionship in suffering.

How important is the role that friends family and animals play in helping us cope with bad news in times of great suffering?

Read Hebrews 2: 5-12

This passage opens up the idea that God is not oblivious to human suffering. If this is true what does it tell us about God? Does God also suffer like us?

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 2: Finding the faith to cry out a prayer "Have mercy on me!"

This month we are going to return to our key story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) multiple times, sometimes focusing on just one particular verse. Each time we revisit the story we hope to gain new insights as we consider all the layers going on in this moving sequence...

Read Mark 10: 46-52

Can we take this story of healing as an analogy to help us understand the journey the church must take to the place of renewal? What are the issues facing the church? Where do we need fresh sight to see the way forward

Are we crying out to God for help like Bartimaeus or are we silent?

Read Psalm 51: 10-19

What would change in the church and our lives if we took Psalm 51: 10-19 to heart? What if we found the courage to cry out "Have mercy on me!"?

Read Mark 10: 28-31

What do we learn about humility from the reply that Jesus gave to Peter when he was looking for approval?

How should we frame our prayers?

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 3: Believing the voice that says - "Take heart he is calling you."

This month we are going to return to our key story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) multiple times, sometimes focusing on just one particular verse. Each time we revisit the story we hope to gain new insights as we consider all the layers going on in this moving sequence...

Read Mark 10: 49 (46-52 is the whole sequence)

Do you have a sense of God calling you in your work? (And by work that could be paid or unpaid, time spent caring for others, or volunteering, or studying or any other responsibilities you have.)

How different would your work be if you believed God had called you to it?

Read Mark 10: 35-45

The Brothers Zebedee want status — they want to be seen as prominent and important. But Jesus shows them that being important as disciple isn't about being prominent and lording it over others as a high official. Instead it's about service and sacrifice.

How do you think James and John felt after this encounter? And how do you think they managed to take heart after?

Read Romans 8: 28-39

To be called by God is not an afterthought on his part. How do you feel reading verses 37-39?

OUT OF THE DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 4: Leaving the baggage of the past behind — for the healing encounter

This month we are going to return to our key story of Bartimaeus (Mark 10: 46-52) multiple times, sometimes focusing on just one particular verse. Each time we revisit the story we hope to gain new insights as we consider all the layers going on in this moving sequence...

Read Mark 10: 50 (46-52 is the whole sequence) and Job 42: 1-6

What are we being called to leave behind as we reach out to be healed and restored?

Read Psalm 126

Can you see yourself — or the church — ever in the same place as the writer of the psalm?

Read Mark 10: 51 (46-52 is the whole sequence)

Could we utter the prayer of Bartimaeus — Rabbi I want to see? Reflect on what it means to be honest with God about our longings to see his kingdom come, to see peace and restoration.