

Sunday Update
29th November 2020

Mark 10:46-52

46 Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means 'son of Timaeus'), was sitting by the roadside begging. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' 48 Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' 49 Jesus stopped and said, 'Call him.' So they called to the blind man, 'Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you.' 50 Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. 51 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asked him. The blind man said, 'Rabbi, I want to see.' 52 'Go,' said Jesus, 'your faith has healed you.' Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. 2 Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. 3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Have you ever had a "light-bulb moment"? It is one of these moments when the answer to a question, or the solution to a problem suddenly dawns on you. Maybe it's something that you've racking your brains trying to solve with no success; maybe you know that you know the answer, but it just won't come. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, the answer comes. You remember the answer; you find the solution. We call it a "light-bulb moment" because in cartoons the character is seen with a light bulb over their heads; the answer has dawned, and everything has become clear. It can be fun to watch someone have that kind of moment; there is a look in their eyes, a bright spark of light, or a smile on their face as they realise that they have come up with the answer. It may be nothing particularly life-changing, but light has dawned and something is solved.

Light and darkness is one of the great Bible contrasts and conflicts. Our Advent and Christmas theme this year is "Share the Light" and over the next few weeks, we will be reflecting on the theme of "light" and how the Bible uses that idea to describe what God has done for the world in the coming of Jesus. I chose that theme simply because it seems the right theme for 2020. So much of life this year has been shrouded in darkness: we have lived for most of the year afraid and anxious because of Covid-19 and these emotions have not yet gone away. We have mourned and lamented for all that we have lost in 2020: for some, there has been the darkness of mourning and grief because someone they have loved has died and you feel that you've not been able to mourn "properly"; some have lost their job and are struggling with unemployment; others are working from home and struggling what that; some have been isolated from family and friends, unable to meet, unable to hug each other; we have lost the regular habits of church life and have missed the faced-to-face interaction with one another. All of this has been like darkness crowding in on our lives, invading our soul.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul is reflecting on darkness in the same kind of way, but with a different experience of life. There are two kinds of darkness that he sees, one that maybe takes us by surprise and another that we might have guessed. The first kind of darkness that he writes about has come into the church in Corinth by other people who have visited the city and the church. Paul writes about some people who have come to the city and have used *“secret and shameful ways... deception (or who) distort the word of God.”* (2 Cor 4:2) He says that the apostles don’t use these ways and the implication clearly is that *“some other people do use these methods to further their cause”* in the name of the Christian faith. It seems strange, but there were preachers who were prepared to do anything to further their own cause and make themselves either rich or famous; they were prepared, even to distort the truth so that the message was more attractive to people and they might believe it more easily. Dark and devious ways had entered the life of the church.

The second kind of darkness is something more difficult: *“the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”* (4:4) In the spiritual battle between God and the devil, the devil has blinded people to the truth of the gospel and the glory of God; they don’t grasp what God has done and don’t see their need of grace. Other things take God’s place in the way that people think about life; people reject the gospel because it seems out of date and irrelevant; some refuse to accept that Jesus has done anything significant for their own lives or for the world. This battle has been going on since almost the start of the story. People live in the darkness caused by not seeing and not knowing the light!

Paul shares the light by telling people about Jesus. The gospel brings light to our minds and to our hearts. It’s like creation all over again: *“Let there be light”* (Genesis 1:3) said God *“And there was light”* and the darkness and chaos was overcome by the light. The same darkness and chaos that lives in our hearts is dissipated by the light of Jesus in the gospel. God makes light shine in our hearts so that we see something of His grace and glory in Christ. This is what our world needs to hear at Christmas 2020, that there is light to overcome the darkness. Jesus brings hope to help us when we feel hopeless; He brings peace when we’re afraid; He brings forgiveness for our failures and waywardness and guilt. It is like a *“light-bulb moment”* for our hearts and minds and life is changed.

Life was like that for Bartimaeus. I’m going to say more about him in our Zoom service, but literally Jesus gave light to Bartimaeus’ dark world; He healed him so that he could see when before he was blind. Life had been like that for Paul: on the road to Damascus, when he was intent of throwing Christians into prison, he encountered the glory of God in Christ in a vision and that moment changed his life. He would say that until then he had been blinded to the truth, after that moment the eyes of his heart were opened, and he could see. He could see what God had done for the world in Jesus; he could see that Jesus is the Saviour of the world; he could see that Jesus loved him and gave his life for him.

This is what the gospel does for us: it allows us to see the truth. We see the truth about ourselves, a bit uncomfortable but necessary, that we have rebelled against God and have been blind to our faults and mistakes. We see the truth about Jesus, the *“Light of the World”*, the Son of God come into the world to live and die and be raised for us, our Saviour. We see the truth about life, to be lived by faith in Jesus, learning to trust Him and learning to be the kind of people He wants us to be. This is our deepest need: seeing the truth, helps us to shape our ways of thinking about everything, including Covid-19. The gospel gives us a way of seeing the world that helps us to deal with the things that make us afraid or that make us anxious; the gospel allows us to see ourselves, warts and all, as loved by God;

the gospel helps us understand that we have good days and bad days and that God is with us in all of them.

We want to share this light over Christmas 2020: we will do that by telling the stories of Jesus; we will do that by taking opportunities to love and care for people; we will reflect Jesus' light simply by being the right kind of people. It has been easy, and at times the right thing to do, to look after ourselves during 2020, keeping ourselves safe from Covid. But we still have something to share with others, something that is important, life-changing, something that will bring light into the darkness of a Covid world. We have Jesus and His light and His love to share with others. Pray for the people in your family; pray for the people you can't meet; pray for the people in your street; pray for the people you meet; pray that they will hear something important about Jesus from some of our events or the events that others are running; pray that there will be lots of "light-bulb moments" for people in our community this Christmas. For yourself, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and let His light fill your heart and reflect His light to your little part of the world by being the right kind of person.

Prayer: Father, we thank You that Jesus is the Light of the World; He has come into the world to show us what You are like; He has come to bring up hope, peace, grace and forgiveness, gifts and blessings to lighten our hearts; He has come to love us and make our lives new; He has come to make our world a better place. Open our hearts and minds to receive the Light. Give us the courage and the opportunity to share the light with others this Christmas.

*Day by day, dear Lord of you
Three things I pray:
To see you more clearly,
To love you more dearly,
To follow you more nearly,
Day by day.*

Please take time during the week to pray for the people referred to in these topics:

- For people who are living in the darkness of fear, anxiety and guilt; whose lives are dominated by one of these three emotions and they cannot find a way out of the darkness. Help them to see Jesus and find in Him the light of their lives.
- For Churches and Christians across the country to speak the truth of Jesus in a spirit of love and compassion, so that people hear the story of Jesus this Christmas; for Churches and Christians to show Jesus to the world by our actions motivated and shaped by love and compassion.
- For effects of lockdown again, new measures and their impact; pray that they work to curb spread of Covid, let numbers go down again and people be safe; let our society be open again and let us be free from fear and anxiety. For the plans centred on Christmas, that the nation will stay safe and people will respect the need to keep other, more vulnerable, people safe.
- NHS staff as the numbers in hospital start to climb again; for care home staff such as Lorimer House, those caring in the community – God keep them safe.
- For the way we and others behave with regard to Covid, to be careful and not reckless; for people to be wise in the way we behave, to observe social distancing and to take notice of people who may be weaker and more vulnerable.
- Those still working from home – what does the future look like? Is this the way they will do their work from now on? Others deeply wishing they were back in an office; some facing a long prospect of this continuing into 2021; may they be healthy in body, mind and spirit.
- People whose hearts and minds are feeling "shut-in"; some coming to the end of furlough, going back to work; others having lost their job and feeling a lack of purpose in life; people for

whom the physical lockdown is affecting their mental health and sense of well-being and freedom. For victims of domestic violence, with nowhere to escape to.

- For the virus to go away completely; pray that science will find a vaccine.
- Our community, caring for vulnerable people, helping those in need, for resilience and strength.
- Our political leaders, trying to make difficult decisions in the right way.
- For one another, sustaining our faith when there is nothing of the outward life of the church.
- People who are weak and vulnerable today, those who mourn, those who are sick, those who are isolated and lonely; those in hospital; those who are still shielding; pray for people you know by name.

Here are some links to hymns you might know and love; go and have a listen. (Some of the links look a bit different this week, but they should all work as usual!)

O come, O come Emmanuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZggySBrr0c>

All my days I will sing

[Beautiful Savior \(All My Days\) - Stuart Townend - YouTube](#)

Lo He comes

[HELMSLEY-LO! HE COMES WITH CLOUDS DESCENDING - YouTube](#)

Focus my eyes on You

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqgesFY36oY>

How can I keep from singing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLPP3XmYxXg>

Remember the prayer e-mail line at prayerigpc@gmail.com

Some other resources:

- Each Sunday at 10.30am, we will have a short time together using Zoom; a link has been sent out in the e-mail with this update which should enable you to join in.
- This reflection is available on our own church website under the “sermons” tab and there is an archive of sermon material there for you to read and links to the video reflections – www.igpc.org.uk
- If you have a smartphone, the Bible2020 app will give you a short bible reading each day (from the Scottish Bible Society)
- Scripture Union daily bible readings can be found at <https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/wordlive>
- The Church of Scotland website has prayers and reflections from the Moderator and details of lots of on-line streamed church services - <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>
- Claremont Church in East Kilbride are making services available over a phone line: here are the contact details which you can share with people who are not on line: **Sunday Services @ 10:30 - same details every week** 020 3937 2973; PIN: 352 598 857#

DAILY BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS The next issue of “EVERY DAY WITH JESUS” Booklet for November and December 2020 is now available and please contact Ian Aitken for a copy. Also, new issues of the “WORD FOR TODAY” Booklet and “WORD 4u2TODAY” Booklet for Young People for November and December 2020 and January 2021 and “OUR DAILY BREAD” for December 2020 and January and February 2021 are also available and please contact Michael Merriman for a copy.. Let the Bible feed you.

Church News: we are preparing a Christmas issue of Church News; there is still time to include your Christmas greetings to your friends; email Alison on jgchurchnews@gmail.com

O come, O come

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

Prepare yourself...

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means "coming" and it's the time we prepare and remember the real meaning of Christmas. In church we would light candles each Sunday in Advent. The first candle represents hope. You may want to light a candle in your home as you say this prayer together, then leave it lit as you do the rest of the activities together.

(Remember to blow it out at the end!)

Gathered here today, we light a candle of hope, Knowing that in dark times you are always with us.

Lord of the light, Lord of the darkness,
Lord of the day, Lord of the night,
Call us to you.

Whether we are happy or sad,
Whether we are ready or not,
Call us to you.

Amen.



Question...



What gives you hope?

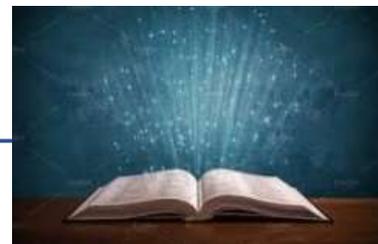
What are you looking forward to?

Read the Bible...

Today's verses are found in 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 and Mark 10:46-52. You can read them in a Bible or find them here: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Cor+4%3A1-6&version=ERV>

You could try reading the verses in different versions to see if it adds to your understanding of the passage.

You can watch the story of Bartimaeus and hear the words from the Bible [here](#).



Talk together...



- What does it mean to have hope?
- What do we hope for as Christians?
- What did Bartimaeus hope for?
- How was Bartimaeus healed? What did Jesus say to him?

Jesus didn't ask if Bartimaeus had followed the 10 commandments. He didn't ask if he went to church or told others about God. He didn't make him promise to help others.

- Why do you think that is?

We should want to do all those things, but Jesus said that Bartimaeus' trust in him was what had healed him. Knowing that Jesus was the Son of God and believing he had power to restore his sight is what made him able to see again. God's gift of forgiveness is a gift to us, we don't have to earn it. All we have to do is have faith in Jesus.

- Do you ever feel like you have to earn God's love? How does it make you feel to know you don't?

Praise together...



My Lighthouse by Rend Collective:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaW_4MWSE6I

Pray together...

Draw a timeline of the week/months/year ahead. Invite everyone to write on it some things they are waiting for or looking ahead to in the time you've chosen (as trivial or important as they like!). Once done, pray with and for one another about each thing written down. Watch, wait and pray with each other as the time approaches.

Make together...

Lighthouses – [Here's instructions](#) on how to make one, if you don't have all the same materials then improvise! For example: use coloured pens or red paper to make the stripes; use a clear plastic cup for the top; use a kitchen roll tube instead of a Pringles tube. Use what you have available and be creative!



Play together...

Play a game of Pictionary. Choose someone to go first and give them one minute to draw. The person who guesses correctly has the next turn. If no-one guesses before the timer runs out then choose a person to go next. For each person's first attempt let them draw as normal, but blindfold any returning artists. They must then draw with their eyes covered. Want more of a challenge?! Once someone has a blindfold on, they must wear it for the rest of the game, any guessing must be done by listening to those around them!