

6. RE-ENCHANTED

Seeing through fresh eyes

Mark 8:22-38

How spiritual insight comes

The almost total lockdown of life due to the coronavirus pandemic came without warning and at incredible speed. With little time to take in what was happening and even less to prepare, we found ourselves catapulted into a whole new way of life. No school, no shopping, no socialising, no sport. The restrictions to normal life felt frustrating. And the new realities felt strange. Time to kill. Town centres and city streets fallen silent. Tension in relationships. Tricky digital ways of engaging to get used to. We quickly found ourselves disenchanted, bored as the thrill and pace of normal life subsided.

– TO TALK ABOUT –

Q. What did you find most restrictive or strange about the period of almost total lockdown during the early days of the coronavirus pandemic?

As days turned to weeks and we settled into new rhythms and routines of life, time enabled greater reflection. What did we miss? What did we like? What were we noticing? What did we appreciate that before we had taken for granted? How might we be changed by this once in a generation experience? We found ourselves slowly re-encharmed by things we hadn't noticed or enjoyed for a long time. Silence. Nature. Family. Friendship. Community. Prayer. The Bible. God.

It takes time for us to begin to shake off the shock of change, to slow down and be less reactive, so as to begin to come to a more settled, considered view that is able to better respond to what God wants to teach us through our circumstances. More often than not, spiritual insight dawns on us as we give it time to come, rather than erupts in a burst of insight out of nowhere. Living through the pandemic and lockdown has surfaced a lot about ourselves, the way we live, the things that really matter and the things that don't. It has been a season in which God has given us many opportunities to see things through fresh eyes.

Let's have a look at a story from Mark 8:22-38 in which the way Jesus restores a blind man's sight becomes a picture of how we come to see God's truth more clearly and understand its implications for our lives.

PARALLELS AND

PATTERNS

Read Mark 8:22-38.

Do so slowly. Listen carefully. Pay attention to the details. Reflect on how things feel at different parts of the story. Let the story sink into your soul.

– TO TALK ABOUT –

PARALLELS

Line up the story alongside your recent experience of living through the coronavirus pandemic. Use the questions below to help identify and talk about some parallels.

Jesus heals the blind man in a two stage process. First he spits on the man's eyes and puts his hands on him, asking 'do you see anything?' (v23). The man can only see people through blurred vision so that they look to him like walking trees (v24).

Q. What did you have a strong sense of during the early days of the period of the pandemic, but couldn't quite put into words to express or explain? It might have been a deep feeling, unease, a growing awareness or appreciation – maybe something you kept to yourself?

Jesus puts his hands on the man's eyes a second time (v25). This time his 'eyes are opened' and 'he saw everything clearly'.

Q. What one thing has your experience of living through the pandemic gradually revealed to you about yourself, others, the way you live, the world around you, church life, God? Think of something you now see with a clarity you didn't have before.

Talk about other parallels you can see between the story and our situation today.

PATTERNS

Line up the story alongside your recent experience of living through the coronavirus pandemic. Use the questions below to help identify and talk about some patterns for living as followers of Jesus.

After the blind man receives his sight, the story moves to a conversation between Jesus and his disciples about who they think he is. Even here Jesus doesn't come at the question directly. He first asks them who people are saying he is, only then moving to ask directly who they think he is (vv27-29). It is at this point that Peter declares Jesus to be the Messiah.

Q. Talk about some things you understand about God and living as a Christian that you didn't previously see the way you do now? How did that better grasp on the truth or expansion of your vision come about? What does it teach you about how God still reveals himself and his ways to us today?

Jesus goes on to tell his disciples in very plain terms how he was going to suffer, die and rise again (v31). But Peter protests causing Jesus to respond that he still didn't get how God works (vv32-33). It's an example of how God always has more to teach us than we are usually ready to receive

Q. What do you still not get about the way God works? What lessons do you feel God has been teaching you plainly as you have lived through the pandemic that you still find yourself resisting?



Talk about other patterns of who God is and how he acts, or lessons that we can learn in living as his followers and his church, that emerge from this story.

**POSSIBILITIES AND
PERSPECTIVES**

– TO TALK ABOUT –

POSSIBILITIES

Take a moment to think about the initial impression this story made upon you as you read it and the discussion that you have just had. What sticks in your mind? What do you particularly sense God prompting you to think more deeply about?

Pause and take a moment on you own, or share with the person next to you, your sense of what God is saying to you from your reflections on this story?

PERSPECTIVES

Prepare to share with others what impression God has made upon your heart. Do your best to put this into words. Maybe it will be the same as others, maybe it will be different. Pay attention to the conversation that is about to start so that God can deepen and widen the impact of his Word.

Share with the whole group the lessons you think God might be teaching you through his Word, by his Spirit.

**PATHWAYS
TO PURSUE**

– TO TALK AND PRAY ABOUT –

Thinking

What has reading this story against the background of your experience of the period of coronavirus pandemic caused you to think again about?

Living

In what specific ways will that make you change the way you live as a follower of Jesus?

Praying

Pray together for strength to follow through on what God has taught each person.

**PROMISE AND
PRAYER**

PROMISE

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1 Corinthians 13:12

PRAYER

God who still opens blind eyes,
steadily reveal yourself to us,
re-enchanted us with the beauty of your ways.
Forgive us that we are so slow to see,
so quick to forget,
so easily have our gaze drawn away from you by the things
of this world.

Thank you for what you revealed to us through the
experience of the pandemic;
about who you are for us,
who we are before you,
what our lives can be when properly focused on you.
Give us fresh eyes to live by that light,
until we see you face to face.

In Jesus' name.

Amen

