

“In a World Restarting: Getting our Bearing Coming out of Chaos”

Welcome to your Small Group- Week 2 (for the week following Sunday, Oct. 3rd)

We hope that you had a chance to either build new relationships or deepen existing relationships in week 1. This week we will continue our small group conversation with a focus on Mark 10:46-52. A reminder that Dr. Matt Skinner of Luther Seminary has made an 8 to 10-minute video for each week to introduce us to Sunday’s Gospel story and to frame one question for your discussion. You can find this in Enews each week prior to Sunday and on the Small Group page in the box on our website homepage, “In a World Restarting”.

*+ **NOTE:** Each week we’ll suggest a question to open with, then turn to the Bible text for the week (with the video and a question from Dr. Skinner), and then suggest a few other questions to discuss as you ponder what it means for you to get your “bearings coming out of chaos”. Feel free to choose the questions that resonate most with your group, in any order you like. If you have time for all, great, but no worries if you don’t.*

Check-in: Either in the whole group or in breakouts of 2-3 people, have each person answer one of these 3 questions. 1) What has been your greatest lament from the pandemic? 2) What is one thing you learned about yourself or our society from the pandemic? 3) Name a way you were surprised by joy in the pandemic.

Bible Reading this week: Mark 10:46-52

This week’s story is the healing of Blind Bartimaeus. Located between the story of James and John asking to be seated at Jesus right hand when he comes into his glory and Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem, this is the second story in Mark of someone being healed of their blindness (For the other checkout Mark 8:22-26. Compare the two stories if you have time.). The story ends not only with the restoration of sight, but Bartimaeus following Jesus on the way.

+ Please listen to Dr. Skinner’s video on Mark 10:46-52 as a group if you haven’t had a chance yet. (Link each week is in Enews from Tuesday of last week and on the website on the homepage in the “In a World Restarting” box.) You can decide if you all want to listen to this together each week, or if you will listen beforehand.

Question from Dr. Skinner’s video:

“One of my favorite definitions of ‘faith’ is the following. Faith is the ability to imagine things otherwise. What Jesus is saying in this text is that Bartimaeus faith is part and parcel of his ability to imagine his world differently and a different future for himself. We often describe faith as belief. But a better way to understand the Biblical definition of faith is TRUST. What does it mean to think about your faith as TRUST as opposed to BELIEF? How does Bartimaeus display a kind of TRUST in the story (notice the details)? What does that mean for us as followers of Christ ‘on the way’ in TRUST?”

Coming out of chaos, ponder together:

1. In April of this year, the New York Times opinion columnist David Brooks wrote an article entitled "How a year of social distancing can change your personality". Here is a quote from that article.

"I'm trying to describe a year in which we've all been physically hunkered down but socially and morally less connected. This has induced, at least in me, a greater fragility but also a greater sense of flexibility, and a greater potential for change."

Spend some time wondering about the 3 things that has happened to him (greater fragility, greater flexibility, greater potential for change). Which, if any, are true for you. If you answered "yes" to any of them, why is that so? Do you see this as a good? Why or why not? If you answered "no", why is that so? Do you see this as a good thing? Why or why not?

2. Here is a second quote from the same article.

*I'm convinced that [the period of time after this is over] is going to be more fantastic than we can imagine right now. We are going to become hyper-appreciators, savoring every small pleasure, living in a thousand delicious moments, getting together with friends and strangers and **seeing them with the joy of new and grateful eyes.***

Again, do you see this statement as being true for you? His statement about "seeing with new eyes" is of particular interest. If he is at all correct, it leads to an important question. What kept us from seeing with grateful eyes prior to the pandemic? What about the assumptions that drove our lives or the way we oriented our lives were an impediment to this? Gratitude for the gift of small things, our relationships, and the everyday moments is an important value within our life of faith, especially when it is seen as gratitude for the gift of life that God has provided and sustains. Do you have the eyes of gratitude? Have there been assumptions or values in your life that have been impediments to seeing with these eyes? Has your faith played into this? Why or why not?

3. Read versus 49-52 in the group one more time. Notice what happens. Jesus calls Bartimaeus. He rises and throws off his cloak, comes to Jesus, is healed, and then follows him "on the way" (which means the path of discipleship). This is a story of a person coming to faith. I invite you to wonder about the image of Bartimaeus "throwing off his cloak". What if we looked at this as a metaphor for throwing off the old assumptions that defined him? Spend some time discussing the answer to the following questions for Bartimaeus PRIOR to him following Jesus. What defined his identity? What defined meaning and purpose for his life? What defined things like success and failure? Now ask the same question as he becomes a follower "on the way". What defines who he is? What defines meaning and purpose for his life? What defines things like "success and failure"? Do any of these questions also apply to you? Is there a

“cloak” of assumptions that, if thrown off, would allow you to define the same questions about your life differently based on God’s love and call for you in Jesus?

In his video, Dr. Skinner says his favorite definition is “faith is the ability to see things otherwise”. Does your faith allow you to see things “otherwise” about who you are and the orientation of your life?

Close with prayer:

Spend a moment reciting the Prayer of Good Courage. What are the assumptions about you in the prayer?

- Your identity
- Where is meaning found?
- How does it define purpose for you?
- What is the definition of success or faithfulness?

Now pray the prayer together.