

Tearfund Ireland 2026 Harvest Pack

Voices for Change



*I had no expectation or hope for my life.
Now I want to change my country.
I want to be in parliament!
~Meseret*

Bible Passage - 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.

Introduction:

Over the past year the world has become more unstable. In 2025, traditional alliances broke down and overseas aid from Governments around the world fell dramatically and since then the widening Middle East conflict impacted all our lives with higher energy costs and rising prices. At the same time, there has been an increase in fake news. A study done in Ireland last year found that 80% of people in Ireland are concerned about the rise in misinformation and false narratives (Worldview 2025). Apps and internet providers seem to encourage us towards the type of information that they think we will like so we can find ourselves living in a bubble or echo chamber.

And of course, Ireland is changing – in Dublin 1 there are now more faith communities than pubs – people are going to the church for help before going to Govt agencies. (RTE news report) – is this what we are hearing in our news feed?

A Question:

So, what grabs our attention? Why do we notice certain things. How do we see the world, our world?

Most believers (80%) live on the continent of Africa, South America and Asia. That is where the fastest growing churches are. But a vast number of them live in poverty. In this global world, 'WHO' actually is my neighbour today? As we rely on the rest of the world – should we not be helping our brothers and sisters, others who might rely on us to walk alongside as they see themselves lifted out of poverty?

There were many people in the Bible who were overlooked and misunderstood. But God looks on the heart. I am thinking of a convicted criminal who spent 27 years in prison. Later on his release he became the President of South Africa – Nelson Mandela.

I think of...Joseph - trafficked, enslaved, imprisoned – but God saw and elevated him and with God's wisdom he was able to save multitudes of people living in famine circumstances

Bible Insight - Mark 10:46-52

The importance of persistence in the face of adversity, tenacity, power of believing and faith and our part in Ireland like the crowd.

This is the story of a man who had been marginalised and left to one side, disregarded by the crowd. He was making his living by asking for money at the side of a dusty road on the outskirts of Jericho city. People hardly noticed him. But unlike many of the people Jesus reached out to in the New Testament, we do know his name, Bartimeus, the son of Timaeus.

How long had he been there? We aren't told. Did he hold on to a small bit of hope that his situation might one day change?

He must have realised that something important was happening when the sound of an excited crowd drew closer. Who was this person that everyone was following? He must be very important. He listened for clues. Someone told him that it was Jesus of Nazareth who was approaching.

He had heard about Jesus of Nazareth, the religious teacher who was challenging the establishment, calling people to love God and love their neighbour in authentic ways; bringing fresh hope to the poor, declaring that the Kingdom of God was not far off, but was near, very near. The same Jesus of Nazareth who brought hope of God's love for people and demonstrated God's power with healings and miraculous provision to meet people's needs. Jesus who had compassion on the poor and the outcast.

If he could only get Jesus' attention, Jesus might be willing to restore his sight. In his desperation to get Jesus' attention Bartimaeus began to call out at the top of his voice 'Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me' 'Jesus son of David have mercy on me!'

As the yelling grew louder, many in the crowd turned on Bartimaeus, warning him to be quiet, not to disturb Jesus.

The crowd had other more important things on their mind. Many may have been expecting that now was the time when Jesus would restore the nation to Israelite rule and get rid of Roman occupation. After all Jesus had recently told them that he had to go to Jerusalem, the centre of power. His disciples fully believed that he would be ushering in his kingdom soon and even the apostles had begun jostling for position about who would be the greatest once Jesus took power.

Surely Jesus didn't have time to engage with a blind beggar.

But Jesus heard his cry. He stopped and told the crowd, the very ones who had told Bartimaeus to stop crying out, to call Bartimaeus forward themselves.

Bible Insight - Mark 10:46-52 (cont.):

The attitude of the crowd to Bartimaeus appears to change instantly, turning their attention to Bartimaeus they beckoned to him to come forward – ‘Cheer up’, ‘Take heart’ they said, he is calling for you.

Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, possibly without thinking, certainly a risky thing to do, as it could be challenging to find it again. Then he leapt up in his enthusiasm and came to Jesus.

As with so many other situations Jesus asked him what he wanted him to do for him, recognising his dignity, his agency. Bartimaeus was completely clear – ‘I want to see’

‘Go’ Jesus told him ‘your faith has healed you.’ Jesus commended Bartimaeus, he stated before everyone that the person who seemed to have nothing, did bring something to the miracle – his faith.

Bartimaeus was instantly healed and he followed Jesus along the road.

The attitude of the various people and groups in this story is worth exploring.

The attitude of Bartimaeus

He wanted to see change in his life, he believed it could happen. He was prepared to cry out for it. We see this over and over in our projects. Even though the crowd turned on Bartimaeus, it didn’t deter him, it just made him more determined to get Jesus attention.

When Jesus called him – he threw off his cloak – his security – he took a risk as so many engaged in our projects do. They take a risk, investing what little they have, their time, their savings, their resources, sharing, opening their home, trying a new business idea.

Meseret’s Story (Self Help Group Coordinating Group member)

Meseret Asefa, a mother of two, first joined a Self Help Group (SHG) in 2009 at a time when she had very limited confidence and little awareness about opportunities for women to improve their lives and the lives of her family. Her husband was also skeptical about whether participating in a Self Help Group would make any difference to their lives.

Meseret's Story (cont.)



I was a shy woman before joining the SHG. I couldn't even express myself or speak in public. After joining the SHG, my self-expression improved massively. From a shy girl, I transformed into a big voice for voiceless women.

Despite these challenges, Meseret became involved in the SHG and gradually started participating in meetings, saving activities, and community discussions. Over time, this participation became the foundation for major personal and economic transformation.

Through regular interaction with other women, Meseret developed leadership qualities and became increasingly involved in advocating for women's rights and representation. She now confidently speaks in regional meetings, mobilises women, and advocates for issues affecting women and SHG members.

As Meseret's husband observed the positive changes in her confidence, leadership, and economic contribution to the household, his perception gradually changed and he is a great supporter of her Self-Help-Group work today.

Meseret strongly believes that women involved in SHGs possess firsthand knowledge of poverty, inequality, exclusion, and the everyday struggles faced by vulnerable women and families. Because of this, she believes SHG women must not remain only participants in development programmes but should become leaders and policy influencers capable of shaping national priorities.

Meseret passionately expresses her ambition to become a member of parliament in the future.



I know the pain of being unheard because I once lived in silence myself. Today, whenever I stand before women, communities, or leaders, I speak about my dream of becoming a parliamentary representative for women. I want to carry the voices of SHGs.. into parliament so that grassroots women are no longer invisible in policies and decisions. Women like us understand the real struggles in our communities because we live them every day. If given the opportunity, I will not speak only for myself, I will speak for every woman who has been denied a voice, a chance, and representation.

Meseret's Story (cont.)

Meseret's story is a powerful reminder that when women are given opportunities, support, and collective strength, they can overcome barriers and become leading voices for change capable of transforming their communities and influencing society.



***I had no expectation or hope for my life. ...
Now I want to change my country.
I want to be in parliament!***

This is a real demonstration of hope, as defined by the author Dallas Willard who said that – **‘Hope is the confident expectation of good’**

The attitude of Jesus

Jesus was surrounded by a busy crowd, everyone with an agenda. He was heading towards Jerusalem where he knew very difficult things were awaiting him. Would he want to get stopped just as he was getting going? His disciples had been arguing about which of them would be the greatest in Jesus' future kingdom, was this discord among them playing on his mind? The crowd were encouraging him to keep going, would he be swayed by them?

No Jesus heard Bartimaeus' cry. He stopped. And he actively involved the crowd in bringing Bartimaeus to him. Jesus still hears people's cries today and calls us to get involved too.

Exodus 3. 9 And now, behold, the cry of the people of Israel has come to me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. 10 Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.”

The attitude of the crowd

Though this incident happened two thousand years ago, there are many similarities between how the crowd responds and present-day attitudes towards marginalised people. The crowd were focused on being around Jesus. Maybe they wanted to hear his words, maybe they wanted to see a miracle or maybe they wanted to be part of the kingdom they hoped he would establish. They were on a mission with him.

The attitude of the crowd (cont.)

Though this incident happened two thousand years ago, there are many similarities between how the crowd responds and present-day attitudes towards marginalised people. The crowd were focused on being around Jesus. Maybe they wanted to hear his words, maybe they wanted to see a miracle or maybe they wanted to be part of the kingdom they hoped he would establish. They were on a mission with him.

When they heard Bartimaeus cry, they were indignant and tried to silence him. They told him to stop and be quiet.

The passage tells us that Jesus stopped, which also stopped the crowd in their tracks. Jesus had heard the cry and graciously involved the crowd in the miracle he would do. Rather than rebuking the crowd, he commissioned them to get involved. 'you call him'/bring him to me.

The attitude of the crowd seems to have changed almost instantaneously. Now instead of rebuking the man, telling him to shut up, they tell him to cheer up! That Jesus is calling for him. They have a part to play in Bartimaeus' transformation story.

The swift change in the crowd is unexpected, yet not really surprising. I can see myself in the crowd, jumping to conclusions about complex issues such as poverty without pausing to ask what the Bible says or bringing the issue to Jesus in prayer to let God move our hearts on issues.

This has been the story for many courageous church leaders and Christians in Lebanon like Pastor Andrew Salameh.

Pastor Andrew Salameh's story (Beirut)

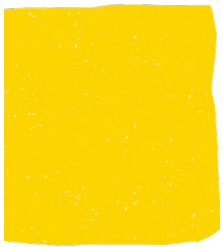
Pastor Andrew's church is based in a Christian area of Beirut, where he felt safe. He didn't visit other ethnic areas as he saw them as being too dangerous. He reflects on the difficult time pre 2006 when the Syrian army occupied parts of Lebanon when many people were killed, injured or imprisoned without trial. 'Why are they coming? What do they want from us?' were the constant thoughts running through his mind, particularly as he saw the negative impact, and the toll of the occupation on his own family, friends and neighbours.

These questions reemerged in 2011 with the onset of the war in Syria, when overnight hundreds of thousands of Syrians poured over the border into Lebanon. The former occupier was back after only a few short years, but not as a powerful army, rather as traumatised refugees.

Pastor Andrew Salameh's story (cont)

Once again Pastor Andrew and people in his community were asking 'Why are they coming? What do they want from us?' He could see people were in desperate need but it was very challenging to reach out to them due to the pain he felt in his own heart.

So, he stepped out and simply began to serve Syrian refugees. As he did so he began to see them differently. Not only that, but Pastor Andrew also began to hear stories of miracles, of refugees seeing Jesus in their dreams. Having previously been reluctant to get involved and for an understandable reason, just like the crowd in the story he heard Jesus' call to help and responded in faith. Not only have the lives of many refugees been transformed. Pastor Andrew's life and the life of his church has been transformed too.



I'm more aware now when people are dealt with injustice or are hurt because I can feel that I was in this situation before. They are getting helped, this will give me comfort, this will give me encouragement.

So What Next?

Church life is busy, work and home life is busy, we have plenty to be getting on with. We can be like the crowd and try to silence voices that compete for our attention.

The Bible passage tells us 'Many rebuked Bartimaeus and told him to be quiet,' but this effectively would have inhibited his ability to step out, take risks and see transformation and change.

"Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor
will also cry out and not be answered." Proverbs 21:13 sobering

Or we can come alongside to help people take a step to fulfil God's plan for their lives like Jesus encouraged them to do:

'So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you."'

Seyhak's Story

For most of his life, Seyhak's routine was simple, go to school and return to the orphanage. But he often felt isolated and unsure of where he truly belonged. His perspective began to change when he joined activities for care leavers supported by Tearfund Ireland partner M'Lup Russey. These included community visits, study tours, and life skills training.

During some home visits to families in the community, Seyhak saw firsthand the challenges people, such as poor hygiene, unsafe environments, and the impact that can have on children's health.

It was a moment of realisation.



I've never joined anything like this before. It helped me see the real environment outside the orphanage. I saw how people live and how we can work together to make a change. It's preparing me for life in the community and teaching me about safety and responsibility.

Through these experiences, Seyhak started to understand the value of family relationships, mutual support, and connection with others. He firmly believes that every child deserves to grow up in a family rather than in an institution.

From facing abandonment and hardship in his early years to becoming a confident leader and role model, his journey shows the power of education, encouragement, and perseverance. As he prepares to finish his fourth year at university and seeks a full-time job, Seyhak continues to dedicate himself to supporting other young care leavers and community action. His commitment to peer-to-peer support and community action demonstrates that when young people are given opportunities, they can rise above adversity to become changemakers.

It would seem instead of going back to try to find his cloak, his former life, his former protection, Bartimaeus followed Jesus. With the catalyst for change, he kept on going – just like we see with women in Self-Help Groups, Christians in Lebanon and care leavers in Cambodia.

And Jesus commends his action – your faith has healed you – his stepping out towards Jesus.

All the crowd did was help Bartimaeus to his feet and walk alongside him as he moved forward to Jesus. What small thing can we do to see people begin the journey of transformation in their lives?

What about You?

- ① Jesus involved the crowd in Bartimaeus' story of healing. Tearfund Ireland love to involve you too, bringing you updates about how we are seeing lives transformed through the work being supported by you and churches across Ireland. Stories of women like Meseret becoming voices for change in Ethiopia, church leaders like Andrew experiencing a new love and concern for refugees in Lebanon, and Seyhak who faced abandonment and hardship in his early life, now a role model for other care leavers in Cambodia. Will you sign up for updates from Tearfund Ireland to hear people's stories and to share them with your church and other people you know? We are always looking for people who will share Tearfund Ireland updates with their churches, please speak to me afterwards about becoming a Tearfund Ireland link where you are.
- ② Can you give a few minutes a day, or week to pray with us? Would you share prayer points in your church groups? We believe that prayer transforms lives and situations. Sign up for our monthly prayer bulletin.
- ③ What about a financial contribution? Even a small amount given regularly can make a difference. For example, €21 a month could establish a new Self Help Group for 15-20 women

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you look on the heart, that you see the ones we might overlook as we go about our busy lives. Thank you that Jesus saw Bartimaeus and heard his cry for help. Thank you for the transformation that happened in his life.

Thank you for the transformation that is happening through the work of Tearfund Ireland partners in Cambodia, Ethiopia and Lebanon.

Thank you for the story of Meseret and others like her becoming voices for change in Ethiopia, church leaders like Andrew experiencing a new love and concern for refugees in Lebanon, and Seyhak who faced abandonment and hardship in his early life, now a role model for care leavers like himself in Cambodia.

Thank you that Jesus involved the crowd in Bartimaeus' story of healing all those years ago.

Thank you that you choose to involve us too, in 2026, in this transformational work.

Prayer (cont.)

Stir us to pray, stir us to see, stir us to listen, we want to respond to your call to come alongside others and love our neighbour.

In your name we ask,

Amen