

# Session 3: Lame from birth? Ethnic disparities, austerity, and faith

Life on the Breadline Lent course, #BreadlineResearch

## Opening prayer:

Creator God, help us to develop the spiritual skills to see, understand, and act on ethnic disparities. In Jesus' name, Amen

2min



## Introduction:

Do all ethnic groups experience austerity in the same way? Ethnic groups describe people with common cultural or national traditions. Researchers in Britain demonstrate that ethnic minority groups, especially from disadvantaged African, African Caribbean and some Asian communities, are disproportionately, negatively, impacted by austerity policies. So why do Christian reflections on austerity often fail to foreground ethnic disparities? Could it be that we have not trained ourselves to look, reflect, and act on 'racialized' injustice issues?

This session will consider some of the spiritual skills we need to be 'looking' people who see, understand, and act on ethnic disparities.

3min

## Watch this video:

Visit the Life on the Breadline website at <https://breadlineresearch.coventry.ac.uk/churches/lent-course/> and watch the week 3 video:



5min

## Now reflect on what you've just watched:

According to Cooper and Whyte, austerity can cause premature death (The Violence of Austerity, 2017); it is a form of state violence. Yet, state violence against black and brown people is not a new experience; it has a long history in Britain. How familiar are you with the salient issue explored in the music video, 'Incarnation: No blacks, no Irish, no dogs?'

5min

## Bible passage:

### Acts 3:1-8

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.

Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John.

Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk.

5min

**God Don't Like Poverty :**  
Black Church, Black Theology and Austerity  
Robert Beckford

1. Pentecostal credit union (with note: "We weren't really aware of austerity")

2. African Community work ethic (with note: "Ashton Cross Live on 7%")

3. Kincraft (with note: "taking care of each other", "A buffer to austerity")

Results:

- Historical Austerity
- Fierce independence
- Protestant Caribbean Work ethic
- Coloniality
- exploitation of Black bodies
- No Irish, No Blacks, No Dogs

Coventry University | E-S-R-C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL | MANCHESTER 1844 | Live Illustration by Katie Chappell

#BreadlineResearch

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## Guided reflection:

### Read aloud then have quiet time to reflect

This passage is mainly interpreted as an example of healing in the aftermath of the Pentecost event in Acts 1. The disciples, full of the Spirit, perform the miraculous healing. There is another way of reading the passage. The passage is also a guide for seeing and acting on structural injustice in the world.

There are three issues to consider.

1. The beggar is "lame from birth." Another way of thinking about this subject is as a form of structural injustice. How society is developed and run so that some people from birth experience disadvantage. How might institutions in Britain today make some people disadvantaged from birth?

2. Peter and John tell the man to "look" at them. The beggar has already 'clocked' them as having something to offer. Another way of thinking about this part of the narrative is as a question of Christian witness. What do we convey to others? Consider what people need to see in us as Christian people that gives them a sense that we have something to offer on racial justice?

3. Peter and John act. They perform the healing as a remedy to his predicament. What do we as Christians have to offer as social healing for racial injustice?

4. What if healing is not always instantaneous? Are there examples of healing divisions and injustices that occur over time? What would a process of recovery look like for addressing racial disparities in our communities?

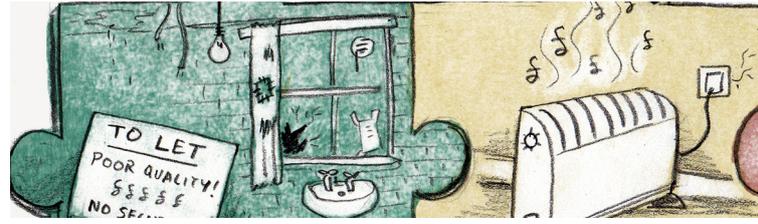
10min

## Questions for discussion:

In addition to the questions in the guided reflection, think about these questions:

1. What can we do to work for a more racially just society, especially in an age of government austerity?
2. How can we address the dual concerns of ethnicity and poverty?

15min



## Take-away actions:

An essential first step is to become cognisant or awakened to what the Bible says about race, poverty, and faith. Three good books to read are:

1. Smith, Mitzi J. *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (in)justice, Intersectionality, and Biblical Interpretation*, 2018.
2. Reddie, Anthony G. *Is God Colour-Blind?: Insights from Black Theology for Christian Ministry*, 2020.
3. McCaulley, Esau. *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation As an Exercise in Hope*, 2020.

Now add your reflections and actions to a time of prayer before the closing prayer.

10min

## Closing prayer:

Holy Spirit, encourage us to be agents of social healing in places of racial injustice.

In Jesus' name, Amen

5min



## What did you think?

We'd love to hear your feedback on a short form - scan the QR code:



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