

# On his Blindness

John Milton (1608-1674)



**Greatest English poet after Shakespeare**

**On his blindness  
The poet is blind.  
This is a very religious  
poem.**

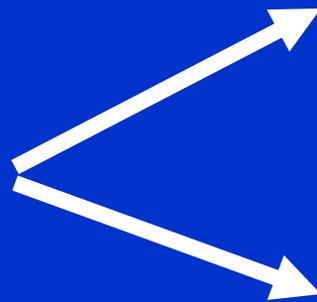
## **On his blindness - John Milton**

- 1. When I consider how my light is spent,**
- 2. Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,**
- 3. And that one Talent which is dear to hide,**
- 4. Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent**
- 5. To serve therewith my Maker, and present**
- 6. My true account, lest He returning chide,**
- 7. 'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'**
- 8. I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent**
- 9. That murmur, soon replies, 'God doth not need**
- 10. Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best**
- 11. Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His State**
- 12. Is Kingly: thousands at his bidding speed**
- 13. And post o'er Land and Ocean without rest;**
- 14. They also serve who only stand and wait.'**

**When I consider how my light is spent,**

The poet is thinking of how he is spending his time.

**Light**



**His life**

**The time he  
has left to  
see.**

# **2 Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide**

**He is thinking of how he has spend his life before his blindness. Now he is spending his days in darkness.**

**Ere: before**

**Half of his life he could see – the other half he is now spending in blindness**

**Dark world: he is blind**

**Wide world: in darkness everything seems endless**

**Alliteration: world and wide**

# 3 And that one Talent which is dear to hide

## Matthew 25:14-26

**Mat 25:15** And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to everyone as he was able; and he went on his journey.

Mat 25:16 Straight away he who had been given the five talents went and did trade with them, and made five more.

Mat 25:17 In the same way he who had been given the two got two more.

Mat 25:18 But he who was given the one went away and put it in a hole in the earth, and kept his lord's money in a secret place.

Mat 25:19 Now after a long time the lord of those servants comes, and makes up his account with them.

Mat 25:20 And he who had the five talents came with his other five talents, saying, Lord, you gave into my care five talents: see, I have got five more.

Mat 25:21 His lord said to him, Well done, good and true servant: you have been true in a small thing, I will give you control over great things: take your part in the joy of your lord.

Mat 25:22 And he who had the two talents came and said, Lord, you gave into my care two talents: see, I have got two more.

Mat 25:23 His lord said to him, Well done, good and true servant: you have been true in a small thing, I will give you control over great things: take your part in the joy of your lord.

Mat 25:24 And he who had had the one talent came and said, Lord, I had knowledge that you are a hard man, getting in grain where you have not put seed, and making profits for which you have done no work:

Mat 25:25 And I was in fear, and went away, and put your talent in the earth: here is what is yours.

Mat 25:26 But his lord in answer said to him, You are a bad and unready servant; if you had knowledge that I get in grain where I did not put seed, and make profits for which I have done no work

**Talent: that which is precious to him  
and God**

**Dear: precious, valuable**

**He had one Talent and like the man in the  
Bible, he buried that one Talent. He did  
not use it enough**

## **4. Lodged with me useless,**

**The talent of writing poetry is now useless because the poet cannot see.**

**Lodged: he is stuck with this talent**

**Soul more bent: his soul now seems determined to use this talent.**

**5 though my Soul more bent To  
serve therewith my Maker**

**He wants to use his talent (writing) to  
serve his Maker.**

**Maker: God**

**and present: he wants to give to God  
something.**

**6. and present My true account,  
lest He returning chide,**

**The image of accountancy is used here.**

**My true account: The poet's Talent is like money. He will present his books to God which will show how much money he made. It will show how much money he has in his account.**

**lest He: God**

**returning chide: God will return. He is afraid God will scold him for not proving what he has done with his talent.**

# **7. 'Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?'**

**The poet suddenly wonders if God is fair in expecting him to make something of his talent when he is blind.**

**Metaphor: God is compared with an employer: will God expect a worker to work when there is no light?**

**Will God expect work that you must do in daylight from him when he cannot see?**

## **8. I fondly ask.**

**In the time that the poet lived you could not confront God with questions like this. It was a sin. That is why he uses the word “fondly”**

**fondly: showing affection and love.**

**He shows God he asks this question as someone who loves Him and not as someone who judges God.**

# **But Patience, to prevent That murmur, soon replies**

**Patience: Patience is personified. It becomes a person.**

**prevent: Patience wants to stop the complaint from reaching God to protect the poet.**

**That murmur: complaint in a low voice**

**Soon replies: answers the question quickly.**

**God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own  
gifts**

**God does not need anything from man.  
God does not need work or gifts.**

**Who best  
Bear his mild yoke, they serve  
him best.**



**The image of an ox being yoked is used here.**

**The one who copes well with the mild burden God has given them, serves God well.**

**The poet's yoke is his blindness. If he accepts his blindness and copes with it, he serves God well.**

# **His State is Kingly:**

**God rules like a true King. He is a king.**

**State: place of government, rulership**

**thousands at his bidding speed  
and post o'er Land and Ocean  
without rest**

**Thousands at his bidding: there are  
thousands of people that do what God  
commands.**

**Speed: move fast**

**Post: travel fast**

**They travel around the world without rest**

**They also serve who only  
stand and wait**

**You don't have to travel around the world  
to serve God. If you only stand and wait,  
you also serve God.**

**Stand and wait: are ready.**