

“Interrogating the Light”

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John 9:8-23

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Read the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

“He’s old enough. Ask him.”

They don’t have any choice, do they? Everyone is trying to figure out what’s just happened to this man. The only evidence they have to go on is him.

He was blind. He had always been blind. He would always be blind. He was *Blind-Guy*. There were no social supports. Disability was seen as a curse of God. *Blind-Guy* was begging on the streets. They all know that.

But we know things they don’t. Jesus and his disciples saw him. *“Watch!”* Jesus said. *“Watch what God will do.”* Every person is a vessel, being filled with God’s grace. So watch! Every person is a story, part of the drama of God’s glory. So watch! Every person is an opportunity for God’s work. *“Watch!”* said Jesus. *“I am the light of the world.”*

Then, Jesus the Light healed him. Because of Jesus, he was no longer *Blind-Guy*.

Now, folks are trying to figure it out. They should ask Jesus.

Except, he is gone. This week and next week, as we unfold the story, Jesus will say nothing. Jesus will do nothing. Jesus will not be there. It’s all about him, but without him.

So all they have to go on is *Used-to-Be-Blind Guy*.

II

The neighbours are confused. The guy they know has always been blind. The guy they know works their streets, living off any coins or morsels that mercy might toss his way. He has always been *Blind-Beggar-Guy*.

But this fellow? He is not begging. He is not blind. He is not the same person.

Well, of course, he is. But he is not. Jesus has worked on him.

When the Light of the world goes to work on you, he does not leave you the same. So those who knew you, those who knew your story and where it was going, those who might have been sad about whatever was wrong with you, but knew that was you, those who had you figured out . . . When the Light writes a new story for you, when the Light heals you, when the Light does a work of God on you . . . those who knew you will be confused.

Jesus has profoundly changed you. Though they'll see it, they might be in the dark. "*How were your eyes opened?*" they might ask (or whatever it was that he did).

What do you say?

III

The neighbours are confused, so they take him to some Pharisees. Let's call them "Ministers."

Ministers are serious. They are serious about God. They are serious about God's ways. They are serious about living as God's people. I must say, those are worth being serious about. Some Ministers are also serious about making sure everyone else is as serious as they are. And they are seriously concerned when anyone seems to undermine that.

I love how the telling of this story unfolds. They neighbours bring *Used-to-Be-Blind Guy* to these Ministers. Oh, and by the way — the Gospel-writer John throws in now — Jesus healed him on a Sabbath.

Oh, Oh! That's serious!

As usual, the Ministers do not agree. Some work it out this way.

- 1) The Sabbath is a ceasing from work. It's God's gift and God's command.
- 2) Someone who breaks the Sabbath by doing work is not from God.
- 3) Jesus has done work on the Sabbath.
- 4) So Jesus is not from God.

But others Ministers work it out differently

- 1) Healing is God's gift, a work of God.
- 2) Someone who heals is from God.
- 3) Jesus has healed this man born blind.
and so
- 4) Jesus is from God.

The Ministers are divided.

You might find that when the Light of the world goes to work on you, folks will be divided. Some will clearly see the hand of God at work. Others will see reasons why it is not God. And it might be those most serious about God who have the hardest time seeing it.

Jesus has profoundly changed you. Though they'll see it, they might be in the dark. "*What do you say about him?*" they might ask.

What do you say?

IV

Neighbours are confused and Ministers divided. So they call for the man's parents.

How well do his folks know him? Are they part of his life? I imagine there's a story between them, and I imagine it's not been a good one. After all, he had been begging on the streets. Still, Mom and Dad are brought in for questioning.

Is this your son?

Yes.

Was he born blind?

Yes.

Are you sure?

Yes.

Then how can he see now?

We don't know. Ask him.

They are frightened, we're told. Apparently hostility has been rising against Jesus. Those who identify with him are facing serious consequences. Being thrown out of the synagogue did not simply free up your Saturdays. It was a community-wide shunning.¹ Rather than say too much then — And, really, what light can the parents shed on this? They are as much in the dark as everyone else! — they turn the attention back on their *Used-to-Be-Blind Son*.

You might find that when the Light of the world goes to work on you, your family can be the most fearful. Long-time relationships might be strained. You might experience painful consequences.

Jesus has profoundly changed you. Though they'll see it, they might be in the dark. "*Ask her! Ask him!*" they might say.

What do you say?

¹ See N. T. Wright, John for Everyone, Part 1 (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 138. Many scholars argue that the Gospel's comment about synagogue expulsion better fit the time when the Gospel was written, likely in the late 1st century. For good discussions of this question, see F. F. Bruce, The Gospel and Epistles of John (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 215f and Frederick Dale Bruner, The Gospel of John, A Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 586ff.

V

So where are we?

I'm intrigued. The fundamental question in this series of interrogations is about Jesus. How did he give the man sight? Who is he? Where is he from? What authority does he have? It is all about Jesus. Yet Jesus missing from the scene.

I'm also intrigued by this *Used-to-be-Blind Guy*, and the job he has been sent to do. You see, Jesus had sent *Blind-Guy* to a pool in the city, where he was to wash. It was there and then that he started seeing. The pool was called *Siloam*, and Gospel-writer John makes a point of saying that this word means "Sent."² I think that's important.

Jesus "sent" the man to "Sent." When he comes back, I think he is still "sent." Jesus is no longer there, but Jesus is still sending him.

Jesus is sending him back into his neighbourhood, back into his family. Healed. Restored. Moving closer to the fullness of life God has for him. Jesus is sending him back to show the Light. By the light now coming into his eyes, *Used-to-be-Blind Guy* will show the Light who gave him sight.

Your story doesn't end when you start seeing. Jesus does his work in you and for you. And, he does his work through you for others. They will know what has happened, and who has made it happen, through you.

When the Light of the world goes to work on you, and they ask . . . What do you say?

Tell them about the Light, who now shines in your darkness.

This is the good news of Jesus. Amen.

² In Hebrew, *shiloah* (the name of the pool) sounds similar to *shālah* (which means "sent.") See Bruce, 210. It was called that because the pool was fed from a spring located outside Jerusalem, from which water was "sent" through an underground passageway to the pool. This construction gave the city a water supply if it is under siege.