

What makes us inquisitive?

As a boy back around 1940 I used to listen regularly to a radio program called *I Love A Mystery*. It was about three fellows who ran a detective agency but unlike your usual detective series or film noir these adventures carried you to many exotic places and sometimes dealt with supernatural themes. But do we really “love mysteries”? Every such story tries to solve, erase, track down the cause of a mystery and thus end it logically. Isn't that also what modern science and technology and our rational powers try to do – like track down that virus that has had us closed down for so long? We often do our best to get rid of “mystery” – purge even outer space of its riddles. We do it partly out of fascination, a yen for discovery, but also to be secure. Correct knowledge leaves us “in control”. Mystery makes us uneasy.

The Pharisees in today's Gospel who were the experts in law and health matters are unsettled by a claim that a beggar, born blind, can now see. That's very odd, mysterious. So caution, a cross-examination takes place. “Tell us how that happened?” The young man says someone put clay on his eyes and told him to wash it off. “Well first of all, he shouldn't have done that. It's the Sabbath, not to be profaned by any such labor.” So they pressed on: “What do you know of this man who opened your eyes?” The fellow says, “I think he's wonderful, considering that he helped me see!” Next phase. These professionals interrogate his parents. “Was your son born blind?” The parents reply: “ Yes he was, nor do we understand this change in him. Ask him about it.” (They knew the Pharisees were already convinced that such a cure was impossible or sinister, so why drag out this inquiry?)

By this time the young man senses the insecurity of his inquisitors and talks back. “Isn't it obvious: the man who healed me must have operated out of some mysterious dimension – something, somehow divine? If so, do you Pharisees want to regulate God?” And the fact is, they do – they want God to operate the way they have decided he should operate – according to their rubrics and rules and the limits of ordinary experience. Otherwise things get shaky.

I mean, aside from the fascination with mystery that motivates science and technology and human reason to reach beyond current objectivity and come up with surprises, such investigations also reveal our worry about things unknown – not proven. Though we may be lured by mystery, we also live concerned about it – we also want to control it, secure our status quo. Which is the intent of these Pharisees. The Gospel of Jesus envisions a world of grace that exists *beyond* the Pharisaical harnesses designed to keep us safe or else sorry. It's the manifold, creative, surprising – well nigh miraculous - nature of gracious events that's the *real* threat they fear.

And so it is interesting that only after the young man with all his new clairvoyance is expelled from the Pharisees' jurisdiction that his healer returns to the story. “Do you believe in the *truly Human* Being?” “Who is he?” “You have *seen* him, he's speaking to you right now within this clearing which encircles the very nearness of God.”

Geoff Wood

(Cycle A Option)