

**Sermon Series: “The Good News for Life”**  
***Interrogation on Identity***  
**Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.**  
**Sunday, July 26, 2020**

Have you ever been interrogated? It is not a good feeling, necessarily, but it is always important to tell the truth! E.g., I recall when I was in college and I was picking up a girl for a date; she was involved with another Christian group at UNO. When I got to the house her mother sat in the living room with me while I waited for my date to come and she started asking me questions. Did you go to church today? Yes ma’m. Oh really— what was the sermon about? And I paused, took a breath, and then recalled a bit of the sermon and told her. But she was a hard sell— she did not look too impressed! Then my date was there. Sometimes we get interrogated on the faith. E.g., I recall being asked if I believe in original sin by someone visiting the church, and this person did not believe in this doctrine, and did not like the fact that I did. E.g., someone once asked me if I believe in evolution, and I said I do believe in micro-evolution between species, but macro-evolution from species to species is a question for me, but I don’t believe it necessarily contradicts the Bible. It is always good to remember that if and when you and I are interrogated we tell the truth— whether we are being pulled over by a police officer, going through a job interview, about to date a girl/guy, or FBI agents approach you on a college campus. We will see the wisdom of that advice in our passage today.

READ John 9:13-23 (pp. 102-103)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus has just healed a man born blind. The man is amazed, as are all those around him. Now we find out the consequences of this wonderful miracle.

READ vv 13-17. “The Pharisees are divided on whether Jesus is from God but seem to lean on the side of skepticism (cf. v 18), while the formerly blind man has no doubt about Jesus. Cf. *Mishnah* ”Shabbat” (ca. 200 AD): “The generative categories of acts of labor [prohibited on the Sabbath] are. . . he who sews, ploughs, reaps, binds sheaves. . . grinds, sifts, kneads, bakes. . .” The Jewish religious leaders are steeped in legalism in the hope of pleasing God. The spell out, as we see in the *Mishnah*, the lengths they would go to try to put a hedge around the law so that no one would break the Sabbath. Since Jesus “kneaded” the mud together and put it on the blind man’s eyes, this healing miracle seems to contradict Jesus’ being a man of God. So some Pharisees reject Jesus outright. Others question this judgment of Jesus— after all, a great miracle has just occurred where a man born blind now sees! Sometimes even religious leaders can get things mixed up and don’t see things correctly. E.g., I recall the story of a young man back in the hippy days who wanted to go to church, but he really did not understand what that meant. So he found a local church, walked in barefoot as the service was beginning and could not find a seat so he walked down the center aisle and just sat down on the floor. No one knew what to do— not the pastor or the laity! Then suddenly, one of the ushers, an elderly man, slowly walked down the aisle toward the young man. Was he going to explain to him he cannot sit on the floor? Was he going to escort him to a seat somewhere? When the elderly man finally reached him, he sat down on the floor with the young man, and they worshipped together. That is what God is like. Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “Then he said to them [the Pharisees], ‘The sabbath was made for humankind, not humankind for the sabbath.’” Sometimes we think the Sabbath day is a day of rest, and it is; sometimes we think it is a day of naps, and it certainly can be. But

it is also a day of blessing—a time to be a blessing to others. E.g., I recall a church where people took widows out to lunch after church. E.g., I recall a group of men from the church helped someone on a Sunday afternoon move into their new home. That is how Jesus saw it. How can you and I be a blessing to someone on this Sabbath day?

READ vv 18-23. “The Pharisees next interrogate the formerly blind man’s parents, who, because of fear, take the “Sergeant Schulz” approach to being questioned! Cf. Acts 4:13-22.” Many of us remember the show “Hogan’s Heroes”, right? Sergeant Schultz was the lovable and bumbling German sergeant who kept order, or tried to keep order, in a German prisoner of war camp during World War II. Whenever Sergeant Schulz stumbled on something in the prisoners’ barracks which he was not to see, like some plan to befuddle the Germans or a secret radio in the barracks, he would say, “I see *nothing!* I see *nothing!*” That is kind of what this formerly blind man’s parents are like. The Pharisees interrogate them— is this your son? Was he born blind? How is it that he sees now? They answer yes this is our son, but we know nothing— in v 21 they say they do not know how he now sees and they do not know who performed this miracle. Please let us go— and go ask our son, after all he is of age to speak for himself! They were afraid of being cast out of the synagogue. Many people in the Church today share a similar fear, maybe not being cast out of a church, but being cast out of a social circle or job or position of authority because of their faith. E.g., I recall talking to a pastor about another pastor’s stance on controversial issues such as marriage, and I was told that that pastor was a “chameleon” , just statinnng positions to please the group in which he was. E.g., I recall a young Christian in high school who was trying to follow Jesus when a difficult situation happened. He was in a class where the homework was graded, and a friend of his asked him if he could copy his homework because he did not do it for that day, and this request was made in front of their friends. What was

this young Christian to do? Allow this friend to copy his homework for a grade, to cheat, and be accepted in the group of friends, or say no and risk being alienated from his friends? It was a tough choice, but he finally said he could not allow him to copy his homework as this would be cheating; he felt that while he let his friends down, he did not let his Lord down.

“What do we say under interrogation for the gospel?” Today we live in a world that is becoming more and more polarized. We can see this by what would happen if in a large group of people we don’t know we were to say for whom we will vote for President— Trump or Biden. It seems to be a quick way to make some enemies! If it is that way in politics today, it is even more for those who follow Jesus. In our Addressing the Skeptics class this week we discussed points of the gospel which are offensive to today’s culture: the idea that we are sinners, that we need a Savior, that marriage is between one man and one woman, that we are to release control of our lives to the Lord. Others are that there is only one God, not many, and there is only one way to heaven, through Jesus. There are two things we need to keep in mind. First, even though people find the biblical gospel disagreeable, we are not to be disagreeable! We should treat all with respect, and not vengeance. E.g., someone told me this week, when people are difficult to get along with, he prays for them, Second, when people find out about our faith, we may be cast out of the synagogue— or socially alienated. Beloved, what will we do when we are interrogated for the gospel?