

TO TELL
THE STORY



LUKE ITALIANO

The Weight of Guilt

The silences between his parents' shouted insults told Benjamin everything he needed to know: This was his fault, but they didn't want to admit it. Ever since Benjamin had been born, his parents' perfect marriage had fallen apart. Because Benjamin was blind. And everyone knew that a child wasn't born blind unless the parents had done something terribly wrong. But his father was a paragon of virtue. His mother? Perfection itself!

And so it must have been Benjamin's fault.

Every day, Benjamin would wake with that heavy burden of guilt already on him. He would stumble out to his place on the dusty road to beg. And under the hot sun with sweat in his non-seeing eyes, he would beg. He would call out to all passers-by.

In Jerusalem, some would stop. And some would ask him, "Who sinned? Whose fault is it?"

And Benjamin would never tell them, in fear that they wouldn't give the money that he needed.

And then, at night, he would stumble home again and give his father those few coins, and his father would look and grunt and say, "Hm. Good enough."

And his mother would say, "Don't be so harsh."

And then they would fight again. Over the money. Over anything. Except Benjamin. Because it was his fault, and they didn't want to admit it.

One particularly hot day, as the sweat dribbled down his face and Benjamin called out for help, a group of people came. By the sound of it, a teacher and some students. And the students asked that ever-popular question: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Ah. By the accent, they were northerners. They were always good for a couple of coins; they were out-of-towners, they didn't know any better.

And Benjamin waited to see what the teacher would say, because based on what the teacher would say, the students would surely give something. So whose fault was it? His fault? His parents' fault?

And Benjamin braced himself for the answer.

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned."

What?

What?

Someone sinned! It's someone's fault that I'm blind! Benjamin held himself back; he reigned back his desire to respond to that – but he couldn't believe it. He had never heard anything like this before!

The teacher went on: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened that the work of God might be displayed in his life. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

And then Benjamin heard a noise. It sounded like someone was spitting. And then something cold was smeared on his eyes.

And the teacher said, “Go. Wash in the pool of Siloam.”

Benjamin knew the way. He got up, and he stumbled down the road. And he reached the cool water and wiped his face clean, and as the water dribbled from his eyes...

...what was that? He looked up, and he saw ... *sky*... so far above him. So blue. So big. And – *trees*? And people. They all had different faces! He knew they all had different voices, but who knew that people had different faces? Look at them all! How do they keep them all straight? How can you ever find one another again?

Benjamin closed his eyes to limit it, but he had to open them again. The glorious sight—the wonder! How did anyone not just sit and stare in awe all day?

Benjamin had to close his eyes to get home – he couldn’t find it by sight! And – and all the – all the things he saw were so distracting! And he got home, and he looked at his parents, and he said, “Dad? Mom? I can see!”

And his mom fell on her knees, shaking her head – she couldn’t believe it. And his father looked at him and said, “No. It’s some trick! Who did this?”

And Benjamin answered, “Someone named Jesus.”

Now brothers and sisters:

We bear so much guilt in this world. And sometimes we think that something has happened and it is our fault. Remember what Jesus said about the man born blind: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so the work of God might be displayed in his life.”

Now this story, it is true, but it’s not done yet. We’ll listen to more of Benjamin’s story next time.

John 9:1-12

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