

# If your eye offends you



Mark 9:38-50

Year B Proper 21

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## Parts by scene

■ = large part    ▲ = medium sized part    ● = small part

		1	2	3
■	<b>James</b> - the most officious disciple, often the most frustrated with Jesus' unconventional decisions (such as his allowing women to join the group)	▲	●	▲
▲	<b>John</b> - the gentlest and most caring of the disciples	▲	●	
●	<b>Woman</b> - a woman in the crowd	▲		
▲	<b>Healer</b> - a man casting out demons using Jesus' name	▲		
●	<b>Patient</b> - a demon possessed man	●		
●	<b>Judas</b> - possibly the deepest thinker and best organizer, the one who usually sees the big picture most clearly, and also the disciple with the best sense of humor		▲	
▲	<b>Joanna</b> - a wealthy woman with a perceptive and agile intellect who abandons her life as the co-manager of King Herod's household to follow Jesus		●	▲
▲	<b>Jesus</b>			■
▲	<b>Peter</b> - the most headstrong disciple, and the least afraid of a fight, but never the smartest person in the room			▲

## Scene 1

Healer , James , John , Patient , Woman

*{James and John are trying to find Jesus.}*

**James**    *[annoyed]* Leave it to you to forget the directions!

**John**    *[contrite]* Sorry.

**James**    Are you sure we're going the right way even now?

**John**    That guy in town said everyone was heading out to the city well to see a traveling preacher. That must be us.

**James** I don't remember anyone saying anything about a well.

**John** True, but maybe they had to change the location.

**James** At least no one's counting on us for anything. Can you imagine if we were supposed to bring something important? They'd be sitting around twiddling their thumbs right now, just because you forgot the directions!

**John** I'm still upset that we're going to miss some of the sermon.

**James** Then you shouldn't have forgotten the directions!

**John** And the guy said there were going to be some healings! I hope we won't miss them. I love to see the expression on some poor beggar's face when he suddenly realizes he can walk again.

**James** *[concerned]* That's another thing. We hadn't planned on doing any healings today.

**John** Maybe people are just getting their hopes up. Or maybe the rabbi added it in response to popular demand.

**James** The last thing we need is another schedule delay. We were supposed to be in - Hey! That must be it.

**John** Look at that crowd!

*{They approach the crowd.}*

**James** *[to a man in the crowd]* Excuse me! Is this where Joshua of Nazareth is preaching?

**Woman** It sure is! And then some!

**John** What do you mean?

**Woman** He preached a wonderful message earlier this afternoon, and now he's healing the sick!

**James** Yes, we heard that he'd be doing that.

**Woman** But not only that, he's actually casting demons out of people who were possessed!

**John** That's wonderful! But where is he now?

**Woman** Inside that sedan. Some nearby noble brought his daughter to be healed.

*{The Healer emerges from the sedan with the noble's daughter by his side. The crowd erupts into cheers.}*

**Healer** Behold the work of God!

**James** What? Who's he? That's not our rabbi!

**Woman** Didn't you say his name was Joshua?

**John** Yeah, but that's not him.

**Woman** Look! He's going to cast out another demon!

**Healer** *[in a loud voice]* In the name of Joshua of Nazareth, depart from this man!

*{The patient screams.}*

**Patient** *[weakly after a pause]* Where am I? What's happening?

**John** Amazing!

**Patient** *[in joyful realization]* Oh my God, I'm...free! *[to the healer]* Did you do this?

**Healer** *[in a magnanimous voice loud enough that the crowd can hear]* I was merely the instrument. The conduit. It was the power of God that freed you!

**Patient** Thank you! Thank you!

*{The crowd cheers.}*

**James** *[in disgust]* He's faking! They're in cahoots! This guy's a con artist!

**Woman** We've known that poor possessed fellow for years. If he's in cahoots with the healer, he's been keeping up the act since his childhood!

**John** *[to the healer]* Excuse me! Why are you using...the name you're using?

**Healer** *[imperiously, and in a voice loud enough for the crowd to hear]* Do you know any other name under Heaven by which such signs can be performed?

**John** Well, no, but...but it's not your name.

**Healer** *[triumphantly]* I never said it was!  
*{The crowd cheers.}*

**James** *[angrily]* Look! You have no right to use our rabbi's name to...to...

**Healer** To what? Heal the sick? Relieve the torture of the possessed?  
*{The crowd cheers.}*

**Woman** *[sincerely to John and James]* I don't understand what your problem is.

**John** I'm...I'm not sure I do, either. But...

**James** *[to the patient]* You! You know this guy's a fake, right? He's been using our rabbi's name - *[in sudden realization]* *stealing* our rabbi's power!

**Patient** *[quietly but bluntly]* I don't care who or what he is! All I know is that I was bound, but now I'm free. I was in pain, but now I'm at ease. I was lost in a horrible darkness, but now I walk in the light.

**James** *[angrily to the patient]* You could get in big trouble for this, you know!  
*[raising his voice to address the crowd]* You and anyone else aiding or abetting this fraudster!

**Healer** *[scornfully]* Hypocrites! If you saw any of the people I've healed today fallen in the street, you'd hasten to pick them up. You'd congratulate yourself for temporarily easing their pain. Yet, you would turn me in to...who? the Romans? the Temple? for freeing them forever of their infirmities!  
*{The crowd boos.}*

**John** *[hopefully to the healer]* Do you know our rabbi? Has he given you permission to use his name?

**Healer** *[wildly]* Oh no you don't! Many have sought to trap me in nets of words. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the scribes: they all conspire to my destruction. Tell me which of these you're spying for, and then I'll tell you whose "permission" I have!

*{The crowd cheers, but also begins yelling out threats against John and James.}*

**John** *[to the crowd]* Please! Please! We aren't spying for anybody. Honestly!

**James** *[almost screeching with indignation]* We happen to work for Joshua of Nazareth himself! We've been with him from the start. We are his *true* disciples!

**Healer** *[coolly]* Are you? Then go and tell him this: the lame walk, the deaf hear, and the blind receive their sight!

*{The crowd cheers.}*

## Scene 2

James , Joanna , John , Judas

*{The John and James discuss their report with Judas and Joanna.}*

**Judas** And you're sure they were genuine healings?

**John** They sure looked real.

**James** But they can't have been!

**Joanna** Why not?

**James** *[to Judas, pointedly ignoring her]* What are we going to do about this?

**John** *[answering Joanna]* There was just something about the whole scene that felt...*off* to me.

**Joanna** But you're the one I would have thought most likely to believe there was real magical power in the rabbi's name.

**John** I believe there's power in *him*.

**Judas** I'm more concerned about how this will affect the mission.

**James** Exactly! There can't be two messiahs. And if every Tom, Dick, and Harry can heal just by using the rabbi's name, then who's going to believe in Him any more? He'll just be another healer.

**Judas** *[to John]* Do you think he'd be amenable to joining us?

**James**     What???

**John**     He was pretty...resistant to anything we had to say. He seems pretty independent. Even a little paranoid. He accused us of being Temple spies.

**Joanna**    *[half to herself]* Two peas in a pod!

**James**    *[sharply]* What was that?

**Judas**     What she said was, "Forces of nature."

**James**    *[irritated]* What does that mean?

**Judas**     It's what I'm always saying about men like the rabbi, and my old master before him, and maybe this guy, too. Men like that, men with the power to make revolutions, are like the whirlwind: full of power that can't always be controlled. I'll bet he had the crowd in the palm of his hand.

**John**     I was afraid they were going to attack us at one point.

**James**    *[competitively]* The rabbi can get a crowd just as excited!

**Joanna**    *[grimly]* Or he can totally turn them off.

**Judas**    *[with some satisfaction]* "Forces of nature!"

### Scene 3

James , Jesus , Joanna , Peter

*{Jesus and the disciples sit at dinner.}*

**James**    *[impatiently to Jesus]* Well?

**Jesus**     First, let's thank Peter for his excellent cooking. You've outdone yourself tonight!

*{Everybody applauds.}*

**Peter**     Thank you, thank you!

**Joanna**    This sauce is the equal of anything we had in Herod's house. How did you conjure it?

**Peter** *[humbly]* Aw, it's the same old thing I always make. *[suddenly mischievously]* Only this time, I cooked it in the rabbi's name!

*{Everybody except James laughs.}*

**James** *[harshly]* That's not funny! The rabbi's name is sacred! It's bad enough there's some nut out there using it to trick people.

**Jesus** *[with a sigh]* I guess we should discuss him now.

**James** Finally! So: what are we going to do about him?

**Jesus** *[innocently]* Peter, what do you think?

**James** *[groaning half to himself]* Not this again!

**Peter** *[in good humor]* Aw, come on! Not this again!

**Joanna** *[joining the joke]* Hey, you did such a good job on the sauce...

**Peter** *[laughing]* Yeah, and what was my sin the last time? Or the time before that?

**Jesus** *[seriously]* This is a serious matter, Simon Peter, son of Zebedee! James has real concerns. Even John has asked me if he should forbid that man from healing in my name! And I believe you have the wisdom to address their fears.

**Peter** *[sincerely]* Honestly, rabbi, I've hardly even been paying attention! Why don't you let me go do these dishes, and you can discuss it among yourselves?

**Jesus** *[ignoring him]* What would you do, Peter, if your sons came to you reporting that some neighbor kid had done a good deed, but claimed that it was all because of your good influence on him?

**Peter** *[relieved]* Oh! Well that's easy. I'd tell them I was happy to be a good role model to any kid, but that doesn't mean I don't still love them best, so they should stop being jealous.

**Jesus** *[to Peter]* Well answered! *[to James]* Are *you* answered?

**James** *[glumly]* Yes, rabbi.

**Joanna** Wait! Rabbi? Pardon me, but I don't know if your answer was totally...accurate.

**James** *[in a hissing whisper to Joanna]* I don't need you defending me!

**Joanna** *[hissing back]* I'm not defending *you*! I'm seeking the truth.

**Jesus** *[mildly]* Okay, Joanna, what flaw did you find in my logic?

**Joanna** Peter, suppose those kids weren't just doing good works and citing you as their inspiration. Suppose they were...let me think...suppose you had set your sons up with a line of credit, so they could borrow money to start some new businesses of their own, using you as a reference. Then suppose those neighbor kids were getting loans for themselves as well, using the credit line you had set up for your kids.

**Peter** Whoa! That would be totally different! *[to James]* Is that what's happening?

**James** *[reluctantly]* Um. That's actually not bad. Uh...

**Joanna** *[pointedly]* You're welcome.

**James** *[trying to shift the focus back to the issue]* So what about it, rabbi? Shouldn't we stop that guy from trading on your good name? He could destroy your credit if he started botching those healings!

**Jesus** That's a very good point. But then again: so could you!

**Peter** *[cheerfully]* Hah! You've got us dead to rights! We're all pretty bad risks, aren't we?

**Jesus** *[joining the joke]* I never said *that*!

**Joanna** *[joining the joke]* Maybe we shouldn't be trying to use your line of credit at all. Maybe we should just bury what cash we have in the ground, like the servant in that parable.

**Jesus** *[still jokingly]* Well, you remember what happened to *him*!

**James** *[angrily]* Wait! Wait! Wait! *[a pause while they stare at him]* What should we do about this guy? That's all we were asking! What should we do? In plain words.



**Jesus** *[seriously]* Sorry, James. All right. Here's your answer in plain words: Leave him alone. And here are the reasons. First, the bank doesn't just issue loans to anyone who mentions my name. He's clearly a good man - he's passed their credit checks - or he wouldn't be succeeding at all in his work. Second, we're all spending this money toward the same end. Anyone who isn't against us is for us.

**James** *[with dignity]* Okay. That's all we needed to know.

**Peter** But we might still mess up from time to time, right?

**Jesus** Absolutely. But beware. *[suddenly somber]* It's one thing to mess up, and it's another thing to do active harm. Someone who merely brings you a cup of water in my name will surely be rewarded, but if anyone harms another in my name in any way, it would be better if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea!

**Joanna** *[trying to recover the light tone from a few moments ago]* I'm sure no one here would do any intentional harm...

**Jesus** *[interrupting with sudden earnestness]* Listen! Listen! If your hand does wrong, cut it off! It's better to live forever with one hand than to be thrown into the fires of Hell with two. *[with growing urgency]* If your foot carries you toward evil, cut it off! It's better to be lame forever than to have two feet that convey you to Hell. *[almost desperately]* If your eye is sinful, cut it off! It's better to enter the Kingdom of God half blind than to have two eyes and see the fires of hell *[almost in agony himself]* where the worm never dies, where all are salted with unquenchable fire!

**Peter** *[in anxious alarm]* Rabbi!

**Jesus** *[sharply]* What?

**Peter** *[timidly]* Are you all right?

**Jesus** *[deflated, back to himself]* Sorry. Yes. What I was saying was: don't let *your* salt lose its flavor. Good salt is worthless if it loses its saltiness. Live in peace with all.

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