

“He came to bring discernment!”

The following is a humorous list titled, **“Great Truths About Life That Little Children Have Learned.”**

The “great truths” are:

- “1. No matter how hard you try you cannot baptize a cat.’
- ‘2. When your mom is mad at your dad, don’t let her brush your hair.’
- ‘3. Never ask your 3-year-old brother to hold a tomato ... or an egg.’
- ‘4. You can’t trust dogs to watch your food for you.’
- ‘5. Don’t sneeze when somebody is cutting your hair.’
- ‘6. School lunches stick to the wall.’
- ‘7. You can’t hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk.’
- ‘8. Never wear polka-dot underwear under white shorts ... no matter how cute the underwear is.”

(“Jesus and the Man Born Blind”, Sermons.com)

Those are certainly some “Great Truths About Life”! The children who came up with those insights were **very discerning** – they had good judgment in their task of uncovering the truth. **Today’s very long Gospel Lectionary Reading deals with judgment – with discernment.** At the very start of the Scripture, the subject of judgment is raised by a number of the participants, who had differing ways of approaching discernment.

After reporting Jesus and his disciples encountered a man **“born blind”**, the Gospel of John states, **“His disciples asked him, ‘Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents’ sin?’** The disciples’ focus on judgment was determining whose sin resulted in the man being **“born blind”**. **“Jesus answered, ‘His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents’ sins.”** He made it clear their assumption that blindness is always caused by sin was and is faulty! Jesus, immediately, provided the truth – discerned what was happening through this particular man, **“He is blind so that God’s power might be seen at work in him.”**

Now, Jesus’ response may come across as heartless and a terrible shame! Was Jesus claiming the man suffered blindness all of his life just to reveal **“God’s power”**? That is, of course, one possible way of understanding what Jesus is reported to have said. However, let me suggest Jesus was actually telling his disciples to discern how God, through Jesus’ healing of the man of his blindness, would reveal the Almighty’s power at work in that particular man. Jesus went on to say, **“While I am in the world, I am the Light for the world.”** **Interestingly, the results coming from the healing of the man in this Reading, show the man was amazingly blessed with a tremendous ability to discern the truth – to live in the “Light”!**

After Jesus healed the man **“born blind”**, many folks, who knew he had been blind were shocked and sought out an explanation. The Scripture states, **“Then they took to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. The day that Jesus made the mud and cured him of his blindness was a Sabbath. The Pharisees, then, asked the man again how he had received his sight.”** The man is reported to have been repeatedly asked to explain what had happened – how he had been healed. The Pharisees, especially demanded he go over it again and again! **“So the Pharisees asked the man once more, ‘You say he cured you of your blindness - well, what do you say about him?’** They were asking him to **discern the truth** about the one who had healed him! **‘He is a prophet,’ the man answered.”** That was not an acceptable answer from the perspective of the Pharisees!

Rev. Michael J. Fish shares “a story of a beggar who was sitting across the street from an artist’s studio. The artist saw him and thought he would make an interesting portrait study so from a distance he painted the defeated man whose shoulders drooped, and whose eyes were downcast and sad. When he was finished, he took the portrait over to the beggar so he could look at it.

‘Who is that?’ the beggar questioned. The painting bore a slight resemblance to himself, but in the painting before him he saw a person of dignity, with squared shoulders and bright uplifted eyes, almost handsome! He asked the artist, ‘Is that me? I don’t look like that.’ But the artist replied, ‘but that is the person I see in you.’” (Brett Blair, www.Sermons.com Adapted from New Vision in Christ, by Rev. Michael J. Fish)

The formerly blind man saw – **discerned God at work in Jesus** – the one through whom the Divine Parent

gave him sight. Like the beggar in Rev. Fish's story, the Pharisees were unable to recognize – **discern the truth**, so they challenged Jesus' status with God and called him "*a sinner*" because he dared to go against their understanding of God's Law, with reference to keeping the Sabbath holy by not working on that day.

However, when the Pharisees demanded the healed man accept their **judgment – discernment** about Jesus' sinfulness, the vulnerable man, who had been blind all of his life, responded, "*I do not know if he is a sinner or not. One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see.*"

The Pharisees were not happy with his **discernment** and continued to argue against Jesus. Among their charges was, "*We know that God spoke to Moses; as for that fellow, however, we do not even know where he comes from!*" "*The man answered, 'What a strange thing that is! You do not know where he comes from, but he cured me of my blindness! We know that God does not listen to sinners; He does listen to people who respect Him and do what He wants them to do. Since the beginning of the world nobody has ever heard of anyone giving sight to a person born blind. Unless this man came from God, he would not be able to do a thing.'*"

Clearly, "*God's power*" was with the healed man as the Pharisees continued to bagger him! **His discernment – his judgment was bold and overwhelming!** The Pharisees' response was arbitrary and reveals the weakness of their arguments against Jesus. They kicked the former blind man out of the synagogue!

Kathryn Matthews Huey notes, "Such a long story, and yet Jesus appears only at the beginning and the end. In fact, he heard that the blind man had been driven out, and he went looking for him. We might sit with that line for a little while, too, and picture Jesus hearing about what happened to the man, and setting out to find him." Huey concludes, "**It's not a question of whether we, sighted or blind, find Jesus, but of Jesus coming to look for us, and finding us (no matter) where we are.**" (Sermon Seeds, Reflection by Kathryn Matthews Huey)

The Gospel of John reports, "*When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' The man answered, 'Tell me who he is, sir, so that I can believe in him!' Jesus said to him, 'You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now.' 'I believe, Lord!' the man said, and knelt down before Jesus. Jesus said, 'I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind.'*"

Jesus' disclosure of his purpose may sound more like the judgmental attitude his disciples expressed in their initial question and like that demonstrated by the Pharisees as they questioned the healed man. But, I believe a more accurate translation of what Jesus said would be "**I came to this world to bring discernment, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind.**" Indeed, Jesus gave **discernment** to the blind man along with the healing of his blindness!

The Pharisees understood what Jesus was saying to the **discerning**, former blind man. So, "*Some Pharisees who were there with him heard him say this and asked him, 'Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?' Jesus answered, 'If you were blind, then you would not be guilty; but since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty.'*" The Pharisees were **guilty of not discerning** – not accepting the truth about what God was doing through Jesus. They were guilty of going against God's Will because they refused to perceive – **discern Jesus is "the Son of Man"** and the Messiah and they sought to discredit and destroy him.

Do you and I welcome God's Healing, Forgiving, and Accepting Sacrificial "**Agape Love**" of God, so we **discern the truth**, as did the former blind man? Unlike the Pharisees, let's humble ourselves – recognize we need God's Gifts of Love – believe **we need God to enable our discernment. Welcome God's Son, Jesus Christ, who came to bring us discernment!** Amen.