

HOMILY
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A brilliant magician was performing on an ocean liner. But every time he did a trick, the captain's parrot would yell, "*It's a trick. He's a phony. That's not magic.*" Then, one evening during a storm, the ship sank while the magician was performing. The parrot and the magician ended up in the same lifeboat. For several days they just glared at each other, neither one saying a word to the other. Finally the parrot said, "*OK, I give up. What did you do with the ship?*" The parrot couldn't explain that last trick! It was too much to comprehend, even for a small parrot.

Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." Scholars over the years have tried to explain what in the world Peter meant by this suggestion. But I think trying to find meaning to these words is pointless. It's simply the way Mark explains it: Peter was frightened and he just said the first thing that came into his head. He simply could not comprehend what was happening.

In life, moments occur that are incomprehensible. The birth of one's child is one of those moments. The loss of a loved one is one of those moments. September 11 was one of those moments. There are mountaintop and valley moments throughout life. We are never really ready for them. They arrive unannounced changing us in irreversible ways. But there is one thing that all have in common. They demand that we be silent and listen. These moments have something to say to us, something to teach us.

After years of working too hard and neglecting her own needs, Nancie Carmichael fell into a deep depression. One day she walked by a gorgeous lake. At this moment, Nancie felt God speaking to her. God seemed to say to her, "When you are still before me, you can then reflect me." The surrounding mountains and trees were perfectly reflected in the still waters of the lake.

A stressful lifestyle had prevented Nancie from spending time with God. Her inner turmoil reflected her lack of connection to him. God was reminding her that as she spent time in quiet prayer, her inner life would reflect God's peace and grace, too. It would also make something of those mountaintop and valley moments of life. Today in the gospel story, a voice was heard from a cloud, "*This is my Beloved Son. Listen to him.*"

There's a mountain of meaning in these words. I suppose that this is where most of the problems exist. Throughout history, it has not been difficult for many non-Christians to believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Many religions throughout the ages agreed with this concept. Nor did they take issue with the idea that God was pleased with Jesus' life. God assuredly would love any man who spoke the things and did the things that Jesus did.

But listen? Listen to him! That's another matter all together! Most of the reason our lives seem to have no purpose is due to our unwillingness to listen, to obey. Be silent. Listen. What will listening to Jesus require of his followers?

Before we can become beautiful to behold, we must submit ourselves to the cost of discipleship. Listening will mean hearing about suffering being a big part of our salvation. Listening will mean no longer sifting through the gospels, taking what comforts, avoiding what chastens and chides. Listening will also require our attentiveness to the poor, the lonely, the marginalized, and those whose basic human rights are threatened.

Elie Wiesel tells the story of a prophet who came to a city and delivered his message every day in the marketplace. After a time, his ranting became a fixture of the city's life and people regarded him with amusement...if they regarded him at all. Finally, a small boy, pitying the old man, approached him and said, "Sir, why do you keep crying aloud like this every day, year after year? The people here will never listen to you." I gave up hope that they would listen to me a long time ago," said the prophet. "I go on crying lest I begin to listen to them."

On the mountain this very day, the disciples are given a genuine moment, a transparent happening that speaks to them. That same voice speaks to us this day. "*This is my Beloved Son.*" He has the words of everlasting life. Are you listening to him?