

## Second Sunday of Lent – Year A

What sorts of things get in the way of your being able to listen to someone?

I know, for me, one thing is the fact that I have a one-track mind. If I'm watching TV, for example, that's the only thing I'm doing. Even during commercials, if someone says something, a lot of times I miss it because I am so focused on what's going on on the screen.

Some other barriers to listening are when someone starts to say something and we think to ourselves, "Oh boy, here we go again." and conclude that it's just going to be the same conversation we've had before. We stop listening before the other person really has a chance to speak.

Or we might hear something and start working on our response before the other person even gets finished talking.

Listening can be a challenge!

Jesus was confronted with a particular problem in getting his disciples to listen to what he was saying.

For one thing, what he was trying to get across to them went against their firmly held beliefs about what was going to happen when the Messiah came. They were sure that the Messianic age would mean overthrowing the oppressors and reinstating the golden age that had been in place when David was king.

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That belief got in the way when Jesus spoke to them about what was going to happen to him at the hands of the religious leaders of Israel and the Roman occupation.

When he spoke of what he was going to suffer and that he was going to die rather than win any kind of military victory, they couldn't hear it. It didn't match up with what they believed.

He needed some way of getting through to them, or at least to some of them.

So, up the mountain they went. God the Father intervened with an experience for the three disciples that would make it so overwhelmingly clear about who Jesus was and what the end result of his suffering and death was going to be, that they would be able to remember it—especially in the midst of the events that would seem to be moving decisively in the opposite direction.

It was true what Jesus was saying. He would suffer a terrible death, but he would rise again on the third day as victor over it. His identity as the Son of God would become clear and his disciples would have good reason to believe in him. In the meantime, they would have to listen and follow his lead.

All that is still true. We believers are still confronted with the call to faith in the midst of lives that tempt us to cut and run, to make us want to avoid the suffering they

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contain for the sake of something easier, more comfortable, less challenging, less like the life of Christ.

That can make us deaf to the call of discipleship, to things like showing concern for others, especially the poor, the lonely, the outcast. It can get in the way of the task of being reconciled with one another, of letting go of hurt and anger so that peace and harmony can be restored. It can make us want to circle the wagons and worry only about ourselves and let the rest of the world fend for themselves.

There's good reason that Jesus did not allow Peter to build his tents on the mountaintop. They weren't staying. The work to be done was not up there, but down in the plain, in the messiness of life where all the important decisions are made and carried out.

The event on the mountaintop was only there to bolster faith. The faith would need to be lived on the way to the cross, and the way of the cross.

When we are challenged in our lives of faith we do have at our disposal the full story of Jesus' life, suffering, death and resurrection to cling to. It's the pattern for our own life if we let it be. That's the promise he's made to us. He goes on ahead of us, but we must listen to him and follow if we want to share his eternal life.