

02/25/18 2 Lent B

-- Researchers who have studied people who have had “near death” experiences often find that they have learned to appreciate things more and to listen more carefully to people. That change doesn’t occur in all people who have that near-death experience, but many do change.

-- Three of the apostles had a significant experience with Jesus. It wasn’t exactly a near-death experience, but it was on a similar level. It certainly could not be explained scientifically.

-- During that experience on the mountain, they heard a voice tell them to listen to Jesus. As his disciples they were supposed to do just that, but they often found it easy to forget the lessons Jesus was trying to teach.

-- True listening is an art. It’s all too easy to pay selective attention to what someone is saying, even if that person is wise. We pay attention to the things we want to hear and ignore things that challenge our views.

-- With the proliferation of social media, there’s a tendency for people to form their own friendship circles with like-minded people, and only listen to them. The art of dialogue among people with significantly different points of view is fading away in too many circles.

-- We can even select our news from sources which will merely confirm our own opinions and not challenge us to think differently.

-- Just like he did with Peter, James and John, God challenges us to listen to Jesus. I’ve already mentioned some challenges to our openness to listening, but there’s another big one in our culture.

-- That is our tendency to hurry from one thing to another. If we are in a hurry, we will usually miss someone in need who crosses our path. We’ll ignore someone who can help us with good advice. There’s actually studies which have proved that.

-- Too often, being “in a hurry” is seen as a sign that we are important people. After all, important people are constantly in demand and often over-scheduled. But what does that do to our ability to listen?

-- Those studies show that hurry is the biggest block to our ability to listen. Yes, most of us are busy, but we do not have to be in a hurry. For "hurry" is primarily an attitude of mind.

-- Often it shows itself in our inability to focus on the present because we're concerned about what comes tomorrow... or next week... or next month.

-- If God's word today and the Lenten season as a whole should teach us anything, it should teach us that we have to shed, as best we can, the attitude that we are constantly in a hurry.

-- I know you'll say that's easier said than done, and I can relate to that. Perhaps we need to start by prioritizing what is essential and what is not. Some things are more important than others, though we'll hear competing voices telling us that everything is important.

-- Next, we need to block out some time (even if brief) to be quiet. That prepares us to pray. Jesus knew he needed that, and his disciples did as well.

-- And we also need to realize that we can't be the savior of the world, or even our own corner of the world. We can only do what is the right thing to do this very moment. Let's leave the savior thing to our true Lord and Savior. He was the one who suffered and died to save us.

-- People like Abraham were challenged to listen to God in difficult circumstances. All of us are called to listen to God in our particular circumstances of life. His voice may not always be clear, but if we take time to listen, eventually we will discern God's will for us.

-- For Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Let's open ourselves to hear his voice. Let's say 'Goodbye' to constant hurry. Then we can listen to him.