

Recently, I had the most wonderful adventure.  
I was with 8 of my closest friends.  
We packed a cooler of food and water and headed to  
Joshua Tree National park.  
This is one place I never imagined I would go.  
(If I'm being completely honest, I always just thought  
Joshua Tree was the name of a U2 album.)  
Everything that happened that day was unexpected.

As we drove into the park, I was overwhelmed by the  
beauty. It truly was like nothing I had ever seen.  
If you've been, then you know.  
If you've not been, imagine enormous rock formations in  
the midst of a grand desert.

As we drove through the park, we stopped to picnic and  
climb rocks.

I'm terrified of heights.  
Yet, my heart drove me take the risk and climb higher:  
to find solid ground on precarious rock  
and stare across the desert.

We decided on a short short hike from one rock  
formation to another. A few of us ended up in deep  
conversation. We were busy extolling the virtues of our  
ideas above and over someone else's. We were loud.

All of a sudden, we noticed that our friends had stopped moving...and talking. *Shhh*, they said, *be quiet...listen*.  
And that was when I heard it -  
silence,  
deep silence,  
silence like nothing I've heard in my life.

I've not forgotten the sound of that silence.  
It was holy, a glimpse of God's glory in creation,  
a sign of God's presence with us.

That moment of silence has me wondering:  
how much am I missing?  
Wrapped up in my own diversions, conversations,  
or thinking,  
do I see and hear what is around me?  
I wonder if I can find a similar moment of stillness in the  
midst of my daily life?

Today's Gospel is known as Jesus' transfiguration. The Gospels according to Matthew and Mark also include this story.

We can be confident that Peter, James, and John were witness to something they had never seen before. Here is Jesus in all his glory, a full revelation of his authority as God's son.

Have you ever had an experience where someone was transformed, changed, in front of you?

- I feel this way with my children sometimes. One moment, I see my son for the child he is; in the next moment, he is the young man he is becoming.
- I remember the time I sat down across the table from a homeless man. I had a lot of assumptions about who he was. Then, as he began to tell me his story, I had a greater vision for who he really was.

Of course, these are human experiences.

What about divine revelation?

How are we witnesses of Christ's glory in our lives?

There are many mysteries in today's Gospel and I have lots of questions.

- Is it significant that Jesus' face shines like Moses at Mount Sinai?
- Why are Moses and Elijah with them now?
- Why do they discuss Jesus' departure?

Peter seems to know something important is happening, and the Gospel tells us he doesn't really know.

I feel the same way:

I know something important has happened here; and I know I don't fully understand it.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all agree, though, this is not the end of the story.

They all tell us

that Jesus, Peter, James and John

come down the mountain and into a crisis.

Jesus' transfiguration continues with the healing of a boy.

Like the story of the transfiguration,  
each Gospel tells the story a bit differently.  
And, as we expect, some of those differences are more  
noticeable than others.  
(If you're in the mood for a Bible study, compare them. I  
wonder what you'll notice...)

The one difference that matters, to me, is this sentence:

*Teacher, I beg you to look at my son.*

It is no accident that Luke uses the word *look*.

- In Matthew, the father says, *have mercy on my son*.
- In Mark, he says, *I brought you my son*.

In Luke's telling of the transfiguration,  
Jesus on the mountaintop,  
seeing matters.

The disciples *see* Moses and Elijah;  
they *see* Jesus' glory.

Now, the father says, *look at my son*.

What happens next  
reveals a stark difference between Jesus and the disciples.  
The disciples are witnesses,  
yet unable to articulate a response  
either by their actions or their words.  
Meanwhile, Jesus *sees* the boy's trauma and responds.

Here is the challenge of discipleship,  
the tension between seeing and doing.  
As witnesses of Christ's glory,  
Peter, James, and John see and hear Jesus' authority  
as the Messiah.  
Yet, their ministry is stunted;  
they seem not quite ready to fully enact their ministry.  
    We have a glimpse here of Jesus' frustration with  
    them. And, I'm not sure that is what matters most  
    in this story.  
To me, what matters is that Jesus does more than *look*.  
Jesus does what the disciples cannot do:  
his love, mercy, and grace heal the boy.  
    I might wonder what the disciples at the base of  
    the mountain have done (or not done) for the boy.  
    That is not the point, though.  
The distinction  
is between the disciples' silence and Jesus.  
Peter fumbles around, half asleep, thinking about  
building tents.  
They tell no one what they have seen.  
Jesus listens, witnesses, and acts.  
  
How can we be more like Jesus?  
How can we listen to Him,  
witness to what we see, and act?

Do we experience the holy in our lives?  
Can we articulate God's presence in our lives and world  
as it is revealed to us?  
How do these moments change us; what happens next?

A few weeks ago our Deacon, Deb Cooper, reflected on  
the Gospel, ministry, and her particular experience.  
In particular, she shared a story of ministering with the  
Afghan refugees.

If you sat with Deb (or any member of our Afghan  
Refugee Resettlement team), you would hear MANY  
stories. They have experienced, and continue to  
experience, great joy and success. There have also been,  
and continue to be, many barriers.  
Facing the realities of refugees is joyful, strong, hard  
work.

Over the last few days, many of you have seen and heard  
the suffering of those in the Ukraine.  
Personally, I have felt overwhelmed.  
How can I respond; what can I do?

The tension of discipleship exists between our witness  
and our action.  
If we seek Christ, we will find Him.  
What happens next? How will we serve Christ in the  
people we meet and in our world?

Today's Gospel subtly reminds us  
that the grace, mercy, and love of Christ is all we need.  
Jesus' life is the divine authority in our lives.  
We are witnesses of his glory.  
His glory compels us to see,  
to look at the suffering brought before us,  
and to respond.  
And Christ's life teaches us the best response:  
acts of healing.  
Our call, our vocation, as disciples of Christ,  
is to not be silent.  
Instead, we must find ways to articulate God's healing,  
redemptive ministry to the world.  
Our ministry is the strong, hard work  
of loving God and neighbors with our whole lives.  
Our witness is Christ's mercy, grace, and love  
in our own lives.

I don't know what unexpected thing is going to happen  
today, tomorrow, next week, or next year. I do know that  
if I pay attention, even if for only a moment, I will  
witness God's glory. May my witness compel me to look  
with the eyes of Christ at the world around me. May I be  
compelled to respond to what I see with Christ's voice  
lingering in my ears. May I be driven to respond with  
Christ's grace, mercy, and love.



