

From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you!" But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (Matthew 16:21-23)

This weekend, part of the Gospel message in the story of the Transfiguration is God commanding the disciples, "This is my Son – Listen to Him!" God's request is likely in part because of encounters like the one quoted above. There were priorities and expectations in their life that prevented them from seeing and hearing all that was being placed before them. All of us are prone to see what we want to see, and hear what we want to hear sometimes. We often use this tool as a "defense mechanism" of sorts, to keep us safe from being hurt, to shelter us from being disturbed or distracted. But sometimes in our drive to keep out what isn't productive or useful, we can miss something amazing.

I came across a story this week about Utah rancher Ebenezer Bryce. Bryce was a successful cattleman in the early 20th century that raised his animals in an area now known as Bryce Canyon National Park. The canyon is famous for beautiful, colorful sandstone formations that evolved over the centuries, shaped by wind and rain. It is a place where people have long gathered to look at the majestic scenery and be moved and inspired. The location serves to most as a solid reminder of the awesome wonder and beauty of God's great creation.

Once, Bryce was asked what it was like to work daily in this setting of natural, unique beauty and wonder. Bryce's response was, "It is one heck of a place to lose a cow." I guess you would expect him to look at the canyon with different eyes because of the work and responsibilities he had there. But I have to agree with others who would suggest that maybe he was missing something wonderful.

What about you? What signs and wonders from God might you be surrounded with in life, yet not fully see or hear on account of familiarity or obligations or being occupied with other things? Maybe the amazing gifts and talents of someone close to you are being fully enjoyed and appreciated. Perhaps there are a lot of sunrises or sunsets that you have moved hurriedly past without a moment's reflection and thought. There could be some daily kindnesses that haven't been recognized as they should. We all find it challenging to listen and to see all that God is placing before us. But thanks be to God that the opportunities will continue to be present for us.

Prayer – Lord God, Slow our pace and open our understanding to make room for all that you offer. May we search for and expect to find good things and cause for thanks and praise, in things both important and mundane. Amen.