



The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

Sermon: Year A –Lent 2 – March 12, 2017

The Reverend Canon R. K. “Moki” Hino

*Hello darkness, my old friend,
I've come with talk with you again
Because a vision softly creeping,
left its seeds while I was sleeping
And the vision that was planted in my brain,
still remains
Within the sound of silence*

I used to hear this Simon and Garfunkel tune all the time on the radio when I was a kid growing up in Guam in the 1970s. And it was one of my favorites, even if I didn't really know what it meant. Somehow, I could hear beneath the surface of the words and along with the melody, they touched my heart and stirred my soul.

And today the song comes back to me as if it was a message that I need to hear again as an adult in 2017, as if it was a call to embrace the sound of silence, bringing to mind that line from Ecclesiastes that we often hear, the line that says: There's a time to speak and a time to keep silent.

St. John of the Cross, the famous Spanish mystic wrote this about silence: “The father spoke one word from all eternity and He spoke it in silence, and it is in silence that we hear it,” suggesting that silence is God's first language and that all other languages are poor translations.

Thomas Keating builds on this by saying that, “The discipline of centering prayer and the other traditional practices are ways of refining our receptive apparatus so that we can perceive the Word of God communicating itself with ever greater simplicity to our spirit and to our inmost being.”

The vision that was planted in my brain remains in the sound of silence—and that vision was the word that was with God and the Word that was God and the word that was in the beginning with God--that word was spoken in silence, and perhaps it is in the silence that we receive grace upon grace, and perhaps it is in the silence that we know the son who God has made known to us. And what a wonderful Lent it is because of that.

And I don't know about you, but what I tend to do with that gift is I tend to take the silence and that awareness, that awareness of the intense presence of God in my life—it's too much for me and so I fill the silence with noise.

What am I going to do? Where am I going to live? What are my next steps? How my going to pay for it? Do I have enough money in the bank? Do I have enough friends? Do people like me? Who's mad at me today? What have I done wrong this week? Noise. Noise. Noise. Noise.

Year A – 7 Epiphany– February 19, 2017, cont'd

But God, thank God, is persistent.

The last time I was in the Holy Land I went up to the Mount of Temptation, just outside the city of Jericho in the West Bank. I went up in a cable car and then walked along the hillside to a monastery carved into the side of the mountain. Then I walked through the cloisters of this monastery and into a chapel where I climbed a set of stairs and entered a small room that looked out upon the barren desert. All I could see through the grill over the window was sand and birds flying by—and I could hear absolutely nothing. And this was when I realized that I was standing on the spot where Jesus faced off Satan in the Temptation of Christ—the place where Satan offered Jesus the world and commanded him to turn the stones into bread. And what I remember is how completely quiet it was. And when I walked away and left the place, I was overwhelmed – overwhelmed by the presence of God that came to me in the silence.

And then I came back to life and filled it up with unnecessary words again. What am I going to do? Where am I going to live? What are my next steps? How my going to pay for it? Do I have enough money in the bank? Do I have enough friends? Do people like me? Who's mad at me today? What have I done wrong this week? Noise. Noise. Noise. Noise. Noise.

And then as if to reinforce the feeling I got in the Holy Land on the Mount of Temptation, a spiritual friend back home here in Hawai'i said to me, "Moki, if you don't know what to do, don't do anything. If you don't know what to say, don't say anything." "But when people look to me, I've gotta say something," I replied. Then he looked at me, smiled and said, "No. Don't just do something, stand there." It was an invitation to silence, a call to holiness, an opportunity for complete integration with the presence of God—true integrity (if you will).

So, it's March 12th and now we're two Sundays into Lent. The branches behind the altar are bare, the music is simple, the Alleluias are nil, and we're silent, silent enough to let God in, to let God into do what God needs to do in order for God to fully know us and for us to fully know God in return.

The Word became flesh and lived among us and in response perhaps we can say:

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