

THE MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE; WE NEED JESUS OF EVERY HOUR (LUKE 9:28-36)

Prayer: Shine Jesus shine. Shine at the mountaintop of our life's experiences. Shine in the valleys of our lives. Shine when the spirits are high; shine when our spirits are low. Let your glorious light shine upon us. Amen.

Today is the Transfiguration Sunday; It is the last Sunday before Lent, the season of fasting and repentance. The Scriptural narrative portrays Jesus being transformed on the mountaintop and his desire to go back join the other disciples in the Valley.

Jesus chose three senior disciples according to their seniority by calling. These accompanied him to the mountaintop. They were the inner circle of the group. The other nine disciples were left in the valley and we do not know the reason why. The name of the mountain is not mentioned either.

The metaphor of reaching the mountaintop gives anyone a feeling in the heart and mind that they are above everybody else. We know from reading the Bible that most important biblical events happened on mountaintops.

- Abraham was called to offer his son Isaac to God on **Mt. Moriah**.
- Moses saw the burning bush & received the 10 Commandments **on Mt Sinai**.
- Moses was told to take off his shoes for the place was holy on **Mt. Sinai**.
- When Moses returned **from the Mountain Sinai** his face was shining like a star.
- The Jewish Temple was built on **Mt. Zion**.
- Jesus gave his famous Sermon on the **unnamed Mountaintop**.
- The Bible records many times Jesus going up the **mountain to pray**.
- God offered his own Son **on Mt. Calvary**.

No wonder, ancient people were also fascinated with the serenity of mountains. They deemed mountaintops to be sacred places because of their closeness to heaven. On mountaintops people made altars to offer their prayers and sacrifices to God. From afar, mountaintops make a **mystical embrace with heaven**. Jesus also said that *A city built on a hill cannot be hid*. In many sanctuaries altars are elevated slightly higher than the rest of the worship place to imply that altars are the holier part of the sanctuary.

Jesus took the three most intimate disciples, the group's inner circle to accompany him to the mountaintop; these three had already accompanied him to several special prayers venues and healings. The three were blessed to see God Kingdom arrive in power and glory at that mountaintop and would grudgingly come back to the valley. Sometimes we have to **climb up a mountain to see things differently about life**. The unnamed mountaintop had **both physical and metaphorical implications**.

On the mountaintop, the disciples had a glorious foretaste of the heaven to come and their hearts were uplifted and they wanted to stay there forever. Here the three disciples saw

Christ transformed into his divine nature. God the Father exalted Jesus above Moses and Elijah and declared him his only beloved Son, who surpasses Moses and Elijah in authority and power.

To us believers Jesus is as the long awaited Messiah. Moses who represented the Law and Elijah who represented the prophets appeared talking with Jesus, the one who fulfills both the Law and prophecies. Jesus commanded them not to say anything to anyone about this messianic secret. They were able to tell the story about it after his death & resurrection as King of all.

The three dimensional path to salvation, is thru the Law, and the Prophets and Christ.

But in the end only one is needed for the salvation of humanity, Jesus Christ alone.

God declared from heaven: *This is my beloved Son. Listen to him. Obey him.*

This means that **Jesus is superior to the Law and prophecy.**

This morning I am using the expression **“Mountaintop” and “Valley”** with metaphorical implications for life experiences apart from the theological meanings above.

The mountaintop experience gave the three disciples a thrill that forced Peter, the most senior of disciples to want to build permanent shelters and residence to stay; **“It is good to be here,”** Peter said. Peter’s suggested that *maintaining the status quo* was far better than descending to join others in the valley life experience. Not only was it unrealistic but it was also selfish on the part of Peter. No shelters must be built on the mountaintop, while the other nine disciples were facing the valley without Jesus; **the law of gravity says, Whatever goes up must come down.**

We all can ascend up **the social ladder**, but descent is inevitable. The question is what kind of descent it will be. Even in an elevator the landing makes one feel a little dizzy or like being depleted. What type of landing will it be when we finally touch the ground in life experiences? Will it be a bump? Will we break our neck or lose our limbs? Will it be a smooth landing?

Jesus commanded the three intimate disciples to descend from the mountaintop back into the valley of life experiences that are less than glorious and more challenging. They must join the rest of the disciples in their valley experiences. They must **come down to where suffering, poverty, disease** is part of life. They must **resume their journey to Jerusalem, Golgotha and the cross. He who climbs up must face the inevitable pain of descent.** The question is what kind of descent it will be!

In real life, when we become successful we tend to care less about those who left behind or those who are struggling to make it? The mountaintop of success makes many forget where we started. It makes people change the way they speak, the way communicate and the gestures we make and the people they associate with. The glorious experience made Peter behave neglected that there were brothers left behind, even Andrew his younger

brother. How many of our brothers, sisters, or close relatives have we left behind?
In fact we may have or might step on them to reach our heights of success.

It hurts to relinquish or let go the top position at work, power and privilege, the honey moon, imaginary moments of day dreaming, etc. *For everything there is a season/time!*

Life is lived **not without** joys and sadness; successes and failures, encouragements and disappointments; ups and downs, highs and lows, mountains and valleys; learn this, **adversity is part of life.**

We mount up like eagles, we descend with aching muscles. Empires rise, empires fall; once there was the **Egyptian Empire**; the **Babylonian Empire**; the **Roman Empire**; the **British**; the **Soviet Empire**; What empire will be next?

However, *every valley* (or difficult situation) is **NOT A DESTINATION** but a **GATEWAY**. Learn this lesson, difficulties do **not last a lifetime**. Tough times **don't last forever**. Like **weather**, difficult times are temporary: It sometimes **shines; it rains; it snows; it dries up**; it becomes foggy, **it is never constant**. ***For everything there is a time.*** Eventually difficult times **pass**; **The Deeper the valley, the greater the work of God.**

Metaphorical mountaintops must crumble as we go into the valley of Lenten season. While the three disciples had a real glorious mountaintop experience/not an illusionary they descended from the mountain toward the valley, to Gethsemane & to Golgotha. They had a foretaste of heaven on earth with Jesus, joined by Moses the Giver of the Law, and Elijah, the prophet; ultimately, left with Jesus alone, they came down the hill.

We need Jesus of the Mountaintop and Jesus of the valley experiences with us. Robert Lowry captured our need to be with Jesus every moment of life in the following hymn:

*I need you every hour, most gracious Lord
No tender voice like yours, can peace afford.
I need you all I need you, every hour I need you!
O bless me now, my savior, I come to you!*

Let ask Jesus be with us on the mountaintop and in the valleys of life experiences. Wherever we are, whatever the time, whichever the circumstance, We need the Lord Jesus, in the darkest valleys and on mountaintops. God declare saying; *This is my beloved Son, trust and obey him.* Amen.