

A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE WITH GOD

2-11-2018

Today is the last Sunday before Lent begins – a time for reflection upon our relationship with God. Jesus brings Peter, James and John to the Mountain to show to them something that will transform their lives and their ministries. If there was ever a time that Peter, James and John doubted that Jesus was God's son, this is the day that would cast out all reservations. They witness Jesus, Elijah and Moses in all of their heavenly glory. In some translations of the Bible, this passage is translated as "his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them"(NAB), "his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them." (KJV) "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (NIV) The point is that human language could not describe the brilliance with which Jesus, Moses and Elijah shone. It was an otherworldly experience, an almost heavenly experience.

Even though Peter, James and John could not look directly at them, they wanted to stay there and relive the experience. It was a mountain top experience for them with Jesus. Who would want to return to the hum drum of earthly life after having such an experience?

Close your eyes and take a moment and place yourselves in the place of James or John as I retell the story of the Transfiguration.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain. His appearance changed from the inside out, right before their eyes. His clothes shimmered, glistening white, whiter than any bleach could make them. Elijah, along with Moses, came into view, in deep conversation with Jesus.

⁵⁻⁶ Peter interrupted, "Rabbi, this is a great moment! Let's build three memorials—one for you, one for Moses, one for Elijah." He blurted this out without thinking, stunned as they all were by what they were seeing.

⁷ Just then a light-radiant cloud enveloped them, and from deep in the cloud, a voice: "This is my Son, marked by my love. Listen to him."

⁸ The next minute the disciples were looking around, rubbing their eyes, seeing nothing but Jesus, only Jesus.

⁹⁻¹⁰ Coming down the mountain, Jesus swore them to secrecy. "Don't tell a soul what you saw. After the Son of Man rises from the dead, you're free to talk." They puzzled over that, wondering what on earth "rising from the dead" meant.

What thoughts or feelings did you experience? Were you in awe in a reverential way or fearful? Did you want to stay there or were you anxious to leave. Or, did you have another experience being there? It is quite possible that your experience was much like that of others in the church this morning, or perhaps all of you had very different perceptions.

When I want to go aside and experience God's presence, I seek nature. There was a spot just outside of town when I grew up, that I would frequent when I needed to be quiet and talk to God. It was a half hour walk from town through the woods on an old quarry road. The ridge above the quarry had rock ledges that I loved to sit on. I could see the river below and the mountains of the Adirondack High Peaks in the distance. I came to first know God there. I would bring a snack and a book or maybe a journal and settle in. I can fully appreciate Peter James and John wanting to stay on the mountain top with Jesus. There was a holiness in that place that I did not find in many other places. I am so grateful that we did not have cell phones back then! There were no distractions!

Where is the mountain top where you find the Holy in your life? It might not be a mountain top at all! it could be in your wood working shop where you fashion beautiful pieces of furniture or art work just as God created the earth. Perhaps it is in your garden, wedding the flowers and feeling the earth in your hands,

being reminded that the growth of flowers is much like the growth of our spiritual lives. Maybe it is in your studies as your mind is expanded to realize the vastness of the universe. Some of you might find yourselves lost in writing, finding expression of God's love for you through words. Perhaps it is a place by the water where you find peace and comfort, being reminded that you were chosen for Baptism as a follower of Jesus Christ.

It is not important where your mountain top place is, what is important is that you have a place where you feel close to God and spend time with God.

All of us have had experiences in life when we have felt nearly taken away to another state of being – emotionally high experiences like marriage, giving birth, getting a promotion at work or simply being with someone whom you love and respect are such peak experiences in life. I'd like you to recall one such moment in your life right now. Bring back the feelings of joy and exhilaration you felt. Do you remember who was with you? What

about music that might have been playing or things that you saw. What brings those memories back when you see, hear or smell something that reminds you of that period of time? Can you relate with Peter, James and John at not wanting that experience to end? Yet, that is not the reality of daily living is it? It is, mercifully, kept in your memory. You can remember the way you felt, what you saw, sounds you heard or aromas of the time recalled. We may not be able to relive the full event, but we can be grateful for the grace of our memories. Memories that have changed our lives.

I would venture a guess that Peter, James and John would use this peak experience in their lives to enact change in their prayer lives – their prayer would probably never be the same. The way they shared the Good News of Jesus would forever be marked by the vision they had seen.

It is not too early to consider what you might like to change to become a closer follower of Jesus during the upcoming season of

Lent. What habits drag you down that changing would make a big difference in your relationships with others and with God? What spiritual practice have you been curious about that you might like to begin during Lent? What guilt has been holding you back from truly opening your heart to God? Is it time to turn it over to Jesus and let him hold it for awhile?

Take advantage of the opportunities that Emmanuel offers during Lent. We will begin with the Ash Wednesday Service here in the sanctuary on Wednesday at 7pm. Join us! Your journey through Lent might be made clearer to you.

Mountain Top experiences with God are awaiting you, if you open your heart to truly experience God!

Let us pray