

“I’VE BEEN TO THE MOUNTAINTOP” (MARK 9:2-29)
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INTRODUCTION: Mountains are mentioned a lot in the ministry of Jesus. His most famous sermon was the Sermon on the Mount. Mark 3:13 says Jesus went up on a mountain to call his 12 disciples. Mark 6:46 says Jesus went alone on a mountain to pray. Luke 6:12 says that Jesus went on a mountain to pray and prayed there all night long. John 6:3 says that Jesus went up on a mountain before He fed the 5,000. Matthew 28:16 says the disciples gathered on a mountain before Jesus gave the Great Commission.

Mark 9:2 says, “After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up on a high mountain by themselves to be alone. He was transformed in front of them...”

The mountain comes to represent something: getting close to God. Just as Moses went on a mountain to get the Ten Commandments, but later came down, just as Jesus went to the mountain to be transfigured and then came down, so even those of us who live along the flat coastland still need to go up the mountain, spiritually speaking, and then come down.



I. Go up on the mountain to worship (v. 2-13)

As I said, the mountain represents getting closer to God. It represents what happens in true worship.

Notice three things that happened when they went up the mountain:

First, they saw the glory of Christ. Verse 2-3 say, “He was transformed in front of them, and His clothes became dazzling—extremely white as no laundered on earth could whiten them.” This transfiguration experience was to show Peter, James and John the divinity of Jesus, the Son of God. Hebrews 1:3 says, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of His nature.” Likewise, when we truly worship, we see the glory of Christ. If people leave saying, “Wow, the preacher is an amazing preacher,” or “Wow, that soloist is an amazing singer,” it may not be true worship. But if they leave saying, “Wow, that Jesus is an amazing Savior,” then it’s true worship.

Second, they experienced God’s presence. Seeing Jesus glorified as He was caused them to be awestruck. They were so dumbfounded to see Elijah and Moses appear that Peter stumbled over his words. But then they experienced the voice of God. Verse 7 says that a cloud overshadowed them and the voice of God the Father spoke just as at Jesus’ baptism: “This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!” It is hard for us to picture what an experience that was, but it was the epitome of what we call a “mountaintop experience.” Many of us have had a “mountaintop experience” in worship. Perhaps it was in a revival when you saw somebody accept Christ you had prayed for and witnessed to for years. Maybe it was in a musical program as your heart was lifted to the Lord in song. True worship should move our hearts like that. We should experience God’s presence.

Third, they got strength for the mission. Notice that verse 4 says Elijah and Moses appeared and talked to Jesus. Luke 9:28 adds an interesting detail. It tells us what they

talked about. It says they talked about Jesus death that would be accomplished in Jerusalem. Literally, the Greek word Luke uses is Jesus “exodus.” So there was Moses, who led the people of God on the exodus to freedom in the Promised Land, talking to Jesus about going to die on the cross in Jerusalem, so that He could lead the people of God on an exodus to the freedom of eternal life. The worship experience on the mount of transfiguration thus gave Christ strength to go to the cross. Likewise, true worship strengthens us to go on mission and serve Christ. That’s why we have to come down from the mountain.

II. Come down from the mountain to serve (v. 14-29)

In verse 9, they were coming down from the mountain, but they were still asking questions about what happened on the mountain. They wanted to stay on the mountain. Peter had even wanted to build shelters for them to stay up there. But we can’t stay on the mountain. We have to come down from the high experiences of worship into the real world. We have to come down from the mountain to serve. Notice three lessons they learned when they came down from the mountain.

First, they had to come down to meet people’s needs. In verse 14, when they got down from the mountain, they met a large crowd arguing with the other 9 disciples because a man had brought his demon-possessed son who was foaming at the mouth, writhing around on the ground, grinding his teeth. The disciples couldn’t do anything about it, but Jesus healed the boy.

If they had stayed on the mountain, Jesus would have never healed the boy. And if we stay in church all the time, and never get outside the four walls to a hurting world, many people will never experience the healing and forgiving power of Christ. That is why we need things like “Love Out Loud,” when our church will be going all over the community doing service projects to show the love of Jesus in a practical way.

Second, they learned that God can use imperfect people. In verse 22, the boy’s father said to Jesus, “If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Not a very strong statement of faith, was it?

Jesus replied, “If you can? Everything is possible to the one who believes.”

He cried out with one of the most interesting statements of faith you will ever read: “I do believe! Help my unbelief.”

Don’t think you must have perfect faith for God to work. This man did not. Yet Jesus healed the boy, not because the man’s faith was perfect, but because He had faith in the right object: in Jesus.

Don’t think you have to be a perfect person to serve God. The disciples blew it here, but God still used them. You may mess up trying to teach a Sunday School class or lead a prayer group or going out witnessing. Don’t let it stop you. God uses imperfect people.

Third, they learned that they cannot serve God without the power of prayer. In verse 28, the disciples asked why they couldn’t drive out the demon, and Jesus’ answer was that they needed prayer. The father had prayed. Remember? He cried out to Jesus to heal his boy. But the disciples failed to pray. Thus we see how everything comes full circle. We cannot stay on the mountain of worship; we must come down to serve. But when we come down to serve, we cannot serve unless we draw on the strength we get from the mountain. We must pray.

CONCLUSION: The Denver Broncos led the Cincinnati Browns 21-3 at halftime of the 1987 AFC Championship. But the pending blowout wouldn't stick. Bernie Kosar rallied the Browns, tossing a remarkable four second-half touchdowns. With the Broncos up seven with one minute remaining, Browns running back Earnest Byner took a hand-off and bolted for the end zone. But just before he hit goal line, Broncos defensive back Jeremiah Castille hit him, forcing the ball loose and crushing Cleveland's chances at a Super Bowl. You know it was a bad fumble when the play is simply known as 'The Fumble.'

Too often Christians are like that running back who was heading toward the end zone, celebrating and thinking he had won it all, but failing to make sure he went to the goal line. They have great times of worship on the mountain, but they don't come down from the mountain to serve. Or they come down to serve, but forget to depend on the power of prayer and worship to finish their service.

Let's not forget to do both.

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