

The View Is Always Worth It

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Mark 9:2-8

I've been up and down a lot of mountains in my life, the Appalachians, The Rockies, the Sierra Nevada, Cascades, Himalayan, Nilgiris, and others. This last summer we were driving up and down the mountains in Olympic National Park. It is a lot of work getting up to the top. Even if you are driving it's still a lot of work, but it is always worth it. The views are spectacular.

Jesus goes up the mountain for a different type of view, but one that is far more spectacular and encouraging. He knows how much he needs this view. He is about to head towards Jerusalem to suffer and die. He needs the encouragement and strength he is going to find up there.

He also knows how much his disciples need this view. Peter especially.

Our text says, "six days after." That is six days after Peter confessed that Jesus was the Christ, but also six days after Jesus rebuked Peter.

Jesus told Peter "Get behind me Satan." After such a rebuke Peter needs to be reassured of Jesus glory and forgiveness.

Jesus knows that we need this view, not just today but every day.

It is sometimes hard to find time in the day to go up the mountain, to speak with Christ, to be reminded that he came to die for you, but the view is always worth the time and effort. It is always something that we need.

2-4 Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus.

Jesus goes up the mountain to meet his Father, but he doesn't go up by himself he takes with him Peter, James and John.

Our text says that he “led them up.” In Greek the word there is *anapheroo*. It is a word that is only used in a religious context in the bible. It is used when something is being brought up to God. In Hebrews Jesus offers himself up to God as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. At Jesus ascension he goes up to Heaven. Here also he leads them up to God. He is not just leading them up he is drawing them to the Father.

In the book of James, the same word is used to describe Abraham leading Isaac up the mountain to be sacrificed to God.

James 2:21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar?

What was it that Abraham received when he brought Isaac up to God?

He received a picture of the Christ who was to come and was to die for his sins. He received from God the blessings “now I know that you fear God.” In the same way the disciples are brought up the mountain to receive a view of the Christ and a blessing from God.

Peter uses the same word in his first epistle, encouraging up to daily come up to God.

1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

This is what Peter meant when he says “offer up spiritual sacrifices” that we daily go up the mountain to meet God. In verse four he says “Coming to Him.” Peter doesn’t suggest that we should sell all that we have and go live in a monastery, but that we should daily go up to God in order to receive from him this view.

Jesus brought Peter, James, and John up to God to receive from God his blessing. Abraham brought Isaac up to God. Peter says that we ought to regularly bring ourselves up to God, that we might receive such a blessing as was given to Abraham, Isaac, Peter, James and John.

5-6 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah ”-- because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.

Lost and afraid Peter grasps about for something to say, something to do, but without a clear vision he makes the wrong decision.

In the dark depths of deep waters, divers can sometimes get confused. Afraid and without a clear view of the surface they can panic and lose their sense of direction. They might head down deeper into the depths rather than up into the light. It is said that the same thing can happen to people buried in snow.

It's hard to imagine how anyone can get so confused that they don't know up from down, but fear and panic can easily confuse people.

In fear Peter was turned around and went the wrong way. It is a lot easier to lose our sense of direction in this life than we realize. In a life full of sin and troubles and daily burdens it is easy to lose our sense of direction and start heading away from Christ.

This is why we need this view on top of the Mount of Transfiguration. This is why we need to daily start our day going up the mountain. With a clear view of who Christ is, with a clear view of the glory that will be ours after this life, with a clear view of our goal we can continue without losing our way.

Hebrews 12:1-2 let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

That is why we have the cross up here at the front of the church. It is a constant reminder of where we are headed and how we are getting there.

7 - 8 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

What do we find at the top? We find Jesus.

Moses went up into the cloud on Mount Sinai and brought down the commandments of the Lord. He told the people that God would raise up a prophet "like me from your brethren, him you shall listen to." Here now is this one whom they are to listen to. "Hear him."

When God spoke out of the cloud on Mount Sinai, the Israelites said:

Exodus 20:19 You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

God agree with them that what they asked was a good thing. Therefore, he sent Jesus whom we are to listen to. "Hear him." Thus, it is that we find at the top of the mountain, not clouds and thunder and a voice which we can not bear. Rather we find Jesus.

The author of Hebrews reminds us that we come not to Mount Sinai but to Jesus.

Hebrews 12:18 ¹⁸ For you have not come to the mountain that¹ may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness² and tempest,

Hebrews 12:22 ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels,

Hebrews 12:24 ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.

Of all the mountains I've climbed, I've never really climbed anything dangerous. I've never used an ice axe or scaled a cliff face. I've seen Mount Everest but only from a great distance. Those who climb such high mountains sometimes find their way blocked by storms. This was true of the Israelites who could not go up Mount Sinai because of the clouds and the sound of thunder and the voice of the Lord. But the mountain before us is not such a mountain. We are not called to climb Mount Everest. The mount of transfiguration is really only a hill in comparison.

We have not come to the Law and to a burden that is hard to carry. Instead, we find Jesus. Come to him and hear him. For the message that he speaks is the gospel of peace, the forgiveness of your sins and a word of eternal life.

You have come up the mountain to see Jesus who gives to you the grace of God and the forgiveness of sins. Since we have such a view, and such a savoir let us go up regular to receive from him the blessings that he promises. Not just today but every day. The view is always worth it. Amen