

A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE MAY 2, 2021

Have you ever had a "mountaintop experience"?

ILL: Base Camp 1 Mount Rainier. Thumb Butte, Groom Creek, Granite Mt. Mogollon Rim

Conversely, have you ever had a "Down in the Valley" I'm not talking about Phoenix!

We tend to talk About "Down" as bad. "I'm feeling down", "That Drags me down" "I'm down in the dumps". The opposite is, "I'm UP"

ILL: Flying into LA - SMOG! I had to apologize to my lungs! What a valley experience!

We use the same kind of words to describe our relationship with God! We talk of a Mountaintop experience with God.

Habakkuk 3:19 - "The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on the high hills."

King David could say, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil" Ps. 23:4

Psalms 120-134 are called the 'song of ascents' - like going up the stairs to God. It begins with "I will call upon the Lord in my distress (valley)" and ends with "I lift up my hands in the sanctuary and Praise the Lord"

Where are you today? Are you down in the valley? Up on the mountaintop? I believe for every valley God is calling us to His Mountaintop to be with Him.

IT'S WORTH THE CLIMB! Many people are content to stay in the smoggy valley, content with a half hearted relationship with the Living God, paying lip service to the abundant life in Christ but never moving forward in faith.

What Mountain is God calling you to today?

Ps. 121:1 - "I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from, my help comes from YOU, the maker of heaven and earth!"

Four Valleys and Four Mountains...

1. From the valley of Disbelief to the mountain of Trust (Faith)

God called Abraham out of the valley of disbelief. God had made promises to Abraham - that his descendants would be a great nation. But it was taking a LONG TIME and where was the promise fulfilled?

When it comes trust, God wants you ALL IN.

In Gen. 22 God came to Abraham and called him by name. "Take you son, whom you love, and go the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on the mountain."

In other word, Abraham, I'm calling you from your valley of disbelief to my mountain of total trust!

So often we withhold things from God! "OK, God, I'll SAY I believe you are there and maybe I'll go to church, but total trust in You? Like letting YOU decide where my life goes

and what I'm to do and who I'm to marry. Like trusting you with my finances. Like obeying you to leave my comfort zone and trust you will be there to catch me."

Abe could have said, "NO WAY GOD! This is my one and only son. You just go ahead and do your own sacrifice thing." Or, "Hey God, here is a pretty good sheep. You can have that!"

But Abraham counted the mountain of trust worth the climb! He trusted that God is a God who keeps His promises and that He would Himself provide the sacrificial lamb.

God is always there for us on the Mountain of Trust! It was very near this very place that many many years later God would offer up His own Son, His one and ONLY Son as a sacrifice for us.

Share the Gospel. This is your very first mountain of trust! Trust in Jesus! Have you agreed that you are a sinner that needs forgiveness and that is only found in the One who climbed the mountain to Calvary for you?

Maybe you are discouraged today, "Downcast". The Lord your God is saying, "Let go, and trust me"

Jesus calls His followers to let go of our lives, drop our nets, and follow Him, denying our own plans and letting Him lead.

It's one thing to SAY you trust God. Another altogether to LIVE your trust in God!

God is Almighty! Gen. 17:1 - When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am Almighty God (El Shaddai); walk before Me and be blameless.

What about you? Are you stuck in a valley of disbelief?

John 14 - Thomas - "Lord, we don't know where you are going!" "Lord, don't leave us here in the valley!" 6. "I am the way, the truth and the life"

2. From the Valley of Defeat to the Mountain of Victory

Some of you here today know God, but you are simply defeated. The world the flesh and the devil have beaten you 'down'. You are in the valley of defeat. Let me share with you another Mountain Climber!

Caleb - Numbers 13:25-14:10 - In number 13 the Recon group finished spying out the land and said, 'the land is amazing, milk and honey, huge fruit! BUT, the people are BIG, and the cities are fortified.

Caleb said - "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it!"

The people said, "No, you don't get it Caleb, we are like grasshoppers to them!"

"Then the entire nation lifted up their voices and cried!... If only we had died in Egypt or in the wilderness"

The people of God were in the valley of defeat! Here is the issue. When your problems get BIG in your eyes, God gets SMALL in your eyes!

And so we wallow in the valley of defeat! We become like **EEYORE** - "Woe is me, we're all gonna die!"

The valley of defeat can lead to rebellion. Where is God? How could He leave me here? Surely God has abandoned me.

The requirement for climbing out of the valley of defeat is the SAME as that for the valley of disbelief. Follow God Fully! Trust your MIGHTY GOD (El Shaddai!) to bring victory!

Num. 14:24 - "But my servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and **has followed me fully**, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it."

600,000 died in that valley of defeat over 40 years. TWO found the mountain of victory!

FASTFORWARD 45 years to Joshua 14 - Caleb went up another mountain. He came to Joshua and reminded him God has promised to give him the land with the Giants in it! "Here I am, 85 years old and strong as ever for war! **Give me this mountain!!**"

Give me this mountain! You may have Giants in the land of your life keeping you from victory. In your own strength you are helpless. BUT WITH GOD you CAN climb out of your valley of defeat and claim the victory!

Caleb key phrase - Joshua 14:12 - "It may be that the Lord being with me I shall be able to drive them out"

Do you believe that God can bring you from the valley of defeat to the mountain of victory?

What will you trust God to do?

3. From the Valley of Wandering to the Mountain of God's Direction

After coming out of Egypt the people did what so many do. They wandered. They wandered and wandered! People today cry out from this valley of wandering!

- Where am I going? How do I live my life? What is my purpose? What am I here for? What is real? What is RIGHT and what is WRONG??

So people do all kinds of strange things with their lives. They destroy the bodies God gave them. They fall into addictions in their wandering. They look for love in wrong places. They wander from job to job wondering if God has given them any talent or gifts to use.

The valley of wandering is a horrible place to be!

Then something wonderful and awful happened in Exodus 3. Moses went up on the mountain! He received direction directly from God Himself. Ten commandments written by the very Finger of God (Christophany?)

The way out of the valley of wandering is to lay hold of the commandments of God and obey them.

John 14:21 - He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

If your life is wandering ask God what He wants you to do and do that!

Start Here! Mt. 22:37-39 - "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Set your heart to Love God fully and love others. That will get you moving in the right direction!

ILL: How God led me from being a Psychologist to a grade school teacher to a pastor. I'm so glad God met me in my wandering!

God says to you, "I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord" - If God knows the plans maybe you should get close to Him!

One more thought on coming out of this valley - "He who loses his life for my sake will find it!"

Review: From the valley of **Disbelief** to the Mountain of **Trust**

- From the Valley of **Defeat** to the Mountain of **Victory**
- From the Valley of **Wandering** to the Mountain of **God's Direction**

And finally...

4. From the Valley of Loneliness to the Mountain of God's Presence

This is a terrible valley and so many are in it: The Valley of Loneliness. In a world of smart phones and texting and email and social media we are more lonely than ever.

ILL: The UK has just created a "minister for Loneliness and Loneliness Strategy" ... but no one will talk to him!

Loneliness is linked to physical health issues like cardiac disease and immune deficiency and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. Millions of people say they are often or always lonely and isolation resulting from COVID-19 has only made things worse.

In a recent study loneliness was closely associated with suicide.

And many feel lonely when it comes to a friendship with God. People ask "Who is God?" or "Where is God when I need Him", or "God if You are there do you care for me?"

How terrible to feel estranged from the One who made you and loves you more than any other!

In Ex. 3 we hear that Moses was with his flock in the back of the desert - a lonely place!

Here was Moses - a Prince of Egypt! Caught in murder! Exiled! Torn away from his people.

Then, Moses saw an amazing site that led him up a mountain out of a valley of loneliness!

Suddenly, God showed up! A "Messenger" appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush!

Moses made a great decision - to draw near! So God (the messenger) spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

And God called him by name - twice - Moses, Moses!

God said, "The place where you are is Holy, and I AM your God!" "I have seen the oppression of your people and I am sending you!"

God is speaking to the loneliness in the heart of Moses - "I am here, I see you, I am YOUR GOD, I KNOW YOU BY NAME, I HAVE A PURPOSE FOR YOU!!"

You never need to feel lonely! If you will quiet your soul before God, if you will turn aside from your desert and draw near to Him, He will be found by you and you will have fellowship with Him!

ILL: I have had many '**burning bush**' times with my God! He has met me at the ocean, on mountains, on a cabin floor, on a high school track at night, on my knees in my parent's back yard and I have heard His message - "John, John, I know you, I love you, I have a purpose for you!"

- From the Valley of Disbelief to the Mountain of Trust
- From the Valley of Defeat to the Mountain of Victory
- From the Valley of Wandering to the Mountain of Direction
- From the Valley of Loneliness to the Mountain of God's Presence

Prayer