

The Mountain Before the Valley (Mark 9:2-9)

In Northern California stands a beautiful mountain called Mount Whitney. This mountain stands at a majestic 14,500 feet and it is one of the highest spots in the United States. Eighty miles southeast is another famous place called "Death Valley." In contrast to Mt Whitney, Death Valley is the lowest spot in the U.S, reaching 280 feet below sea level. It is known as the hottest place in the country with temperatures reaching 134 degrees.

I am using this illustration to show how life is also filled with mountain peaks and valleys. Towards the end of the gospel of Mark the disciples had no idea that they were about to enter a valley with Jesus.

Until that time, things were going well. They watched Jesus perform miracles like raising the dead, healing the sick, walking on water, calming a storm and feeding over 5,000 people. He had been surrounded by massive crowds who wanted to hear his teachings. The disciples were experiencing one highpoint after another, but right around the corner loomed the valley of the shadow of death.

The crowds who once shouted out to Jesus, "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" in Mark 11, will soon be shouting, "Crucify Him" in Mark 15.

I. The mountain:

Let us begin by looking at the mountain peak found in Mark chapter 9.

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone and He was transfigured before them."

The word "transfigure" means that His appearance changed. Luke tells us that his face changed, and Matthew says, "his face shined like the sun." "His clothes became dazzling white." At that moment, Jesus revealed his deity.

Verse 4 says, "And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus."

What were they talking about? Luke said "they spoke about his departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem." It seems to me they were talking about His death, resurrection, and ascension. Elijah and Moses were there. Two of the greatest prophets in the O.T. Peter wanted this moment to last forever and he said, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters - one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Instead, "a bright cloud appeared and overshadowed them. A voice came from the cloud saying: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'" Then, just as quickly as it began, the moment was over: "Suddenly, when they looked around, and they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus." This was the mountain peak before the Valley of death.

II. Valley:

Spending time in God's word is our mountain peak. Every time we get together to worship and hear the Word of God being spoken; we have a mountain peak. It is with God's church that we are reminded that Christ has taken our sins. And it is here that we are reminded that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.

Here in Mark chapter 9 we catch a glimpse of the Lord's glory, even if it's just for a moment. Sunday morning worship and hearing God's word being preached are the mountain peaks that will prepare us for the valleys.

If you find yourself down in the valley of worry go to the mountain peak passage found in 1 Pet 5:7, where Peter says, "cast all your cares upon Jesus, for He cares for you."

When you find yourself down in the valley of disappointment, turn over to the mountain peak passage found in Rom 8:28 where Paul says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."

When you find yourself down in the valley of temptation, turn to the mountain peak passage in 1 Cor 10:13 where it says, "God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

When you find yourself down in the valley of the shadow of death, turn to the mountain peak passage found in Psalm 23 where David says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me."

When you are down in the valley, climb to the mountain peak with Jesus, where God says, "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him."

Peter wanted to stay at the mountain, He said, "Master, it is good for us to be here, let us put up 3 shelters. Peter didn't want this glorious event to end. However, life is not always lived on the mountain peak. When Jesus, Peter, James and John came down from the mountain they found people who were hurting, and they found people who were lost. When Jesus came down from the mountain, He still had a cross to bear. Sometimes we need the valleys to get where Jesus wants us to be. The valley of trials is the place where our faith is tested (1 Pet 1:6).

Close:

In this life we need to go through some Valleys in order to reach the Mountain peak and we need to go to the Mountain peak of God's word in order to get through the Valleys.