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Pataskala Church of the Nazarene
July 15, 2007

Mountaintop Glory for Valley Living

Mark 9:1-10

Introduction:

This morning I want to say how good it is to be back home. You don't know how much I've missed all of you.

I would be terribly amiss if I did not personally recognize our Church board and the vital decision to allow me to spend some time away in spiritual, physical and emotional renewal time.

Now that I'm back rested and recovered from my sabbatical we have a lot of work to do together to build His Kingdom work right here at PCN.

If and when you have another Senior Pastor, I hope and trust you will do the same for him when it comes time for this kind of experience.

God has personally spoken to me in many ways and in many situations during the last 9 weeks.

I have so much I could share with you and in the next several weeks, I will include some of my experiences in my sermons with some pictures.

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Some of you would know that I left nine weeks ago to drive to Colorado Springs where I stayed for a week with my very close friend, Bob and Libby Huffaker. They treated me like a king.

On another trip I was with Cecil and Bev Jones in Jackman, Maine just 16 miles from the Canadian/Quebec border. I was in the wilderness!

Sometime in another sermon I want to tell you about Allen and Ann DuPlessis who gave my brother and I a place to stay above their restaurant, called the Four Seasons.

I was in the mountains both times. I will share that with you in parts of this sermon.

It seems fitting to me to preach to you from this passage this morning that deals with a mountaintop experience.

When I was with Bob, we went to the top of Pike's Peak. Is there anyone here this morning who has been to the top of Pike's Peak?

To let you know - Pike's Peak is 14,100 feet above sea level. Now folks, you wouldn't appreciate what I just said unless you've been there.

I believe Pike's Peak is one of the highest mountains in our nation. Is there anyone here who knows what altitude sickness is?
(Show a picture of Pike's Peak)

What an experience!

We've all heard of wanting to be on the mountain top. Wouldn't it be nice if all of us were always on top of the mountain, so to speak?

If we were all in a perpetual good mood with circumstances working out right,
With people treating us wonderfully; getting the affirmation we all need,
The faithful love we all desire,
The trust we want from others, and
The mutual respect we all are due...

If that were indeed the case, life would truly be wonderful! It would be an Eden experience!

But, we all know that is not where we always live.

A lot of times we live our lives in the valley experience where everyday life really happens.

And sometimes those everyday life experiences come at us like raging storms.

Robert Louis Stevenson gave us this little story:

A ship was in a serious storm and in grave distress. The passengers were alarmed.

One of them finally, against orders, went up to the deck and made his way to the pilot.

The seaman was at his post of duty at the wheel, but, seeing the man was greatly frightened. he gave him a reassuring smile.

Returning to the other passengers. the man said. "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well."

"I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well." can be the phrase on which the story of the transfiguration is based.

Zig Ziglar tells the story of eating at a neighbor's house when he was a young boy.

The neighbor had a cook who had fixed some biscuits.

But the biscuits came out as thin as his watch.

He said to her, "What happened to your biscuits?"

She replied, "Well, I put them in the oven and they squatted to rise, but the heat was high and they got cooked in the squat."

Now - Sometimes that's where we are - cooked in the squat.

Sometimes life is like that.

Sometimes the heat is on, and we feel it.

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How many of you this morning can relate to that?

Let me tell you what's happened: **You've been cooked in the squat!**

You know, we all know of one person who always appears to be on the mountaintop.

These are the people who are thrilled with life.

I have a brother-in-law by the name of Al. He is one of those guys.

I met him at Easton just three weeks ago.

I asked him how he was doing and he said, "Super!" **He was retiring in two days.**

When I asked him how things were going, he replied with a big smile, "SUPER!"

When I would share with him my plans, he would say, "SUPER!"

Frankly, I really liked being around Al.

His positive attitude picks me up.

He makes me believe that life can be super.

But all of us know that everything is not always super in life even after you and I become a

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Christian believer. Some people believe that, but it's not true! Would you agree with me?

Life is not always lived on the mountaintop. All of us know that!

Life is lived primarily in the valley. And folks, listen to me, **that's not all bad or negative.**

Does the Bible hold out hope for those of us who are valley-dwellers?

As a valley-dweller, I can honestly answer, I found the answer to this in the past few weeks, "Yes, absolutely THERE IS HOPE and PEACE!"

In fact, the Bible is FULL OF PROMISES that teaches us how to use those mountaintop experiences to equip us for valley living.

The key – now listen - is to get some of the mountain into the valley. Let me explain:

You see - that should be important to us! Because, if we don't do this, we will allow life and its challenges to get the best of us.

What is experienced by us as we face the valley experiences can be used as we scale the heights and deal with the depths of our needs.

Did you get that? Let me say it again

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Because we live in the valley, the mountaintop experiences are vital.

Folks, hear me, I have learned that we need regular trips to the mountaintop to be encouraged and equipped for valley living.

The largest church in this world in South Korea, pastored by Yongi Cho have what they call "Prayer Mountain."

Thousands upon thousands of Christians go to Prayer Mountain during their vacation times to pray for their church, for lost souls and their nation to come to Jesus Christ.

No wonder they have over 850,000 members!

Maybe we need to define what I mean by mountaintop:

You see that was what my Sabbatical was all about!

But I've also decided that I'm not so sure I always want to be on the mountaintop. I'll explain that later.

In our text today, we see Jesus taking His inner circle of disciples, Peter, James and John to the mountain in order to prepare them for valley ministry.

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It is the account of the **Transfiguration of Christ**, and it reveals to us **Four important lessons** which can help us translate our mountaintop experiences into daily life.

In the Scriptural account we have before us, Jesus is taking three disciples up onto a high mountain for a time of solitude and prayer.

Luke's Gospel tells us they were "to pray."

We believe this was Mount Herman because of its height and its close proximity to Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus was ministering at that time. **Mt. Herman's peaks rise some 11,000 feet above the Jordan valley.**

I can relate to the height of Mt. Herman because Pike's Peak was over 14,100 feet above sea level and when I was on top there was still over six foot of snow on the Peak.

A Cog Railcar took us to the top, which took an hour and a half. (Show picture)

It was truly a wondrous sight and a great experience.

The day before Bob and I went to the top a snow storm blew in. Now this is in May.

I was told the wind blew, the snow came and the lightening flashed in the sky.

From Jerusalem to Tyre, its snow-clad slopes can be seen on a clear day any time of the year.

Because of the length of such a climb Jesus and His three disciples would have had to have started before daylight to get to the top, we believe it was early evening as they began their prayer meeting.

This place was not unusual for Jesus to go to pray. He was always stealing away to a solitary place to pray.

Would you agree with me that probably one of the most vital things a believer could do is to do exactly what Jesus did, **just steal away and pray.**

I have learned in my time away that your pastor needs to steal away to pray because of the immense challenges and stress in pastoring a church like ours.

Let me just be transparent with you here for a moment:

One of the difficulties I found before I left was that I lost my focus and was trying to carry too much of the church on my own instead of going to God and allowing Him to carry His own church.

You see – now understand with me – this is not my church – nor is this your church in terms of

ownership – **It is His Church and we are a part of it!**

There were too many things that I worried about instead of giving those worries to God and allowing Him to work them out.

Church family, I want to say this has to change.

I have heard and am so thankful that the Board has stepped forward in a great way to share the different areas of ministry in our church.

And let me say, some of you won't understand what I'm saying, but we will do our best to explain it in the future months - as your pastor and the board in its leadership needs you to step forward in this church to help in the spiritual health and growth of His church... We have so much to do before Jesus comes again!

For now, just picture it like everyone who is a part of this church, doing a ministry for His Church.

One thing I felt God speak to me clearly about during my last several weeks was to give myself more to intercessory prayer for this church, our nation and our world and His Kingdom building.

By this time, Jesus had brought His inner circle of three disciples with Him to a special place of prayer.

Have you ever wondered why Jesus took these three disciples up to such a lofty height to pray?

1) Here's the answer: They just needed a quiet place away from the crowds of people.

Folks, when you decide to get alone with God to pray there will be all kinds of interruptions and people who won't understand why you are alone.

2) And the second reason was because they needed to be encouraged.

In preparing this sermon, I began to think about what preempted this decision by Jesus to go to the top of a mountain to pray and here's what I found.

Just six days earlier, the Lord had revealed to them the inevitability of His eventual suffering and death on a cross.

Now it's important for you and I to understand what Jesus and His disciples had been through in the last several days.

You see – if we don't grasp what they had been through – we won't be able to relate this to what we're going through when we are in the valley or facing life's challenges.

What is your life challenge this morning?

What has you discouraged and down emotionally? How is the enemy attacking your life?

For some of you, only you know what you're going through or what you've been through.

Some crisis or negative stress at work
 Some neighbor has you all stressed out
 Mom – your children are driving you crazy
 Maybe someone in church has been unfair and gossiped about you in a negative way and you know it's untrue – but you can't tell others about it. Oh, people, if we could only learn to keep a bridle on our tongues and not talk negative about others. Possibly your spouse is not being faithful to you.

But listen - you need to remember Jesus and His disciples what they had to grapple with – in just six days Jesus was going to have to face the cross and die.

Think of it! The reality of the Cross and the disciples were **stunned** by the thought of the cross **because they knew** what it was like to see someone die on the cross, and this thought put them into despair and discouragement.

Application: Christian Believer -

What cross are you carrying this morning?
 How are you reacting to that cross?
 Are you facing it with spiritual strength, are you trusting God to help you?

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Are you facing it in a positive way?
Or are you struggling to carry the cross to
the point of wanting to run/quit?

You know what its like to feel overwhelmed!

**Friend, I want you to know the enemy wants to
destroy you?**

There seems to be such little knowledge or accept-
ance of the fact that the enemy so strategically
works against believers in the church today!

**Do you see where he would love nothing more
than to get you**

To give up on your faith, or

**To convince you to be upset with
someone in the church**

Give up on your church and leave, or

**To quit doing your ministry Jesus has
called you to do?**

That's his strategy to destroy and defeat you.

**That's where these three disciples were in their
emotions:**

Now, Jesus had brought them along in order to
encourage them and prepare them for the days
ahead. These were not going to be easy days.

Church family, In these Last Days before Jesus
comes to get His church, this is not going to be
easy days for believers in His church.

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And here they were, on top of the mountain with
Jesus.

What they were about to experience would be the
most incredible sight they had ever seen.

They wouldn't understand it.

They would be totally blown away by it.

I recall one early morning around 4:30 when I was
having my devotions at Bob Huffaker's home that I
cried a simple prayer asking God to help me.

This was my first week of my Sabbatical and I
opened the devotion, **Streams in the Dessert**,
and read these words: ***"Don't be afraid, Daniel"***

I have to be honest and say, I was stunned in a
moment of time, "Oh, God, you're speaking to me -
I sat there amazed that I felt God had just spoken
to me personally. I was simply blown away by this
experience.

Prior to that, I had prayed and it seemed like
heaven was brass – heaven was shut to me.

**It was on May 16th in the early morning when
God spoke to me and said, *"Fear not Daniel:
for from the first day that you set your heart to
understand and to chasten yourself before
your God, your words were heard, and I am
come for your words. But the prince of the***

kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty one days.”

Listen to me, where you are this morning, we have **a wonderful teaching here on prayer**, and we are shown **the direct hindrance from Satan**.

That great man of God, Daniel had fasted and prayed 21 days, and had a very difficult time in getting an answer to his prayer.

It wasn't because Daniel was not a good man, not because his prayer was not right; but it was because of a special attack of Satan on his life.

My friend, I know this to be real!
This morning you might be facing a special attack of Satan on your life.

Maybe you'll recall just before I left I was in a **series of sermons on Spiritual Warfare**.

According to the Word of God every serious believer can face these kinds of attacks by Satan.

He is no respecter of persons. He wants you destroyed.

Let me interject here some truth. Church family we have people who once attended this fellowship who are not with us and not attending church anywhere. The Devil has done his work and defeated these people and we believers who care

about them need to do everything we can to get them back into church.

There was a conflict in the heavens; and Daniel seemed to go through an agony on earth the same as that which was going on in the heavens.

Remember - Paul said in Ephesians 6:12 “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers ... against wicked spirits in high places.”

Now hear this: Satan attacked Daniel for 21 days and Daniel nearly was defeated, and Satan would have been glad to kill him; but – God sent His ministering angel to bring the answer to Daniel.

Believer friend, listen to me, if you will hold fast, God will never allow anything to come on you that you can't bear if you will only trust in Him.

When you are living in the valley of life and its trials and you feel like fleeing or quitting, just remember that God is only a prayer away.

Don't be afraid! Trust in God and God will come in like a flood and will give the answer to you.

You see – the key is in the word “**TRUST**.”
Dare to Trust God! Dare to follow God!

Then you and I will discover that the satanic force that blocked you in your moment of trial and

threatened your spiritual life becomes the very things that will build you stronger in your relationship with God. Child of God, this is rich truth for us!!!

W. L. Watkinson said, **“Hell does its worst with the saints. The rarest souls have been tested with high pressures and temperatures, but heaven will not desert them.”**

If we believe this, then we have to become more aggressive in encouraging others instead of allowing them to think no one cares.

What was about to happen would be the most exciting thing these disciples had experienced thus far. For they were about to see...

1. A Vision of the Glorious Christ

“And six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them.” (v. 2)

They were alone on top of the mountain.

Evening had fallen, and they were in prayer. In my third week, I was in Jackman, Maine in a Prayer Summit, 16 miles south of the Quebec/Canada line. We spent three days in prayer.

Luke tells us that as this prayer meeting continued, His disciples were **“very sleepy”** and that they eventually dozed off.

This happens to some of you when the preacher preaches too long! Amen??

All of us are human – and I don’t know about you, but if I don’t move when I am praying, I guarantee you I will get sleepy and fall asleep.

Folks, I admire anyone who is able to get on your knees in the early morning or before you go to bed and pray and not fall asleep. Some of you do this – and you know what I mean.

But then something amazing happened.

Jesus was transfigured in their midst.

What was happening was too great a sight to miss.

“And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them.” (vv. 2c-3)

There on top of that mountain, I want you to see it in your mind, with the only backdrop being a blanket of dark night, lit only by the summer stars, **the inner glory of Jesus Christ was revealed.**

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People, we don't know what that looks like, but that is what the transfiguration did.

It revealed the inner glory of Jesus' divinity.

His clothing began to glow brightly white.

The word can be translated "**dazzling**" or "**glittering.**"

Matthew says that His face shone like the sun.

The glory which was always in the depths of His being rose to the surface for that one time in His earthly life, or, put another way, He slipped back into eternity to His pre-human glory.

Indeed, the glory of the Lord was revealed in Jesus, a glory that was always there.

The glory of His deity began to shine through. I'm sure the disciples were absolutely spellbound.

And it says, "And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were conversing with Jesus." (v. 4)

Along with this glow came two people out of the past, Elijah and Moses.

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If Jesus' transfiguration were not enough to blow them away, **I'm sure the appearance of Moses and Elijah was.**

Now you have to understand these were two of the greatest men in all of Israel's history.

What a sight - Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, talking together.

Luke tells us they were "**speaking of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.**"

"And Peter said to Jesus, 'Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah, for he did not know what to answer; for they became terrified.'" (vv. 5-6)

The disciples were terrified/overwhelmed.

What they were witnessing was **an other-worldly, terrifying experience.**

They stared in stunned silence.

What was there to say?

They had nothing to say, but Peter said it

He volunteered to build three tabernacles, one for each of them.

Like many modern Christians today with an edifice complex, he wanted to do something religious.

He was uncomfortable with the silence.

All too often, we are like Peter, uncomfortable being silent in the presence of God.

Every fiber of our being cries out, "Don't just sit there, say something/do something!"
And that is precisely what Peter did.

Let us stay here and relish in this moment.

Let's at least act like we know what's going on.

And so what we see next is...

2. An Appearing of the Sovereign Creator

"Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is My beloved Son, listen to Him!'" (v. 7)

When they seemed not to be able to comprehend any more, everything was gone and Jesus told them to follow Him down the mountain.

Peter, James and John could have thought to themselves, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well."

They saw the glory of God through Jesus, Moses and Elijah and heard the voice of God and they could have thought, "yes all is well as we dwell in the valley and ride out the storms of life."

God said, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to Him!"

While Peter was trying to mask his confusion with words, God was saying, ***"Enough. My Son is here. Be quiet and listen to Him."***

"And all at once they looked around and saw no one with them any more, except Jesus only." (v. 8)

God had spoken.

He had singled out His Son.

And now all that filled their vision was Christ.

So often we are guilty of being captivated by peripheral things.

We get sidetracked with the crowd
We get sidetracked by the music
We get sidetracked by the sermon
We get sidetracked by the person
We get sidetracked by the emotion

The issue has been and always will be Jesus.

Rick Warren is so right when he says, "It's not about you or me, but it's all about Jesus!"

He is the one to whom our allegiance is due.
He is the one to whom we should listen.

Peter had to learn that, and we need to learn it, too.

Our tendency is to listen to others
Our tendency is to take our trials to others
Our tendency is to worry about who is in control

Peter would write later,

"For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased' -- and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." (2 Peter 1:16-18)

God was pointing to His Son Jesus.

Moses and Elijah were only forerunners.

The fulfillment was in Jesus.

Listen to Him.
Hear Him.

Friends, I beseech you to listen – these are the last days we are living in.

Please don't take this lightly! Jesus could come at any time.

I am convinced with my whole being that Jesus is standing at the door waiting for the Father to send Him to Rapture His Church.

We have to be ready spiritually and prepare as many people as we can for His coming.

Church family, we have too many empty chairs.

It's no wonder the enemy of our souls has stepped up his activity, because he knows full well that Jesus is soon to come for His church.

I can almost hear the shout
I can almost hear the trumpet blast

The message of the transfiguration is that we must always look to Jesus and His Coming.

3. It also speaks to us of the truth of who Jesus is.

Jesus Christ is God the Son.

Jesus Christ is Lord.

This is the vision those disciples beheld.

And this should be the vision we have of Jesus.

When we spend time alone with Jesus, we also are transported to the mountaintop.

And if we will put our eyes on Jesus and get them off of other things, we, too, will experience the glory of God.

The problem that we have sometimes is like the problem the disciples had.

They failed to see what God was trying to show them because their minds were still in the valley, or their problems, their stresses.

What are you allowing to dominate your mind this morning?

What thing is bothering you so much that you have lost sight of Jesus?

Let me take you back to my experience with Pike's Peak.

That mountain top experience was glorious.

The mountain top experience for the disciples was glorious. They wanted to stay, to stay and worship what they saw and heard.

And many times we as Christians want that mountain top experience in our faith life.

Some even make those who do not feel that way feel guilty! We like the highs, we shun the lows.

But to be perfectly honest - I wanted to stay. Because on the top of the mountain, (my 9 wks away), I had my mind off the trials of church life, the negative stresses of life.

But friends, listen - Jesus will give us the power to go back down the mountain to the valley where we live, changed more into His image.

Church family, your pastor is back to valley living if that is what Jesus wants. But I've learned to get some mountain experiences in the valley.

2 Corinthians 3:18 the Apostle Paul says, "***But we all, with unveiled faces beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just from the Lord, the Spirit.***"

The disciple's first impulse was to stay put on that mountain top with all the glory around them.

Their first impulse was to stay in this glory, to stay put, to bask in the glory of God.

But Jesus did not see it that way.

After the experience on the mountain, what did He do?

He went down the mountain and set his face for Jerusalem and the cross.

Beholding Jesus changes us.

Some of you are afraid of the valley living.

Some of you have decided to stop living in the valley of challenges and stresses.

How do I know that, because I've observed you and you've withdrawn from doing ministry.

But friend, you're wrong to stay there.

What you have to do is this:

Beholding Jesus allows us to get a little of the mountain into the valley where we are living.

Now, they were on their way back down the mountain.

Friend, it's alright to live in the valley.

What a vision!

What an experience! I'm sure they could hardly wait to relate it to the other disciples.

But Jesus forbids them to tell this to anyone

And I really don't have time to finish the last point of this sermon: It will be on the webpage under sermons if you want to read the rest of it.

Mountain top experiences are great, but living, working, helping, loving in the valleys are where Christ asks us to be.

This is where Christ has chosen me to be.

I have seen the pilot and the ship is well, our lives are well and we need to sail into the valleys of life with love and compassion for our neighbor who Christ bids us to love no matter what happens.

Only Jesus can help us take some of the mountain into the valley.

Mountaintop glory for valley living -- that's what we need.

And the only place we can find it is in Jesus.

Invitation:

**How do you need Jesus this morning to touch you?
Are you facing things in the valley living that is just too much to handle?**

Then it's time for you to go the mountain top for His glory to be applied to your life.

Would you come to Him and allow Him to meet you at the altar?

Friend, He is just that – A Friend who wants to help.

4. An Understanding of the Redemptive Cross

"And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen." (v. 9a)

But what did all this mean?

Jesus had in mind something greater than a story you could tell your children while you pondered the greatness of God.

That is why He gave them orders not to speak about what they had seen.

The time wasn't right.

Many things had to be done.

"He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead. And they seized upon that statement, discussing with one another what rising from the dead might mean." (vv. 9b-10)

What Jesus was after was not a grand memory for posterity, but a Gospel message for people.

He gave them orders not to say anything until He had risen from the dead.

Jesus did not want the message to be His transfiguration.

He wanted the message to be His Cross and resurrection.

While the transfiguration is an interesting story, it cannot save anyone.

The Cross is Christ's redemptive work.

It is the Cross we preach.

By His death and resurrection, He paid the penalty for the sin of all humankind.

By trusting not in the transfiguration, but in Christ's sacrificial death, we are saved.

There could be no preaching of the Gospel before His resurrection.

You see, we must proclaim the whole Gospel, not part of it.

We proclaim a Gospel that includes the virgin birth of Christ, the virtuous life of Christ, the vicarious substitutionary death of Christ, the victorious resurrection of Christ, and the visible second coming of Christ.

This is the essence of the Gospel, and Jesus would not be preached apart from His Cross.

The glory of God is revealed in Jesus, and the mercy of God is revealed through His death on a Cross.

Because He died there for you, He stands there today with open arms, this God of glory, to receive you to Himself, to forgive your sins, and to change you into His image.