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"Vision On the Mount"

2 Kings 2:1-12 Mark 9:2-9 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 9:2-9

When Jesus was being baptized, BEFORE he BEGAN his ministry, the skies opened up and the Holy Spirit descended like a dove on Jesus and he heard his Heavenly Father's voice that said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Some of the people standing around said it was thundering, but the gospel writer records that it was Jesus' heavenly father's voice.

This morning we are going to fast forward three years to near the end of his ministry. Now, for the second time Jesus hears his Heavenly Father's voice from heaven. This time the voice is accompanied not by the vision of a dove, but by the vision of two men standing with Jesus, two men who more than any other personified the Law and the Prophets--Moses and Elijah.

So many are familiar with Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. This week we skip ahead to near the end of the story of Jesus' life and ministry to-the Vision on the Mount. Hear the word of the Lord from Mark 9:2-9

Have you ever had a mountain top experience? You know like one of those times when you felt like you were on top of the world, really happy, when you felt that you were really close to God?

That moment might have come at some exciting event in your life: graduation, baptism, your first kiss, your first day on your first job, your wedding, the birth of a child, even catching your very first fish. It might have been something really spiritual, like a week at church camp or a church retreat. Or it might have been something of a smaller, quieter nature, like a very intimate conversation with your father or mother when you felt that they honestly understood what you were saying and why you felt the way you did.

Last Sunday night was a Mountain top experience for a team that had never won the Super Bowl to defeat the team that had won 5, and to do it with their second choice for quarterback to do it.

That second choice quarterback was Nick Foles. In addition to winning the game Nick was named the Most Valuable Player of the game. A reporter asked him what he wanted fans to take away from his journey, and his answer is a great lesson on embracing failure.

"I think the big thing is don't be afraid to fail. In our society today, you know, Instagram, Twitter, it's a highlight reel. It's all the good things, and then when you look at it, you think, like, wow, when you have a rough day or your life's not as good as that, you're failing. Failure is a part of life. That's a part of building

character and growing. Like without failure, who would you be? I wouldn't be up here if I hadn't fallen thousands of times, made mistakes. We all are human, we all have weaknesses.

I'm not perfect. I'm not Superman. I might be in the NFL and we might have just won the Super Bowl, but hey, we still have daily struggles, I have daily struggles, but that's where my faith comes in, that's where my family comes in."

When you look at a struggle in your life, just know that, you know, that's just an opportunity for your character to grow," he continued. "And that's really just been the message, simple. Like, if something's going on in your life and you're struggling, embrace it. Because you're growing."

Winning the Super Bowl may have been his mountain top experience, but to get there he had to do a lot of mountain climbing that didn't make it. Those experiences of failure helped him develop the character to reach the top.

The Bible is full of Mountaintop experiences. It was on Mount Sinai (Picture of Mount Sinai) that Moses received the 10 commandments. It was on Mount Carmel (Slide of Mt Carmel) that Elijah had a showdown with the prophets of Baal.

When Jesus wanted to get alone he would often go mountain climbing so he could find some quiet time to pray. One day Jesus took Peter, James, and John, three of his closest friends mountain climbing on Mt Hermon (Picture of Mount Hermon)

After they arrived at the top they were sleepy. But they managed to stay awake, and because they did they saw something that must have made them think they were dreaming. They saw Jesus glowing and talking with two long dead heroes of their faith—Moses and Elijah! (Picture of Jesus Moses and Elijah)

Like Moses before him, Jesus was glowing with glory. The appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white! When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining and they were afraid to come near him."

Elijah had a mountain top experience when he faced down 500 prophets of Baal. The prophets of Baal called upon their gods to bring fire to consume their sacrifice for the better part of a day to no avail. But when Elijah called upon his God fire came down from heaven and consumed Elijah's sacrifice.

More than any two figures in the Old Testament Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. Indeed, when Jews refer to what we Christians call the "Old Testament" Jews called it, "The Law and the Prophets."

As Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt to form a new nation, Jesus was to lead his followers into a new kingdom. As Elijah had confronted the evil prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Jesus was to conquer sin on Mount Calvary.

This Vision on the Mount was so fantastic that Peter said, "Let's build 3 booths, one for you one for Moses and one for Elijah. Bless Peter's heart. He always just says the first thing that comes to his mind. But Jesus refused the luxury of staying in this mountaintop experience in the three booths Peter offered to construct away from the city and the hassles of the masses.

What did this Vision on the Mount mean for Jesus and for Peter James and John? What was the purpose of this remarkable demonstration? It established for Peter James and John that Jesus was greater than the greatest men the nation of Israel had ever produced. If that wasn't enough there was the voice-- God's voice-- Jesus' heavenly Father's voice. "This is my beloved son! Listen to Him!"

Don't listen to Peter! He wants to stay up on the mountain top. Listen to Jesus. Slow down. Don't be so quick to move things your way, to shape the world as you see it. Don't be so quick to climb the corporate ladder, to join the rat pack and be number one. Don't try to beat your colleagues to the first position. My Son is trying to show you another way, another world, another kingdom, so to Him. 1

When the voice died down Peter, James and John rubbed their eyes and Moses and Elijah disappeared, leaving only Jesus. The old is ended. The new has come. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, "Tell no one the vision." The three friends kept quiet about this and told no one. No one would have believed them anyway.

Eventually everyone must come down from the mountaintop to live in a world which nevertheless continues to be full of sickness, pain and suffering. For there to be a tall mountain there must be a deep valley.

This vision confirmed who Jesus was, but the goal was not to live on the mountain top experience. The goal was to take this inspiration and translate it into perspiration for the work of the mission and ministry below.

What kind of things did Jesus say to which we should listen? When he was asked which was the greatest commandment, Jesus said, "The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength. A second is like unto it. Love your neighbor as yourself. On these two hang all the law and the prophets." Everything Moses wrote--the law, and everything Elijah and the prophets spoke and did, hang on loving God and loving our neighbors and loving ourselves.

Peter James and John would need to remember this vision as they saw Jesus fulfilling his mission. When they saw Jesus beaten, and scourged and dying on the cross completing his Mission, they would need to remember the Vision on the Mount to make sense of the High Noon Nightmare on the Hill of Calvary.

We might be tempted to think that, because we are so ordinary, that a life-transforming experience wouldn't possibly happen to us. We could block out the vision with our own arrogance, prejudice, or preconceived ideas, so that no new light could shine in upon our soul. But I say, never count yourself out.

At this year's Winter Olympic Games athletes across 92 nations are fiercely competing for a chance to stand on those coveted Olympic podiums. There are 15 different sporting activities and a total of 102 events. Some of those 102 events include going ... downhill. Those that are victorious know that their goal was not to live on the mountain top, but to be the fastest one to reach the valley below.

There will be times when you feel like you are on the mountain top with Jesus and like Peter, would want to build Mount Hermon World! (☺) There will be times when you will feel like you are plummeting downhill. There will be times when you don't feel you have the strength or the will to climb again. Know that Jesus will be there with you as well.

February is Black History Month. All this "mountain" talk reminds of Martin Luther King's last sermon... He delivered it April 3, 1968, on the eve of his assassination, in Memphis, Tennessee. He concluded his remarks that night:

"I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountain top. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promised Land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord." 3

What is your vision of who God is calling you to be in this part of God's world? What do you see yourself becoming? How does your vision of who you are and who we are inform your mission, our mission? What do you see this church's mission? What do you see this church becoming? How will we respond to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount **AND** this Vision on the Mount?

Let's pray. Dear Lord, You are so marvelous, so stunning, and so brilliant. During your life among us your glory was cloaked, subdued. We couldn't have handled seeing who you really were all that time. Thank you for this episode in

your life, for trusting 3 of your friends with a vision of who you really are. Thank you that YOU resisted the temptation to stay on the mountain top with Moses and Elijah and that you came back down to our level and gave your life for us and fulfilled your Mission to take away our sins. Having given us a glimpse of your glory this morning, fill us with your Holy Spirit so we can glimpse a vision of who you are calling us to be and the mission you are calling us to fulfill.

Lord, you have an infinite capacity for surprise! There are times when the power of the moment astonishes us and we are able to catch a fleeting glimpse of your glory. We are like Peter. We do not know what to say, but we say something anyway. Then there are other times when you seem so far away. We long for mountain top experiences. We easily grow impatient. We are quick to complain. We question.

Teach us to resist the impulse to cling to things which do not finally matter. Help us to remember that you unfold your finest work within the full view of ordinary people who are engaged in ordinary life situations. Increase our faith. Increase our capacity for service, but never let us get so jaded that we can't be surprised.

We pray that you would surprise us with revelations of who you really are. We pray that you would reveal to us who WE really are, joint heirs with Jesus provided we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him. We are your children that you love so much you will not neglect to discipline us. We are your children that you love so much that you weep when we are weeping and you laugh when we are laughing. Hear us as we lift to you those on our hearts who are laughing and those who are weeping. In Jesus name we pray.

1 Brett Blair, www.Sermons.com.

2 Edward F. Markquart, Mountains, Valleys, and Plains

3. ChristianGlobe Networks, Inc., ChristianGlobe Illustrations, by David E. Leininger