

Feb 28 10 Lent 2 Mark 9:2-9

COME TOUCH HIS ROBE:

A MOUNTAIN TOP EXPERIENCE

Experiences! Sometimes they are bad, but often there are good ones, the ones you like to remember, and the ones that put joy in your lives. Some who are sharing their stories during Lent know how tough it is; yet how joyous it is as they reflect on what God is doing in their lives. They are learning how the Holy Spirit takes over and brings calmness... Well some are learning that.

Sometimes when we go to Florida in October with our friends we go to the Christian theme park "Holy Land Experience" in Orlando where we have had great mountain top experiences. Every time we have gone they change some things. It's like a little bit of heaven within a chaotic world. For some 6 hours or as long as we would like, we experience music, drama, eating, the crucifixion, resurrection and much more. We leave that place with a little bit of heaven in our hearts. We have been to the mountain top. Out of our busy schedules and hectic lives we find time to relax and reflect on our faith through Biblical scenes, dramas and music. We really do see Jesus. We might say we have been to the mountain top with Jesus and his friends. We have been with Peter, James and John. We take a day to get away from the difficulties and problems of this world to charge up our spiritual batteries and to remember in the midst of places like Orlando where Disney built a place for families to enjoy and see the fantasies of his mind, there is a place not too far from there where you can experience the presence of God. This

park takes you back, back to Biblical times and if you allow it to happen you can experience a heartwarming as you are brought back to the time of Jesus, see the shops, and see people dressed as they would have looked. No rides. No games. It's more than a theme park...it's a Christian experience that will feed your soul.

Some of you perhaps have had other Holy Land Experiences of your own where you have gone to seminars or retreats. Some ladies go to Women of Faith, others to an Emmaus Walk weekend that pumps you up. These times prepare you for the valleys in your lives.

In the disciples lives there were times that they had fears and doubts. (That's why we can relate to them.) At times perhaps they wondered why they had left their nets, their families to follow Jesus. (Ever had that feeling?) But when they looked back, they realized they experienced closeness with Jesus. (There's your answer.) One of those times happened with three of the inner friends as Jesus took Peter, James and John to the mountain to get away for a short retreat. The disciples had just experienced an eye opener as they realized that though others referred to Jesus as a teacher or Rabbi, when asked who did his disciples say he was, it was Peter who paused and said, "Why Master, you are the Messiah come from God." As they walked Jesus had a difficult chore to do as he told them people would reject him and put him on a cross. But, not to worry for in three days he would rise again. But they did not want to hear this. They blocked it from their minds. Now a week or so later Jesus takes his closest friends to the mountain to help them understand and see his glory and experience a little bit of heaven. Hear now God's word of hope and glory as we sit back and listen to

Mark's explanation of that wonderful Mountain Top Experience.
READ 9:2-9

Let me share the words from the music surrounding this event. *Jesus took three of his disciples up the mountain and was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as the light. Moses and Elijah appeared with him and a voice came from the cloud saying "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him."* Certainly this was a powerful encounter for the disciples. *His shining robe and the voice from the cloud burned into their memories. Though they would face many difficult days these memories would give them tremendous confidence as they preached the Lordship and Gospel of Jesus Christ."*

What would you have done if you had been there that day? I wonder what James and John thought as Peter opened his mouth to speak. "Master, let's build three tents for you, Moses and Elijah." All three were caught up in the moment. Just a few days before they were walking along the pathway with Jesus seeing the things of this world, watching Jesus have compassion on the people, touching lives, healing some, giving hope to others. Now they are mesmerized as they see the great Law giver Moses, the great Prophet Elijah standing with Jesus. Perhaps they heard laughter, watched as the three embraced and greeted each other. They saw Jesus transfigured, changed in a moment, to where his robe was white as snow and he shone so bright they wished they had their sun glasses with them. They watched, but could not hear the conversation between the three, but they were touched by what was before them. And when it was over, to top

it all off, they, yes they, heard the voice of God booming from the cloud saying, **“This is my beloved Son, Listen to Him!”**

WOW! What an experience. Not only to see Moses and Elijah, but to hear the voice of God. They must have thought they were in heaven. Perhaps they were waiting for lightening to strike, or a great big boom of thunder to be heard. They fell to the ground in humble adoration knowing the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Jesus’ Dad was talking directly to them. Awesome!

My friends, the disciples were transformed that day. When I read this passage over and over I began to think, how come they only wanted to build three tents? Why not six tents? Why not tents for them along with those for Jesus, Moses and Elijah? It doesn’t say. But this I believe. They just wanted to stay there and soak it all up. It didn’t bother them that they had no place to get out of the sun or even rest. This was their moment. They wanted to be on that mountain forever where there was peace away from the turmoil. They had a little glimpse of heaven and well, like some who have had out of body experiences, they wanted to stay longer in the presence of the “light.” But as we know, like those sent back more was to be done, they too had to climb down the mountain to the ministry that was yet to be.

This morning’s music said *“He called us up to the mountain, we followed the Master’s call and we were changed forever by the glorious things we saw.”*

Changed forever! What a wonderful thought. We would think that all their fears and doubts were gone. But you know, Holy Week was coming. The Last Supper was coming. The betrayal

was coming. The scattering in the garden was ahead. And even Mr. Peter was about to deny Jesus 3 times. Why one disciple was about to turn him over for a bag of silver. A measly 30 pieces. This transformation was the beginning. It was a preparing for what was to be, the good, the bad and the ugly.

“Come,” Jesus said to the big three, “Come, I want you to experience something you will never have believed.” “What is it Jesus? What do you want us to see?” they may have said. After all they thought they had seen it all. What else could he do? He calmed the raging sea. He raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, helped a cripple to walk, touched a deaf and dumb person, and fed thousands with just a couple fish and slices of bread. Walked on water. (Even Peter did that.) I mean what more could he do? “Never mind wondering,” Jesus might have said, “just come and behold the Glory of God. Come my friends, come, listen and learn.” Jesus smiled and led the way as he stated, “You will never be the same.”

You know, isn't that what happens to us? When I came to know Jesus as Savior and Lord he called me to follow and let me know I would never be the same again, for through his transformation I had an eternal makeover. Those changes help when I'm in the valley facing that nasty serpent.

I believe each Sunday God calls us to assemble here in this church to experience something wonderful. Often we ring the bell to announce our worship service is about to begin. But maybe the ringing of the bell is God's invitation “to come and experience His presence. Come experience His grace, power and mercy. Come, listen to His Son.” Isn't that an awesome feeling? I mean we just sit back and let God minister to us. We shut out

the cares of this world for just about an hour and we become transformed through his grace. We come to praise him, yet we receive. We tune him out, take a short nap, but something wakes us, a word, a phrase, a song, a scream from the pastor, and we hear the voice of God speaking our name. Fantastic! That's what worship is all about. It's about God being God. We are invited to come to experience his glory and his power. We come to experience his power as he transforms sinners into saints, those with no hope to being hopeful, and those who are suffering to have the courage to keep on keeping on. Those who are facing death to know there is new life waiting. We learn to see Jesus on the mountain top and in the valley of our lives. We look up to see an empty cross and know He Lives today. We experience his grace and his power.

Isn't that what the disciples experienced? All God wanted them to do was enjoy the moment.

Have you not been in awe of what God has sometimes done in your life? I have. You look around at a miracle that just happened and you smile and say, 'God is good.'

But there was one more very important thing that they needed to do. **They needed to listen to him.** Down in the real world things were going to get rough. In the valley there were needs to be taken care of. This was just a glimpse of heaven. The real heaven was coming soon. But in the real world there was to be suffering, rejection, for Jesus a cross, a grave, an empty tomb in order to experience the true presence of the Risen Lord. Listen and trust in Jesus. When difficult times come, never forget the glory of God. "Through it all. Through it all. I learned to trust in Jesus, I learned to trust in God."

Just like the disciples we may want to remain in a place where we feel the grace and peace of God. We don't want to have to deal with what awaits us. Then we have to listen to his voice. Don't we hear his voice saying don't worry about the storms in your life for I

Will ride them out with you? We hear his voice saying 'take my hand, grasp on and hold tight. I will never let you go.' Fear! It can destroy ones faith. Being fearless one walks by faith and finds the victory.

In the scene from the movie Titanic when the ship was getting ready to make the final plunge to its resting place Jack looks at Rose as they stood clinging to the ship as it comes to a stop with the stern straight up in the air. For a brief moment they watched as people fell all around them and then Jack told Rose not to be afraid, hold on to his hand as hard as she could, don't let go. Even when they hit the water don't let go. The Titanic begins its final plunge quickly disappearing into the sea. Jack yells to Rose not to let go. They grasp each other's hands and take a deep breath as they hit the water and the force of the ship going deeper and deeper pulls them under and they hold on as best they could until finally the force of the turbulence is so great it separates them. In a few moments they both pop to the surface and yell for each other and once again they find each other. Jack got Rose on a plank to get her out of the water but there was no room for him. He tells her to hold tight and not let go until they are rescued. Rose, feeling secure through his words, drifts off to sleep clutching his hand. When she wakes still holding his hand she realizes Jack was no longer alive. But she had gotten through the night. And of course since this was a movie, she was

saved. At the end of the movie we see Jack and Rose united once again in death with all the others as he reaches out to take Rose's hand to be with him forever and all the others lost at sea clap because they are together for eternity.

Isn't that what Jesus did for us? Even though he went to the cross, he has never let go of a hand that has reached out to grasp his. His promise is, I will never let you go. "Come to me all who have burdens and I will give you rest." Even in heaven he waits to reach out his hand to welcome his children home.

This morning we heard another story of how God touched someone. We need to remember that God's grace is there for everyone who will receive.

Today Jesus invites everyone to come and experience his glory and grace and his power. Come touch his robe. Come and experience what the disciples did. Come and experience that transformation that will help you when the things in your life seem to go bad. Come and touch the robe of compassion, the robe of healing, the robe of grace, the robe of glory, the robe of his power.

Listen once again to our song for today from the Mountain Top Experience: *I remember that day on the mountain as I lie in the valley below. And through all my days of darkness there's one thing that I know. There was glory on the mountain. What wonder did I see! And the glory on the mountain will forever be living in me.*"

“Come touch my robe,” Jesus invites, “In faith, touch my robe. Feel the power, the grace that flows to all who believe. Come to my side...Come touch my robe.”