

## Mountain-top experience

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*Bible reading: II Kings 2:1-12 , Psalm 50 and I Corinthians 11:23-26.*



*Mark 9:2-9 Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain, where they were alone. As they looked on, a change came over Jesus, and his clothes became shining white---whiter than anyone in the world could wash them. Then the three disciples saw Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus.*

*Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, "Teacher, how good it is that we are here! We will make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." (He and the others were so frightened that he did not know what to say).*

*Then a cloud appeared and covered them with its shadow, and a voice came from the cloud, "This is my own dear Son---listen to him!" They took a quick look around but did not see anyone else; only Jesus was with them. As they came down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has risen from death."*

### I. Personal mountain-top experiences

Today is a special day for Toma and me. We got engaged ten years ago, and it was also a Sunday. It was a wonderful day, very emotional, very powerful. It was a mountain-top experience. The engagement ring I have was given by Toma, and the marriage ring, which is given also on the day of engagement, was given to us by my father. My mother and father were married 40 years when they decided to offer us their rings. It was a very touching and powerful experience.

For me is a mountain-top experience, than on this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our engagement I can be among you, here in Grace Church, a budding church, with life and hope, and we, you Grace Church and I, we are "engaged" and we will have a wonderful celebration tomorrow, on the recognition service. You gave me upon my arrival this bracelet, with the "Lord's prayer" engraved in it. Very powerful, very touching.

And there is another particular mountain-top experience that stands out for my family, and this really happened on a mountain. It was 2006, June. We were in the South of France.

There is a particularly interesting rock, called the "Le Baou," 807 m, in one side a very steep rock and from far away it looks like a human head. Toma had long time desired to climb that mountain, with a good friend and his family, and us, as a family. So, on a beautiful morning we set out, Noemi 6 then, David 3, and we headed up on the rock. We took the friendly way, Toma and me alternating in carrying David in a back-pack-like carrier. Noemi walked all the way up on her own. She needed some occasional rest, sometimes a hand to hold her, as she collected flowers on the way, evaluated how far we advanced, and looked up where we wanted to arrive.

It was hot, David became heavier and heavier on our back as we advanced. Finally there we stood, 807 m above the sea level, looking down to the villages, looking toward the sea. We had a sense that we could now do anything we set our minds on. And it was not only a private experience, so to say, but it was a family experience. It was something very powerful about it. And we were very proud of all of us:

- David being carried, handling the big heat;
- Noemi walking up all the way alone;
- The kindness of our friends, taking the longer, but friendlier road for our sake;
- and us, doing it together with our children, doing it together Toma and me.

There was a *great sense of accomplishment* in it. Up there everything seemed so peaceful. It was a great experience, it was very uplifting.

*Mountaintop experiences are supposed to be like that.*

A mountaintop experience is like a *revelation*, a *sudden understanding of the way things work*. A mountaintop experience is an “aha” moment when something falls into place. It doesn’t necessarily take a mountain top to have one. Mountain-top experience is a figure of speech.

Mountaintop experiences are called mountaintop experiences, because a mountaintop is a great place to get away from everyone.

From a mountaintop you can easily see

1. where you have been
2. and where you are going.

## **II. Biblical mountain-top experiences**

### **A. Elijah**

The great prophet Elijah also had a mountaintop experience. Elijah had told the people all that God had given him to say and they didn’t like it. Elijah was running for his life when he climbed Mount Horeb. There on Mount Horeb, Elijah stayed in a cave. God spoke to him and told him to go out on the mountain before the Lord for the Lord was about to pass by. We are told in I. Kings that,

*“There was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks into pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, the sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.”*

Then the Lord spoke to Elijah and told him all that he should do. Elijah met with God in the silence of the mountaintop and the experience carried Elijah through the difficult task of being God’s prophet.

### **B. Jesus**

Now we come to Jesus. Jesus, Peter, James, and John climbed a high mountain to pray. From the mountaintop, they could see where they had been and where they were going.

Jesus and the three disciples are on a mountaintop in prayer. During the prayer Jesus' face changes and his clothes become an amazing white color. Moses and Elijah appear to talk with him. They too appear in glory and they talk to Jesus.

Moses was the great lawgiver. For the Jews, Moses represented the Torah, the Law.

On the other side of Jesus is Elijah, the great Prophet of Israel. Elijah represented the Prophets who called Israel back into relationship with God again and again. In his person the Prophets are symbolized.

On the mountaintop, Jesus met with the Law and the Prophets in person. Jesus' experience on the Mount of Transfiguration revealed the glory that layed on the other side of suffering.

The next time Jesus has a mountaintop experience is the mountain of Calvary and God's Messiah, is sacrificing his life for the world. That mountain-top experience is our life and our salvation.

Instead of having Moses on one side and Elijah on the other, Jesus is crucified between two thieves.

And just before suffering on the cross he gave to his disciples the bread and wine, to eat it and drink it in remembering him. Just before dying on that mountain-top, Jesus is giving something very simple but very powerful: to have communion with Him, to have communion in Him, and to have communion with our fellow Christian brothers and sisters by breaking the bread and drinking from the cup, as we will do it today.

### **III. Mountain-top experiences and today You**

*Communion is about the yearning to see God, to experience Him and experience his power – in us. It is about being touched by the Spirit and being moved by the voice of the Lord whispering in our ears.*

How is that in our lives? Do we want to experience Him and His presence, or do we move away "before the real thing?"

I think that sometimes we are like this little boy in the following story:

*Story: A little boy, around the turn of the century, lived far back out in the country. He had reached the age of 12 and had never, in all his life, seen a circus.*

*You can imagine his excitement when it was announced in his village that the next Saturday a travelling circus was coming to a nearby town. He ran home with the glad news, and then came the question: "Dad, Mom, can I go?"*

*The family was poor, but the father sensed how important this was to the boy, so he said, "If you do your chores ahead of time, I'll see to it that you have the money to go."*

*Saturday morning arrived and the chores were done and the boy stood ready in his best*

*clothes by the breakfast table. His father reached down into his overalls and pulled out a dollar bill - the most money the boy had ever had at one time - and gave it to him. After the usual cautions about being careful the boy was sent on his way.*

*The boy was so excited that his feet barely touched the ground all the way to the town. When he got there, he noticed people were lining the streets and he worked his way through the crowd until he could see what was going on. There in the distance approached the spectacle of a circus parade. It was the grandest thing that the lad had ever seen. There were exotic animals in cages and bands and midgets, acrobats, and all that goes to make up a great circus. After everything had passed by where he was standing, a circus clown, with floppy shoes and baggy pants and brightly painted face, came by.*

*As the clown passed by where he was standing, the boy reached into his pocket and got out that precious dollar bill. Handing the money to the clown, the boy then turned around and went home.*

The mistake that the boy made - is the same mistake we can make in our spiritual lives - we can end up settling for less than *the real thing*, for a portion - instead of for the whole, and all because we either do not believe in what God can do, or because we do not look at or understand what we have been given.

Many times we are not open to the special moments, “the mountain-top” experiences. those special touches that only God can give.

Today, in the simplicity but in the sacredness of the Holy Communion, Jesus is offering a possible mountain top experience. We cannot force it, but we can expect it, and take it if it comes in our way.

May it be that as you take communion today you would take it from Jesus’ hand: from his wounded hands, from his forgiving hands, from his loving hands.

May it be so that individually and as a church, we would all would be ready to experience a mountain-top experience, and be empowered for the journey and challenges ahead.

Amen