

Life is filled with peaks and valleys. A peak is something excellent that happens in your life, something great, something to celebrate and remember. I still remember my 60th surprise birthday party my wife planned for me in November of 2016. Dan and Robin Ebelt from Atlanta were going to come and spend several days with us. However, Dan could not drive down with his wife, since he had some business to attend to with the railroad company he works for. He would have to fly in two days after his wife Robin arrived. As a result, I had to drive to the Orlando airport to pick him up. As I drove up to the baggage claim area, to pick him up, standing behind him near the entrance door was our only child Carolyn, and my grandson Everett. I was totally surprised. I had no idea my daughter and grandson would be flying in and spending the weekend in Florida. I was on cloud 9. I would get to hug and play with my grandson. We would all be together at church on Sunday. That was a peak. A Peak! The birth of a child, the day you got married, that awesome family vacation, that surprise party – that is a peak. During those moments, it's easy to be a Christian. "God is good," you think to yourself. How He has blessed us!

But life isn't one peak after another. There are the valleys too. Those difficult moments. When you have been diagnosed with cancer – that's a valley. When a loved one dies – that's a valley. When your child or grandchild is going through a painful divorce, that's a valley. During those moments, it's more difficult to be a Christian sometimes. When you're in the valley, it's hard to say, "God is good." Sometimes your faith is shaken. There's some doubt there, when you're in a valley, whether God is truly there for you.

Peaks and valleys – where are you right now? Are you on top of a peak? Or are you in a valley? Maybe you're somewhere in between – maybe there's a peak or a valley for you right around the corner, and you don't even know it. The disciples of Jesus Christ had no idea that they were about to enter a valley – they were about to go through a low-point with Christ. Things with Jesus seemed to be going so well – he had performed miracles – walking on the water, feeding the 5000. He had been surrounded by crowds of people, listening to his parables. It was easy to be a disciple of Jesus at that time. There was no doubt that this was the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The disciples were experiencing one high-point after another with Jesus.

But right around the corner loomed the valley of the shadow of death. The crowds would soon turn against Jesus. He'd be betrayed, and arrested, and tortured, and publicly condemned, and executed in the most shameful way known to man at that time. The valley was right around the corner. The disciples would be filled with fear and doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. Soon, it would be very difficult to be a disciple of Christ. A deep, dark valley was right around the corner, and the disciples had no idea.

And so that is why today, Jesus takes them to the top of a mountain. He lets them experience something amazing – with their own eyes, they catch a glimpse of his glory. Right before the valley, Jesus takes them to a mountain, to a high point, and he does this to strengthen them for the difficult road ahead. He does the same for us: "Prepare For The Valley Ahead!"

"After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them." The word "transfigure" means that Jesus' appearance completely changed. "His clothes

became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.” “His face shone like the sun.” At that moment, Jesus revealed his deity. He was the holy, almighty God, and the brightness of his appearance revealed that to his disciples. This was good, because soon the disciples would see Jesus dirty and bloody and weak and dying. During that time, it would seem as though Jesus was a lowly man. But here it is clear, as he shines brighter than the sun – he is God – holy, almighty, and powerful. Remember who Jesus is in the valleys ahead, He is the Holy, Almighty, All-Powerful God!

It says that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about his departure that would take place in Jerusalem. Moses was there representing the Law. Elijah was there representing the Prophets. The word for departure is the word “exodus.” Just as God miraculously led his people out of Egypt to the Promised Land through the waters of the Red Sea, Jesus leads us to our Promised Land by his miraculous departure from this life. Jesus prayed for strength from his heavenly Father to make it through his departure. How much easier it would have been to come down from this mountain top and not go to the cross for us. The Father answered his prayer by having Moses and Elijah minister to him, just as angels ministered to Jesus when he was praying the Garden of Gethsemane.

Moses and Elijah also minister to us this morning as well. Moses died 1500 years before Jesus was born. Elijah was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot 900 years before Jesus was born. Both miraculously stand before Jesus and minister to him. They also minister to us because they remind us what will happen to us after we die. When we die our souls go to be with Jesus. On the last day our bodies will be raised to life again, and reunited with our souls, no matter how much concrete surrounds us, or how much dirt covers us, or where our ashes may be scattered or interred. Will we recognize each other in heaven? Peter, James and John recognized Moses and Elijah. One dear widow lady told her pastor how much she missed her husband Bill. They had been married for over 60 years. She said, “I used to get the dinner ready looking forward to that moment when he would walk in the door so we could be together again. All those years I waited for him to come home to me. Now he is waiting for me to come home to him. The Apostle Paul said, “So shall we be with the Lord forever.” Happy reunions are in store for us.

The coming suffering and death on the cross was understood in heaven by Moses and Elijah. They knew the importance of Christ’s suffering and death, for without it there could be no forgiveness of sins, no salvation, no eternal life. The theme of their conversation was not on the Savior’s life but on his death and resurrection from the dead.

All too often people suppose that those living in Old Testament times had a different way of salvation than we have today. It is true, they did not have nearly so clear a picture of God’s plan of salvation as we have today, but they staked their hope of heaven on Jesus Christ, the Messiah who was to come. Abraham was saved by this faith, and so was Moses and Elijah, and Isaiah and all who ever were saved. The whole Jewish system of blood and the sacrifice of animals pointed to Christ, the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sin of the world. Let us be sure, that we too always pin our hope for heaven on the departure that Christ was to accomplish at Jerusalem, and let us like Moses and Elijah also talk about this wonderful event.

What an amazing high point for those disciples to experience. Peter wanted this moment to last forever. He wasn’t really sure what to say or what to do, so 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. He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.

But “While he (Peter) was speaking a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.” God used a cloud to lead his people out of Egypt. The cloud of God’s glory filled the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple of the Lord. God uses this cloud to speak to Jesus. “A voice came from the cloud saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him.” Peter was afraid of the cloud. The presence of God’s glory struck fear into him. Don’t point an accusing finger at Peter. If a cloud of God’s glory suddenly filled this place, we would also react in fear because of our sinful condition.

God the Father proclaims his love for Jesus. He says, “This is my Son.” The Father was totally pleased with the life that Jesus had lived. He would show he was pleased with the sacrifice Jesus made at the cross by raising him to life again. This holy and perfect God who appears in the form of a cloud can never find anything in me or you that could qualify us for his love. You may see a beautiful sunset and joyfully thank God for the beauty that you have seen, and the next moment you utter angry words at the driver that has just gotten too close to you on the freeway. Sin must be paid for and forgiven before we can escape the judgment to come and join Jesus and Moses and Elijah in the place that Jesus has prepared for us. God the Father chose his Son Jesus to be the perfect and pure source of forgiveness and peace and salvation for you. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

And then, just as quickly as it began, this moment ended: “Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.”

Today you hear my voice, but my voice will be silenced in the grave even as the voices of those countless servants of the Lord who have come and gone before me. But the voice of Jesus will never be silenced. His voice was heard at creation when all things were made by the Word of His power. His voice was heard during the days of His ministry when He said to sinners, Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” His voice was heard as he hung dying on the cross, saying, It is finished. His voice will be heard on Judgment day, saying to the unbeliever, Depart from me you cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. His voice will be heard saying to the believer, Come, you who are blessed by my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. His voice will be heard forever in paradise as He opens to us new realms of thought and learning, of beauty and wisdom. The voice of Jesus will never be silenced.

So no matter how difficult life may become, Christian, remember who is in charge. It’s Jesus. Remember, who he is. The All Powerful Son of God! A face shining like the sun, clothes whiter than you can bleach them. This is the person who is in your corner through thick and thin. This is the person who empowers us to face the challenges of life. Yes, It is good to be here Jesus, with you. Amen.