

Rev. Dan Welch Transfiguration 2-11-18

Text- Mark 9: 2- 9

Have you ever noticed how life is filled with peaks and valleys? A peak is a high point something wonderful that happens in your life, something amazing, something to celebrate and remember. Like when you're in grade school and you bring home an excellent report card, or say you earn top honors in a music recital, or when your basketball team wins first place in the big tournament. Or, a little later on in life you get a raise or big promotion at work. Those are all peak moments. Then there are the **really** high peaks in life. The ones you'll **never** forget, like the day of your wedding or the birth of your children. During those times it's easy to be a Christian. "God is good!" you say to yourself. There's no doubt in your mind that God is blessing you.

But life **isn't** one peak after another, is it? There are valleys too. When the report card you bring home is disappointing; or you get really nervous and **don't** perform very well at the music recital, or when your team gets clobbered in the first round of the basketball tournament; or when you didn't get the raise or that promotion you were counting on. Then there are the really low valleys, the **really** difficult moments in life: When a friendship is ended, or when you have been diagnosed with cancer. When a loved one dies, that's definitely a low valley- it's as low as they come. During these times in a deep valley, it's not quite so easy to say, "God is good! God is blessing me!" Sometimes your **faith** is shaken. When you're in a valley you may seriously doubt that God is blessing you.

Peaks and valleys- where are you at right now? Are you closer to a peak time or closer to a valley? Maybe you're somewhere in between. Maybe there's a peak or a valley waiting for you right around the corner, and you don't even know it.

Peter, James, and John, had no idea that they were about to enter into a valley. These disciples were about to go through a low-point with their Lord. Things with Jesus **had** been going so great. He had performed amazing miracles, like walking on water and casting out demons. His popularity was at an all-time high. The crowds swarmed to Him, listening to how He taught with such great authority! It was **easy** to be a disciple of Jesus during times like that. There was no doubt that that He was the Son of God, the Savior of the world. The disciples were experiencing one high-point after another with Jesus. But all that was about to change.

Right around the corner loomed the valley of the shadow of death. All too soon, the crowds would turn away from Jesus and against Him. He'd be betrayed by one of His own friends, a disciple named Judas, then arrested, tortured, publicly condemned, and put to death. The valley was right around the corner. The disciples would be filled with fear and doubt that Jesus is the Son of God. Soon, it would be very difficult to be a follower of Jesus as they feared for their own lives, too. A deep, dark valley was right around the corner and the disciples had no idea.

And so that's why 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 heavenly glory. Right before this valley they were about to enter, Jesus takes them to a **mountain**, to a high point. He does it to strengthen them for the difficult road ahead. And today, it's good for **us** to go on this journey too, and with those disciples experience this same high point.

There are two good reasons. First of all, it prepares us for Lent. Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is just three days away. Up until now during the season of Epiphany, you have heard about Christ, how powerful He is, what a great teacher He is, how He taught with authority and performed miracles that amazed people. You've heard how people began to believe so strongly that He is the Son of God and Savior of the World. But, that's all about to change. Very soon it will be Lent, the time in the church year when Jesus goes down into the valley of the shadow of death. You're going to hear about how He was rejected. How He appeared so weak, as He refused to use His divine powers to save Himself when He suffered and died for the sins of the world. These next six weeks, we are going to walk with Jesus, into that valley, and see those difficult moments. This mountain-top experience we hear about **today** prepares us for the valley ahead.

The transfiguration also prepares us for something else- our own **personal** valleys in life. This is the second reason it's good for us to journey with the disciples to the mountain top of Jesus transfiguration. As we see Jesus glorified there today, it prepares us for when we go through our own difficult moments in life. (pause)

Let's take a close look together at our text. Mark 9 verse 2: "After six days

Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves and He was transfigured before them." The word "transfigure" means that Jesus' appearance completely changed. He was transformed. At that moment, Jesus revealed His deity. That He **is** the holy, almighty God. 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, a criminal. But here it's clear, as He shines brighter than the sun: He is God-holy, almighty, all- powerful. Jesus truly is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and the disciples could see that for themselves with their own eyes.

The text continues: "And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus." The Gospel writer Luke tells us that they were talking about Jesus' coming death, resurrection, and ascension. Moses and Elijah were two of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. Once again, this was good for the disciples to see. Soon, His accusers would be saying that Jesus was **against** the prophets, that Jesus had nothing to **do** with the prophets. But here it's clear- Elijah, Moses, and Jesus- they were speaking together about His road to the cross and His resurrection.

What an amazing high point for those disciples to experience! Peter wanted this moment to last and last, He wasn't really sure what to say or what to do, so He said, "Rabbi it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." But that idea wasn't even a possibility. Instead, "a bright cloud

overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud: "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!" The disciples were surrounded by a bright fog, and then they heard the voice of God the Father Himself. They heard Him say that Jesus truly *is* His Son, that He loved Him, and that they need to listen to Him. Again, this was good for those disciples to hear. Soon, people would be saying that Jesus was not the Son of God. Soon, it would seem as though God the Father *didn't* love Jesus. The religious leaders would be saying that *no* one should listen to Him. But here it's clear- none of that is true- this is the true Son of God, loved by the Father, Whose words are words that we need to listen to. And then, just as quickly as it began, this moment ended: "Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only." This was a high point for those disciples a mountain peak experience they would never forget. They saw Christ in all His heavenly glory, surrounded by the prophets, and acclaimed by God the Father. This would help and strengthen them as they continued on with Jesus into the valley of the shadow of death.

And this helps *us*, too. As we get ready to begin the church season of Lent this Wednesday, we will watch Jesus battle with Satan, and we will see Him eventually become weak and die on Good Friday. Here today we are reminded that Jesus *is* the Son of God, the Holy One spoken of by the prophets. Although He will be suffering and dying, He is still God and Savior, doing these things to win for us our salvation.

This also helps us as we go through *own* peaks and valleys in life. I don't know where you're at right now- if you are

experiencing a high or a low time. And I don't know where you will be one year from now; two years from now- what highs or lows you will be going through. Neither do you. But for us today, right now, it is good for *us* to be here, because here we are reminded of our Savior's glory, Who He really is, how we will see Him one day face to face as He is.

The disciples needed to climb a mountain to see this. Today, *God's Word* is your mountain to climb. Every time you come here, to Divine Service, and you hear the Word of God, you've climbed the mountain. Here, you see Christ, Who has taken your away sins on the cross and Who has risen from the dead. Here He delivers that forgiveness to you through His Word, His absolution, His Supper, strengthening you in your baptism into Christ. Here you catch a glimpse of His glory, even if it's just for a short time. Sunday morning worship- the Word of God- this is your mountain top. It is good for *you* to be here with your fellow Christians, and to keep coming here week after week, because this is where you are strengthened for all the peaks and valleys that lie ahead for you in this world. Yes, how good for us to be *here!* Amen!