

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

February 27, 2022

“Climb every mountain,” we’re told in a famous musical. And that’s pretty much what we do. Life is a series of mountain climbs, one after another. And each one is a struggle. When we get to the top, we are able to catch our breath. But it’s short-lived. For there is always another mountain that looms before us. Another climb that we must endure. Until we reach Mt. Nebo.

Moses was 120 years old when he reached Mt. Nebo. “Climb that mountain,” God told him. And he did. And he knew that this was his last climb. Moses was not allowed to step foot into the Promised Land. But God was gracious allowing him to see it with his eyes.

Oh, how the tears would have flowed. This was it! The land God had promised to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Forty years God had led them through the wilderness. And all for this good land that now spread out before him. Finally, they had arrived. The people would enter in and possess the land. But not Moses. For him, Mt. Nebo was the end of the journey. There he died and God buried him.

In looking at our church’s record book last month, I noticed that, during my time here, right at fifty of our members reached Mt. Nebo. Some of these, and many of them being your loved ones, climbed many mountains along the way. Others not as many. And yet, for each of them, every mountain climb was a real, sometimes exhausting, struggle.

It’s the same for you and me. Some of you have endured mountain climbs that possibly few could have endured, facing exhausting challenges such as illness and disease, financial woes, the death of a loved one and the heartache that went with it, and many other challenges, some very unique.

You have faced these challenges, climbing each and every mountain that God placed before you, not knowing how many mountain climbs you will still have to endure; not knowing how high, how exhausting, how painful, they will be.

When will it all end? When can we finally catch our breath for good, and see that no other exhausting mountains loom before us? Not until we reach Mt. Nebo. Our last mountain. Our last climb.

Sometimes, like with Moses, a Christian is quite aware that he or she is climbing Mt. Nebo. But quite often a Christian does not know that the climb he or she is presently enduring is their last.

Mt. Nebo is the last climb that you and I will make. But it is not our last mountain. We see this with Moses in our Luke text. He is standing with Jesus, not on Mt. Nebo, but on the Mt. of Transfiguration. This mountain is in the Promised Land. Moses did not get in before he died, nor will we. But now, after his death on Nebo, Moses is wrapped in glory in the Promised Land on that high mountain, beholding and speaking with Jesus face-to-face.

This is a picture of heaven for you and me. And so, in a very real way, you and I, too, will be on that beautiful mountain wrapped in glory with Jesus.

But that mountain we do not climb. Moses did not climb the Mt. of Transfiguration. His last climb was Mt. Nebo, as ours will be. Jesus brought Moses to the Mt. of Transfiguration. Jesus took him there. And He will take you there, my friend, but not before you climb Mt. Nebo.

“Climb every mountain,” the song goes. Yet there is a mountain that we cannot climb: Mt. Calvary. And so, Jesus climbed that mountain for you. He dragged His cross up that mountain. Bleeding from the thorns in His head, from the lacerations in His flesh, His trek up that mountain was a bloody trail of tears.

But they were tears of joy. Just like with Moses. Looking out over the Promised Land, Moses’ tears were not of sorrow, but of joy. Joy because the people who had been following him were going to enjoy this beautiful land, the land God had promised to them.

And so with Jesus. Any tears that fell from His eyes as He climbed Mt. Calvary were of joy. Joy that you, yes, you my friend who have been following Jesus up and down each and every mountain in your life, are going to live forever in the beautiful land of heaven that God has promised you in your baptism.

Jesus climbed Mt. Calvary for you because it was the only way to give you the Promised Land. We are sinners, you and I. And so, like Moses, we cannot step foot into the Promised Land of heaven.

But Jesus climbed Mt. Calvary to suffer and die for you, to bear your sin, to take away your sin, to be punished for your sin and the sin of the whole world.

He is your Savior, who forgives you. All of you He forgives. And He is why you will be carried from Mt. Nebo into the Promised Land. He takes you there. Jesus goes up every mountain with you in life. He will go up Mt. Nebo with you. And He, my friend, will carry you into the Promised Land of heaven.

Jesus is the only One who climbs every mountain. Whatever mountain you are presently climbing, He is with you. And He knows when Mt. Nebo will arrive for you. Moses did not fear that mountain. Nor should you. Yes, it is the end of our journey here. But the beginning of our life in the Promised Land. And all because of Jesus. Amen.