

## Luke 9:28-36

If you want to see things from a better viewpoint, go up on a mountain. On top of a mountain the air is clear, and being up so high you can see for many miles in every direction. On top of Mt. Nebo Moses was able to see all the land of Canaan as it stretched out before him. The Promised Land which the Children of Israel had been traveling to for forty years, the land flowing with milk and honey, must have brought tears to his eyes as he finally gazed upon it.

On a high mountain, years later, Peter, James, and John saw things which they had never seen before. They saw this same Moses, who had died on top of Mt. Nebo, standing with the prophet Elijah, and these two men were talking with Jesus. But Jesus, on top of that mountain, was different--much different from how they knew Him. His face was altered, shining like the sun. His clothing was dazzling white. Peter, James, and John had been heavy with sleep, but seeing such things on top of that mountain they became fully awake.

Perhaps we, too, if we were up high on a mountain would lose our sleepiness, our boredom, our apathy, and be aroused to gaze more intently upon the sacred things of God. There is a little church out in the Grand Tetons of Wyoming, and this church instead of having a wall or a stained-glass window behind the altar, has a window. It's a clear window stretching from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. The entire wall is a window. And looking out that window is a view which could take your breath away. The Teton mountains in all of their majesty are what the worshippers see as they sit in their pews every Sunday morning.

We don't have such a window. We don't have such a view. We don't have mountains around here. We don't see what worshippers in Wyoming see. We don't see what Moses saw. And we don't see what Peter, James, and John saw. We have a wall to look at. It has some nice stained-glass windows in it, but we do not have a mountaintop view. Our view is always the same.

And so are we bored, tired, apathetic about coming to worship? Peter, James, and John were heavy with sleep. Is that how we feel in traveling up here to Augusta? They trudged along behind Jesus because He told them to. But they were not excited about it. They were tired, worn out, sleepy. Maybe we are too. Week after week we trudge our way here to God's House. And is it just because God tells us to? Do we come only because we're supposed to? And after a while don't we get worn out with coming? Don't we get tired of it?

Like Peter, James, and John we need something to wake us up. Their sleepiness vanished when Jesus was transfigured before them. But that was then, and this is now. The white paraments on the altar and the white robe your pastor wears are the closest things your eyes will see to compare to the dazzling white garments of Jesus; and they aren't very close at all.

But our sleepiness is not just because of the same routine Sunday after Sunday. Is it not true that our very lives are asleep with sin? The world in which we live has lulled us into a kind of spiritual sleep. We are not watchful against temptation. We do not take our sins too seriously. We don't worry about all the bad things we do. We yawn about them and shrug them off rather casually. We think that as long as we're nice people and do not go off the deep end into terrible sins, we'll be alright. In our confused generation we have come to believe in a God who does not condemn; who does not judge; who does not cast people into hell for their unbelief; and who looks the other way when we skip church, cheat on our taxes, and disrespect those in authority. Because we believe in a God like this,

we do not become too alarmed when we hear His accusing Law. We yawn, shrug our shoulders, and say, "He's accusing someone else, not me."

Something happened to Peter, James, and John at the top of that mountain. The heavy sleep left them and not just because Jesus was changed. It was the cloud which covered them. They couldn't see a thing. No Jesus, no Moses or Elijah. But they heard the voice of God in the cloud and they were very afraid. Are we missing that in our life? That terror before God because we have offended Him? That fear of realizing how dreadful are our sins in His sight?

Wake up! You are in the presence of the holy God. You are nothing before Him, as am I. He justly condemns you and me on account of our sins. His judgment is eternal death in hell. And if we can pass this off with sleepy eyes thinking, "No big deal," then God have mercy! If you and I do not take God's Law seriously, how will we ever take His Gospel seriously? If we are not condemned in our heart by God's Law, we will think nothing of God's forgiveness.

It's not a mountaintop view that wakes us from such sinful thinking and living. It's not gazing upon the Grand Tetons during worship. It's not looking out over the Promised Land. If you and I are to be awakened from our life of sin, it is the power of God's living Word alone that will do this. It is not as important what your eyes see in worship as what your ears hear. If you are a sinner who is sorry for how you have lived, and you desire to change your sinful life, and you seek God's mercy, then this is purely by God's grace. Through His Word which is active within you, His Holy Spirit is awakening you, is pulling you out of your spiritual sleepiness, and is taking the yawns and apathy out of your worship.

And in doing this for you, the Holy Spirit then does what we all need most of all...He gives Jesus to you. After the voice, and the cloud, and Moses and Elijah were gone on top of the mountain, Peter, James, and John were all alone with Jesus. Not bright, dazzling white Jesus. Just Jesus. The same Jesus who had called them to follow Him. The same Jesus who had taught them many things. The same Jesus who always forgave them when they stumbled and fell. And that's who is here with you. Jesus into whom you are baptized. Jesus whom you were taught to love in Sunday School. Jesus who gives you His body and blood at this altar. Jesus who speaks His forgiveness to you through the mouth of His pastor. He is here now with you. He does not condemn you; He was condemned for you. He does not judge you; He was judged in your place, for He took your place on a cross.

This Jesus, your Jesus, traveled back down that glorious mountain so that, for you, He would not many days later suffer and die. And while He was suffering, Peter, James, and John again became tired. Their eyes closed in sleep as He prayed in the Garden. But again He forgave them. And so does Jesus forgive you. He forgives you even for those sins which you struggle with; which you do not want to do, but you keep doing over and over. His eyes do not grow weary and sleepy. They are always upon you, not to watch for your wrongdoings, but to help you do what is right, and to forgive you when you stumble and fall. Like a loving parent watching his or her child asleep in a crib, so Jesus is watchful over you.

He led Peter, James, and John back down the mountain, and He leads you back into your life so that wherever you are--on a high mountain somewhere, or on the plains of the Midwest, whether you are awake or asleep, He remains your loving Lord and forgiving Savior. Amen.