

When we hear the expression, “mountain-top experience,” what comes to mind? An actual mountain top, perhaps, down in the Smokies, or out west in the Rockies? Maybe on a clear day, making for one spectacular view?

A number of people say they feel closer to God on a mountain top. That it clears their mind, giving them a calm and peaceful posture, and so, they can better experience God up there, whatever that means.

This is hardly the case for Simon Peter, along with James and John here in our text. They have a real mountain-top experience. And they are close to God up there. They see Him as they had never seen Him before. Jesus is transfigured before their very eyes. But rather than clearing their minds, we see their minds becoming all muddled up. Not knowing what he is saying, Peter tells Jesus, “Tis good, Lord, to be here...let’s make some tents and stay awhile!” Not the brightest thing to say at the time, however, and for a number of reasons.

Peter speaks out of sheer terror. All three disciples are *utterly scared* it says. We might say that they are emotional wrecks up there. I guess we could say that not all mountain-top experiences are calming and peaceful.

Look at Moses. He is up there with Jesus on that mountain-top. Oh, he is calm and filled with peace up there as he talks with Jesus. But such was not the case on Mt. Sinai. Coming down that mountain, Moses saw the wickedness of God’s people. He became furious and threw down and broke the two tablets of stone upon which God had written the Ten Commandments. For Moses, not the most pleasant mountain-top experience.

We also see Elijah up there with Jesus. He, too, had quite the mountain-top experience. It was on Mt. Carmel. Elijah had demonstrated to all the people that the Lord, He is God, and that Baal is nothing. But right after that, Elijah fled for his life from Queen Jezebel. He became frustrated, depressed, and feeling defeated.

Peter, James, John, Moses, Elijah. These five men had mountain-top experiences in which they dealt with fear, anger, frustration, and more. Maybe mountain-top experiences are not everything they are made out to be.

I think, for us, we deal with these same things, and not usually on the tops of actual mountains. We don’t need to climb Mt. Carmel with Elijah to suffer from defeat, and frustration, or from hopelessness. We don’t need to go up Mt. Sinai with Moses to deal with anger, and to lose control of ourselves and our emotions. And we don’t need to climb up with Peter, James, and John to suffer from anxiety and fear. We get all these right here where we are in our lives.

I see it, though, as very comforting for us that these men of God dealt with the same things we deal with. This does not, however, keep us from having to deal with them. It’s as if we live going from mountain-top to mountain-top. From fear, to anger, to frustration, to hopelessness. We’re tired of climbing all those mountains. When will it ever end?

Let me show you. It ends on the top of a hill outside of Jerusalem. We call it Mt. Calvary. Here Jesus climbed up with His cross to deal, once and for all, with our fears, our anger issues, our frustrations, our hopelessness. Jesus dealt with the root of all these – our sinfulness.

This is why Peter's little speech up on that mountain was not very bright. "Tis good, Lord, to be here...let's stay!" No Peter. Not on this mountain. Jesus must go to Jerusalem to suffer, and be killed, and be raised to life. And Jesus had been saying this very thing all along. This is why the voice from the cloud said of Jesus: "*Listen to Him!*" He knows what He's talking about. He must go to that mountain and die on the cross.

And because He did, it changes everything. Whatever mountain you are climbing right now, that mountain is not your place to dwell. You do not need to pitch a tent up there for yourself. Your place is under the cross of Jesus. Here you are safe with Him. Here His cleansing blood covers you, covers all your sinfulness.

Oh, I know how it is. I'm the same way. Sometimes we do climb up the mountain of anger, or the mountain of frustration. Sometimes we climb up with Peter, James, and John the mountain of fear; fear because we are still on this side of heaven, and so we wrestle with temptation, and so often we give in and we become afraid. "Will God forgive me again for this same, stupid sin?"

Yes, my friend, He forgives you again, and again, and again. For your unrighteous anger, He forgives you. For losing control of yourself, He forgives you. For everything, for all of it, He forgives you.

You may still climb those mountains at times, but you live in the tent that Jesus made for you. The dwelling of your baptism where you have Jesus' promise that you always belong to Him. Yes, always, no matter where, or how, you have strayed away from Him; and that He always, yes always forgives you.

This is your mountain-top experience – your baptism into Christ. This is where you are truly close to God. And here at His altar, at His table of grace for you. Here Jesus brings His cross to you. Here in bread and wine He gives you His body, crucified for you on that hill outside Jerusalem, and His blood, shed on your behalf there.

This is your dwelling. Not up there on Mt. Sinai with Moses. Not with Elijah on Mt. Carmel. And not with Peter, James, and John up on that high mountain. Forget Peter's tents up there. They are not for you. Oh, you will see Jesus in all His glory as they did on that mountain. In heaven you will see it. And there will be your dwelling forever. But until then, here is your tent. Under the cross of your Lord and Savior where His blood is poured out for you, and always covers you. Amen.