

# Up and Down the Mountain

One of the greatest needs in the church of our day is for God's people to recapture a vision of Christ's divine majesty that will compel us to sacrificial service. Our text for today leads us to that very place:

## Mark 9:2-13

<sup>2</sup> And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup> and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup> And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." <sup>8</sup> And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

<sup>9</sup> And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. <sup>11</sup> And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>12</sup> And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

## I. We must climb the Mountain to behold His Majesty (vv.2-8)

In fulfilling His promise to His disciples in v. 1, Jesus leads them up the mountain that they may see His transfigured majesty. Throughout the Scriptures, God's servants have been compelled by a vision of God's majesty. Consider Moses in Ex. 3, Isaiah in Is. 6, Ezekiel in Ez. 1, Saul in Acts 9, and John in Rev. 1. In each case God's servants had a vision of God's greatness before they fulfilled God's calling. So must we. We can see the need for this, even in the natural realm. Once when asked why he climbed mountains, Rene Daumal said:

*"You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again.*

*So why bother in the first place?*

*Just this: What is above knows what is below,  
but what is below does not know what is above.*

*One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen.*

*There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions  
by the memory of what one saw higher up.*

*When one can no longer see, one can at least still know."*

What the disciples see on the mountain is not the valleys below, but rather the radiant splendor of Jesus Christ. They get their eyes and ears full of His majesty. This is why we enter His sanctuary each Lord's Day: to renew our vision of His glory. Imagine what Peter would have missed if he had told Jesus he was too busy that day; or imagine Peter coming down the mountain complaining, "you know, we could have done that in half the time."

## II. We must come down the Mountain to enter His sacrificial service (vv. 9-13)

Although Peter would obviously like to build three monuments and hang around awhile, they all must come down the mountain to live and serve in our broken and needy world. Jesus gives them two instructions:

**A. Keep the secret (vv. 9,10)**

In Colossians 3:1-4, Paul gives us vital spiritual direction:

**1** If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Notice that we are now "hidden with Christ," that is, our identity is not yet known. When shall our identities be evident to all? When He appears. Until then, we guard the secret in our hearts.

**B. Carry the cross (vv. 11-13)**

The disciples ask about Elijah. Jesus explains that he has already come, but they apparently missed him, because he suffered. Jesus will suffer, too. So will the disciples. So will you. Cf. Romans 8:17; Phil. 3:10,11. Glory comes through suffering.

**Discussion Questions**

1. How can we spiritually "climb the mountain" today to renew our vision of God's divine majesty
2. Why do we fail to do this as we ought?
3. What is the significance of Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus? Of the cloud? Of the voice?
4. What are some ways in which Jesus' disciples today wrongly "stay on the mountain" and fail to enter His sacrificial service?
5. When we hear God the Father say "listen to him," how ought we modern Christians be most challenged in our listening to Jesus Christ?