

## **Seeing is Believing**

If you want to believe these stories about Jesus, then, sometimes it helps to see these stories about Jesus.

And, if you want to believe and keep believing the truth about Jesus, then sometimes it helps to see and keep seeing the truth about Jesus.

If you want to believe in the ways of Jesus, the love of Jesus, the saving grace of Jesus, then sometimes you simply need to see those ways, see that love and see that grace of Jesus.

For, to believe in that bright cloud, that face shining like the sun, that transfiguration, that transformation, that revelation! To have that mountain top experience....sometimes we simply need to go to the top of the mountain.

On that day, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and he led them up a high mountain. He led them to a place away from their ordinary place. To a place they had never been. To a place they feared to go. And they followed. They followed just as Jesus had asked them to follow. Denying themselves, trusting in him. Ready to sacrifice their lives in order to gain new life. They followed. On that day, with trust, they followed Jesus to the top of the mountain.

And on the top of that mountain they saw something. Free from the realities of their everyday lives, they were able to see more clearly than they had ever seen before, they had a vision. A revelation.

On the top of that mountain, that place they had never been, that place foreign to them, the truth was revealed. The truth about Jesus. His ways, his stories, his love, his grace...it was of God...and from God.

It was known. In that moment, on that mountain, it was known to them that Jesus was and is everything God had ever hoped for and called for from the most ancient of days. And God said, "This is my Son the Beloved; with him I am well pleased."

Who wouldn't want to build an altar...construct a monument...mark that place as holy. It was there that the truth about Jesus was made known to them. Surely it is that particular place that we meet God, that we commune with God. It was a holy place.

But Jesus said, "Get up and do not be afraid."

Get up. Do not be afraid. And, come with me.

Come down the mountain. And, follow me.

Follow me. That day and this day, Jesus calls us to follow. Not to one particular, rather to any place. Not to one mountain top, but to any mountain top. Not to one encounter with God, but to many encounters with God.

Because what we know today, as they knew that day, is that the ways of Jesus, the stories of Jesus, the love of Jesus is of God. And so when we follow in his ways, take to

heart his stories, and share his love – at the top of a mountain or the bottom of a valley – we will know that God is with us. But, we must follow.

We must follow as he calls us to follow – denying ourselves – losing our lives that we might gain new life. When we follow, willingly and sacrificially, we will know and we will encounter and see and believe the presence of God.

At the Hope Food Pantry on a Wednesday afternoon, serving food to the hungry, we can see and believe in the presence of God.

At the CAP Center on a Tuesday evening, packing and distributing groceries for the struggling, we can see and believe in the love of God.

At a nursing home nearby, bedside with a friend or a stranger, we can see and believe in the grace of God.

At a memorial service for a dear friend and member of this church, gathered with family and loved ones as a flag is folded and an honorable man saluted, we can see and believe in the mercy of God.

We can see and believe in God. We can have a mountain top experience...because the top of the mountain stands right before us everyday and everywhere. The top of the mountain is not a physical place...but a spiritual place.

It is that place where we move beyond the calls of everyday life, where we move beyond ourselves, lose ourselves for the sake of others...for the sake of those who need us...for the sake of God.

And it is that place where we move beyond our fears, where we move beyond our doubts, where we move with trust that God will care for us...God will meet us...God will commune with us...be with us as we are with one another.

The top of the mountain is a spiritual place...a holy place...and Jesus calls us to follow him there. To have a mountain top experience.

To encounter God by the ways of Jesus, with the love of Jesus, in the grace of Jesus...as we encounter one another.

The top of the mountain is right here...right now...

Awaiting us, prepared for us, set for us.

Calling us.

Let us go to the mountain.

Let us see and let us believe.

Let us meet our God.