

The Mountain and the Valleys

Catherine Anderson

September 4, 2022

The Mountain and the Valleys

Taught by [Catherine Anderson](#)

Series: Who Is This Man?

9.4.22

Mark 9:2-29

Old Testament Imagery

“after six days”

Moses spent six days on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:16)

“high mountain”

recalls Mt Sinai where Moses met God. In the Bible, mountains are places where God reveals himself to humanity. (Genesis 22: 2, Exodus 24: 15, Deuteronomy 34:1, I Kings 8:20, 19:11, Ezekiel 40:2, Matthew 5:1)

“transfigured before them”

like Moses (Exodus 34:35)

Moses and Elijah

The presence of Moses and Elijah represents the prophetic tradition that anticipated Jesus. Both were deliverers of Israel: Moses from captivity, Elijah from false gods. (Acts 10:43, Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18, Malachi 4:4-6)

Cloud

Symbol of God’s presence and glory (Exodus 24:15-16, Exodus 40:35, I Kings 8:10-11)

Voice

Present at Jesus’s baptism by John the Baptist. (Matthew 3: 17, Mark 1:11, Luke 3: 22)

Clearly, Mark is connecting the transfiguration to God's ongoing work and purposes as recorded in Scripture, in the Hebrew Bible.

Takeaways:

1. Prayer is indispensable. Prayer is key to discipleship. Flannery O'Connor writes: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief"... is the most natural and most human and most agonizing prayer in the gospels, and I think it is the foundation prayer of faith." Or as Frederick Buechner said: "'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief' is the best any of us can do really, but thank God it is enough."
2. To be a disciple of Jesus means we will and must experience the mountains and the valleys.

Quotes

From *The Gospel According to Mark*, James Edwards

"The Transfiguration anticipates the resurrection and it has the purpose of encouraging the disciples to believe and follow Jesus all the way to the cross." (p. 271)

[The command to silence] reinforces that the cross and resurrection are the only vantage point from which Jesus' life and ministry can be understood according to their divine purpose, and that until the cross and resurrection all other knowledge of Jesus is peripheral and inadequate. The command to silence is especially pertinent in the afterglow of the transfiguration, lest the disciples succumb to the glory and emotional adrenaline of the mountain rather than the necessity of the way to Jerusalem and the cross. The transfiguration is indeed a preview of the resurrection, but the disciples inherit the *gloria resurrectionis* only through the *via dolorosa crucis*. (P. 273)

From Matthew Myer-Boulton, from *SaltProject.org* blog, Year B, February 2018

[We learn] that the compassionate heart of God is most powerfully revealed amidst the broken, the sinful, the suffering, and the despairing. The kingdom of God shines most brightly against the backdrop of the parent who grieves, the child who cries, the "demons" who oppress, and the disciples who try but fail to manufacture the

holy. God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. God's beauty is best contained in broken vessels. We might not like this aspect of faith, but it's an aspect that has much to teach us.

The discipline of the valley happens in the valley. Finding God in the ordinary requires dwelling in the ordinary. We learn quotidian holiness only in the seconds, minutes, hours, and days of our "regular" lives. There are no shortcuts. God is not in the business of offering us permanent real estate on the mountaintops.

So here's the great challenge of the Christian life: can we speak glory to agony, and agony to glory? Can we hold the mountain and the valley *as one* — denying neither, and embracing both? Can we do this hard work out of love and compassion for each other, so that no one among us is left to hurt and suffer in the places where God's presence is harder to discern?