

² After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴ And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵ Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷ Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

⁸ Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

What do you think was the most wonderful thing they saw on that mountaintop? Was it Jesus’ glory? They had seen glimpses before, but nothing quite like this. His glory as true God is shining so brightly not even his clothes can cover it up – they’re glowing whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Talk about a sight! Or was it Moses and Elijah? Two heroes from the Old Testament, gone to heaven centuries before, now back in living color, talking with Jesus. Or maybe it was when God the Father made his presence known – in that glory cloud that up until then they had only read about in their bibles. Getting to hear the voice of God himself say, “This is my Son, whom I love; listen to him.”

There were plenty of wonderful sights and sounds on that mountaintop. But there’s one more glorious than the rest. It’s this: **Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.** Glory cloud, gone. Moses and Elijah, gone. Just Jesus, back to “normal.”

Maybe that doesn’t seem very wonderful to you at first. Peter would have agreed. He got that he was seeing a slice of heaven on earth, and he wanted the glory to last. **“Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.”**

Not too unlike us. No, we’ve never experienced anything quite that wonderful. But God does give us some pretty wonderful experiences in this life, doesn’t he? Mountaintop moments. When you welcome your first child into the world. Your wedding day. Everything at work going well, and peace on the homefront, too. And we say, “It’s good to be here!” And we want Jesus to make the glory last.

But he doesn’t, does he? Jesus brings us down into valleys, too. Instead of welcoming a child, we say goodbye to someone we love who dies. The marriage falls on the rocks. We lose the job, and find conflict in the family.

And so quickly the goal of our lives can become finding the mountains and staying on them. And we can start to see Jesus like Peter did – just the one who can keep me on the mountain and out of the valleys. And when he doesn't, we get frustrated.

It is good for us to be here – to learn with Peter that we needed more than just a mountaintop Savior. Did you notice what Mark said drove his words? It wasn't just excitement. It was fear. Seeing Jesus in glory terrified them. It was a slice of heaven that drove home they weren't fit for it – sinners who could only fall on their faces in terror before a holy God.

Are you starting to see why the most wonderful sight was Jesus, back to "normal?" It wasn't his normal. Normal for him was the glory he showed them on that mountain! But if Jesus had stayed in that glory where he belonged, then it would forever be a place we don't belong. Then falling down before Jesus like Peter in fear of his punishment is all we would know.

But that's what makes it the most wonderful sight on the mountain: **Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.** He does the same thing he did when he came from heaven to earth – sets aside the glory that was his. And he does it for the same reason – he loves you. He loved you enough to walk down the mountain in humility that day. He loved you enough to walk up a hill, carrying a cross, six months later. He loved you enough to trade his glory for the shame of your sins there, to suffer the punishment you fear there...to take your sins away and make you fit for heaven. To win you something far better than a few years of mountaintop moments here. To win you perfect, permanent glory in heaven.

Is there any sight more glorious than the cross? There, Jesus doesn't just show you what he can do – shine like the sun. He shows you the glory of his love – what he's willing to do to save you.

Jesus showed his glory on the mountain so his disciples could see it at the cross. So that as they went through that darkest of valleys – watching Jesus be betrayed, rejected, suffer and die, they'd know it wasn't because he was helpless to save himself, but because in love he chose to save them. So they could know that, even then, Jesus was God, and everything was going according to plan, and his plan was to save them. So that they could say, even on Good Friday, "It's good to be here."

And that's why we can say the same. Not just in our mountaintop moments, but in our darkest valleys, we can say, "It's good to be here." Because his love hasn't changed. Even there, Jesus is God, and everything is going according to his plan, and his plan is to save. To bring us to glory that lasts.

Can you picture it? Jesus, shining like the sun. Moses and Elijah and every believer. Father's glory cloud hovering over us. Mount of transfiguration, times eternity, no fear...and no more valleys ever again. Boy, will it be good to be there! Amen.