

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations in our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord our Rock and our redeemer; Amen.

Growing up my family, as I'm sure most of your families do, had special family traditions. For example, we made whoopie pies and Christmas cookies every year at Christmas time. Every Memorial Day and Labor Day we would spend the day in the pool or out on our boat on lake or in the river. For our birthdays we got to choose our favorite meal for Mom to make us. These traditions were special things that made us, us. Well my absolute favorite family tradition was coming to Pennsylvania to visit my great grandparents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins the week between Christmas and New Year's. Each year I would have a countdown, anticipating the day after Christmas when we would pile up in our car and head north.

Upon our arrival at my grandparent's house or very soon thereafter, my entire family would be gather together, everyone. We would eat meals together...did I mention they were always my favorite meals, like homemade pot pie and applesauce and my grandma would keep my favorite snacks in the house too? We would have sleep over after sleepover with my cousins, we would eat at our family's favorite restaurants and visit the cemetery where my mom's side of the family was buried, we would have a huge gift exchange, watch movies, play cards and go to church together. Life together was grand. And every year like clockwork, when it was time to go home, my heart would fill with gratitude for our time together, but also be filled with sadness. I loved time with my family. It was perfect. But truthfully, not living next to my family made our time together go more smoothly.

You see, my life long goal was to live next to my mom's family, to be able to experience what I did the week between Christmas and New Year's all the time, to make my life that mountaintop experience. So, when it was time to choose my seminary it was only natural that I

picked Gettysburg, the closest seminary to my family. I finally got my dream. But something happened when I lived with them all the time. I found out that my family didn't get along all the time. I discovered that my grandma didn't always cook my favorite meals or go to my favorite restaurants. I realized that there were rules I was expected to follow when me being a part of the family was a more permanent situation. I found out when something is permanent it can't be a mountaintop experience.

Today we have one of history's greatest mountaintop experiences. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up to a high mountain. Jesus is exhausted. He has just performed miracle after miracle, done healing after healing. He needs a time of respite. He needs for his cup to be refilled. So Jesus does what any of us would do, he turns to his inner circle, his people and he takes a vacation, well sort of. He finds a place that is high up on top of a mountain and was isolated. I'm sure as they were walking along, climbing the mountain, the guys were wondering what in the world was going on. I bet they were looking at the rocky terrain and wondering if they would ever arrive at their destination. Finally, Jesus stops. They look around, to survey their new surrounding, and something very strange happens.

All of a sudden Jesus changed right before their eyes. Now, they had to know, even though he looked different, this was Jesus. There was no one but the four of them. And when they looked at Jesus, his clothes became a dazzling white, way whiter than any bleach or tide pod could get them. And remember his clothes would have been dirty! They had just traveled for miles and miles in sandals and then hiked up the side of a mountain. There was no way they were just delusional. Jesus was transformed. And then even more crazy than Jesus' new look, Elijah and Moses, two of the greatest prophets in ancient tradition appeared before them and were

talking to Jesus. I can't even begin to imagine how overwhelmed and excited and amazed the disciples were.

Then my good old friend Peter does exactly what I imagine I'd do if I were experiencing a transformation of Jesus and seeing famous dead people come to life, especially people that were thought to be next to God; Peter he starts rambling. And the best thing that he could think to say was, "Wow I really want to stay here. I don't want things to change. I want them to be exactly as they are in this particular moment. I want to freeze time. Please Rabbi, please can we stay right here on this mountain, I'll even build us a place to stay? And then in the midst of Peter's scattered thoughts, a dark cloud came over them and they heard the voice of God saying, "This is my Son the Beloved, Listen to him!" And the transfiguring and the prophets were gone and all that was left was Jesus standing.

What a letdown. One moment you are in the presence of people who, for the Jewish community, were as important as Jesus is for us. The next minute they are gone. I bet the disciples were wondering if what they saw really happened or if it was the figment of their imagination. And what about Jesus? In that moment, for that inner circle, they knew they were standing next to the son of God, and yet they could tell no one until Jesus died. Wait. What? Jesus is going to die? Oh the confusion. What would happen next?

We, like the disciples all have had mountain top experiences in our lives. Hopefully you've had more than one. They are special places in time where something good and right and peaceful breaks into the chaos of our everyday lives. In those moments we want to freeze time. We want to stay there forever where life seems good, but as hard as we try it's just not possible. Even Jesus had to come back down off that mountain.

Mountain top experiences are what fill our cups, they are what make us feel energized, they give us the stamina to survive whatever life throws at us. They are glimpses of the kingdom of heaven, what things will be like one day when all of creation is restored, when we sit at the feet of God for all of eternity. They are important to our lives. But they are like vacations, they can't last forever.

When we come down off those mountaintops into the valleys of life, we come down remembering that God goes with us. We come down full of energy and of life and of love. And Jesus, unlike the disciples in his inner circle today, calls us to go out into the world proclaiming that life abundant and the love that God has already and continues to show to us.

So get up and go, knowing that you are loved, that you are cherished, that you are God's beloved children. Go spreading joy and peace and love. Amen.