

God of the Mountain Top; God of the Valley Below

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[0 : 00] This time of the year we look back to the birth, the birth of Christ, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity.

! And nearly every day of our lives we look back to another event, the cross, and it's important I think for us to look back in view of looking forward.

So we look back at the birth, look back at His cross, but we're always looking forward to His coming and maybe that'll be today, who knows. Well, I want you to take your Bibles this morning and open them to Luke chapter 9, and we're ready now for verse 37 through 45.

That will be our text for this morning. Luke chapter 9, verses 37 through 45. You say, Pastor, are you going to be preaching a Christmas message this morning?

Thanksgiving is past now, and now we're full speed ahead for Christmas, and are you going to preach a Christmas message? And the answer to that is no, not yet.

[1 : 23] I'll take a couple of Sundays before, well, yeah, two Sundays before Christmas and preach some messages related to that great and wonderful event.

But for the next two Sundays, I'm going to stick with our plan, preaching through the Gospel of Luke, and we're ready now for verses 37 through 45. So listen, follow along in your Bible as I read. Now, it happened on the next day when they had come down from the mountain that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly, a man from the multitude cried out, saying, Teacher, I implore you, look on my son, for he is my only child.

Behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.

So I implored your disciples to cast it out, but they could not. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?

[2 : 32] Bring your son here. And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed him. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.

They were all amazed at the majesty of God. For while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, he said to his disciples, Let these words sink down into your ears.

For the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men. But they did not understand his saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it, and they were afraid to ask him about this saying.

All right, now, to begin with, I want you to notice that verse 37 is transitional. It's meant to serve as a transition.

And we know that, again, because of the conjunction. Now, Luke writes, Now, it happened on the next day. Now, or and, or then, it happened on the next day.

[3 : 38] And I want you to note the conjunction now. Now, some of you are looking at your Bibles and you're saying, But, Pastor, it's not in my copy of God's Word, not in my version of the Bible.

And, indeed, you're correct. It does not appear in many of the versions of the Bible. It is in the Greek text, however. The conjunction is there.

And that is, we find that in the King James and New King James. Some of the more modern translations in ASB, ESV, NIV, and I'm not sure what else we might have out there.

Some of those versions chose to leave that word untranslated, the conjunction. But it is in the Greek text, and it serves, as I've said before, it serves to connect what comes next with what came before.

And that's why the conjunction is so important. Now, what came before? It's been a couple of weeks since we've been in Luke chapter 9, so you may have forgotten. But what came before was

the Mount of Transfiguration, remember?

[4 : 47] When Jesus took Peter, James, and John, those three of his apostles, up to the top of a mountain to pray. And there Jesus was, quote, transfigured.

Transfigured. He was changed. We could say he was morphed. And literally, we could say that because the word is metamorpho, from which we get our word metamorphosis.

And so, a metamorphosis took place in his visible appearance. That's what happened on the Mount. That's what happened through this transfiguration. And the point being that his true nature as the Son of God became visible to his apostles, Peter, James, and John.

Luke says that they saw his glory. That is, they saw the radiance of his glorious person as the Son of God.

They were allowed to witness that, allowed to observe that. What a tremendous experience for these three apostles. And so, getting back to verse 37, verse 37 connects this glorious revelation of the deity and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 05] Connects that with what comes next. And so, this is how Luke writes it. Now, or then, it happened on the next day.

What happened on the next day? When they came down from the mountain. They came down from the mountain on the next day. That mountain where Jesus was transfigured. And what happened? A great multitude met him. All right, so they come down from the mountain and there is a multitude of people. And so, Luke, really the Holy Spirit, wants his readers then to connect this next event, what's going to come next, with the event that has just occurred.

All right, Pastor, great and wonderful. Why? Why would he need to do that? Well, because, and don't miss this, because this is what the passage really is all about.

Because he wants us to know that the God revealed on the mountain is also the God in the valley.

[7 : 09] And that's important to us. Why? Because where do we live? Do we live on the mountain or do we live in the valley? Now, you see, our hope certainly is in the God on the mountain.

The one revealed on the mountain. The one revealed to Peter, James, and John. Our hope is in more than just a mere man. Right? Because Jesus was more than just a mere man.

He lived, yes, he preached, he taught, he healed, he died upon the cross. But Jesus was no mere man. And our hope is in Jesus, the Jesus revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration as the glorious, glorious, divine Son of God.

And so our hope is on the mountain. But our faith is needed here in the valley. Because that's where we live. For now, we live in the valley.

And the good news is that it is, again, this. The God on the mountain is also the God in the valley. And so this is what it all comes down to.

[8 : 23] If all of our hope is in the Jesus revealed to Peter, James, and John there on the Mount of Transfiguration, then all of our trust, all of our faith must be in that same Jesus here in the valley.

Because the God on the mountain is the God in the valley. And the valley is where we live right now. Got it? Okay? Well, let's see it then. Let's see it from this passage.

And so looking at the text, first of all, we need to, number one, recognize the reality of troubles. We need to recognize the reality of troubles.

That's number one. Peter, James, and John got a huge reality check when they came down from that mountain.

Huge reality check. Now think about it. Think about the comparison. The transition from the mountain to the valley. Think about it. They were there on the mountain with Jesus.

[9 : 28] Had been selected by him to be there. Those three, Peter, James, and John, out of all the other apostles, they were selected to go to the mountaintop and to be there with Jesus there.

And when they were there, they saw Moses and Elijah, two giants of the faith. And not only that, but they saw Jesus, as I've already said, they saw Jesus in all of his regal splendor as the glorious Son of God.

And then added to that, they heard the very voice of God the Father, who spoke and declared both the deity of Jesus and also his sovereignty.

Remember what he said? He said, this is my beloved Son. Hear him. Now, can you imagine what kind of mountaintop experience that would have been?

Incredible. And I'm sure Peter, James, and John were thinking, man, this is it. This is the ultimate. And then comes the reality check.

[10:34] They came down from the mountain. And Luke says they were met there by a great multitude of people. Mark, by the way, who also gives us an account of this same event, Mark gives us a little bit more detail, a few other details.

In Mark chapter 9 and verse 14, the Bible reveals that when the disciples came down from the mountain, they saw a great multitude. And they saw the disciples, and they were surrounded by this great multitude.

And they also saw that there were scribes there, teachers of the law, and they were arguing with the disciples. Welcome back to the valley. And, you know, I think if I had been one of the apostles, I would have wanted to do an about face and march back up that mountain.

But then comes a further reality check. Verse 38, look at it again. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out. All right, so it's not just a multitude of people, but ultimately one man cries out, saying, teacher, I implore you, look on my son, my poor son.

And he is my only child. And behold, a spirit seizes him, and suddenly he cries out. It convulses him so that he foams at the mouth, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.

[12:03] So I implored your disciples to cast it out, but they could not. Now, what is the Bible saying to us here with all of this? I mean, certainly you notice the stark contrast.

One minute we're on the mountaintop, and we're seeing the amazing display of the glory of Jesus Christ, and then the next minute we're met with a multitude of needy people, a group of naysaying scribes, a desperate father whose only son is demon-possessed, and some disciples of Jesus who lack the faith to heal him.

Welcome back to the valley, you see. Now, there's a reason for this reality check, and I think Luke is giving us a reality check. There's a reason for it. In fact, there are two reasons, really.

In the first place, God wants us to recognize where we live. We're not to lose sight of that fact, that reality. Of course, it's pretty hard to sometimes, because that reality is so close to us, but sometimes we can lose sight of it.

He wants us to understand where we live, the reality of our troubles. I asked that question a moment ago. Where do we live? On the mountain, or do we live in the valley?

[13:22] Do we live on the mountain where we can always see Jesus clearly, where we can always see Jesus for who he really is, is where we can always see his sovereignty, his majesty, his glory, his power, and we can always see that very clearly?

Is that where we live? That is, by the way, where Peter wanted to continue to live. Remember what Peter said to Jesus there on top of the mountain? He said, man, this is great. Let's build three tabernacles, three tents.

Let's build one for you, Jesus, one for Elijah, one for Moses, and the idea being, let's just stay right here and bask in this wonderful glory. And so, on the mountain, is that where we normally live?

No. That's not where we live, not yet anyway. We live in the valley. And I believe that's what Luke is doing here. He leads us from the Mount of Transfiguration right back down to the troubles of everyday life.

Or as Adrian Rogers used to put it, from the sweet by-and-bys to the nasty now-and-nows. That's where we live. Now, to be sure, and I think nearly all of us, all of us probably could attest to this, that God's people do have some occasional, I would call them near-mountaintop experiences.

[14:42] I mean, we couldn't hardly compare anything we could experience here with what Peter, James, and John experienced. So we'll just call it near-mountaintop experiences. And occasionally we have those, and then we wonder why God won't let us stay there.

You ever wondered that? In fact, when the troubles of this world come roaring back, and they always do, we're often surprised by it. You know, we say, this isn't supposed to happen to me. And then next we move to complaining to God about it. Why is this happening to me, Lord? And then we begin to question and to doubt God's sovereignty by asking the question, why are you letting this happen to me?

That's kind of the natural digression of things that we experience when the troubles come crashing back. But God wants us to know that our world right now is not the world to come.

When, according to Revelation 21, 4, God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. When there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.

[15:51] When there shall be no more pain. When the former things have passed away. When he who sits on the throne will say, behold, I make all things new. Won't that be a wonderful world?

No. But we don't live there yet. We don't live in that world yet. And so this is what Luke is doing in our passage.

First he wants us to recognize where we live or the reality of our troubles. And he wants us then to recognize who lives here also. Who lives here with us.

And this is a wonderful promise, a wonderful truth here. The apostles came down from the mountain, but who came down with them? Jesus did, of course. He came down.

And during the times of the disciples, of course, Jesus lived in this world. Jesus lived in this world of woe. He healed the sick. He cast out demons. He delivered people from the bondage of Satan.

[16:48] Jesus lived and ministered in the world, this world that is filled with trouble. And listen, Jesus still lives here today.

Do you doubt that? He still lives in this world today. He lives in the hearts of his redeemed children. He lives in the church, which is today his incarnation. He's living in this world today. And Jesus said in John 16, 33, in this world you will have tribulation.

You're going to have troubles. You can count on it. But he goes on to say, Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. And so Luke is reminding us of this, that the God on the mountain is also the God in the valley, but faith is required in the valley.

And so that leads to a second thing we need to see from this passage. First of all, recognize the reality of troubles. But second, respond to the requirement of trust.

[17:59] Trust. Trust. And this really moves us to the primary concern of this particular passage of Scripture. And it's faith. That's really the subject here. It's faith.

Or we could call it trusting Jesus at all times for all things. What happens next in this passage seems a little strange to us.

At least it does to me. Verse 40, look at it again. This father said to Jesus, I implored your disciples to cast this demon out, but they could not.

And how did Jesus answer it? He answered and said, Oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Now, to whom is Jesus referring?

The multitudes? The crowd that was there that day? And I guess by extension, all of the nation of Israel, God's chosen people, was referring to them? Or the father?

[19:05] The father of the demon afflicted boy? Is he referring to him? Or maybe the disciples?

The disciples who were unable to heal the boy? To whom was Jesus referring?

When he said, Oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long am I going to put up with you? To whom was he referring? The crowds? Israel? The father? The disciples?

I think the answer is all of the above. As for the multitudes, on at least five other occasions, Jesus said something similar concerning the entire nation of Israel.

As for the father of this boy, I mean, the father did do the right thing, didn't he? I mean, he did bring his boy to Jesus, which, by the way, is another lesson for parents.

He brought his son to Jesus. He did the right thing. Brought his son to the right person. And so perhaps Jesus' rebuke is less about the father than it was about others who were gathered there that day.

[20:09] And yet, I would say to you that the father also needed a lesson on faith. Now, Luke doesn't really tell us this, but Mark does. Mark, in his account, in Mark 9, 22, the father says to Jesus, and listen to what he said to Jesus, but if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

Now, I want you to think for a moment about what this father said. He said to Jesus, of all people, he said to Jesus, if you can do anything, or if you can do anything, or if you can do anything, or if you can do anything, or if you can do anything, no matter where you put the emphasis, it still comes out the same.

Weak faith, a lack of faith. And how did Jesus respond to the father? Well, you're not looking at that passage, so let me go ahead and tell you. Jesus just turned his words right back to the father.

He said, if you can, is that what you're asking? If you can. And then he said, all things are possible to him who believes.

Believes what? Believes in self? Certainly not. Believes in faith? No, he's not saying that either.

[21:44] It's not faith in faith that we need. God? Yes. Certainly. Now understand this, that faith has only as much power as its object.

And so if you place your faith in self, then your faith has really no power. Faith has only as much power as its object.

And powerful faith has God as its object, and I would add, and has his divine will as its one desire. That's powerful faith.

And according to Mark, the father, I think, understood Jesus' lesson on faith because the Bible says immediately, the father of the child cried out and said, with tears, Lord, I believe.

Help my unbelief. Remember that? So then, getting back to Luke 9, 41 and Jesus' rebuke here, Jesus' charge is faithlessness, and the target of this rebuke includes, I think, the nation of Israel.

[22 : 53] I think that's very clear. You could hardly argue that point. But I think it also includes, to a lesser degree, the father of the boy, as I've said. But it seems to me that Jesus' own disciples were in the bullseye of Jesus' rebuke.

Why were they unable to heal this boy? I mean, why were they? You say, well, pastor, I mean, this is a demon we're talking about here.

I mean, that's a pretty big thing. Cast out a demon, and so it just simply was beyond what they could do. I mean, that's pretty obvious, isn't it?

Is that what you think? Well, what about verse 1 of this same chapter? You look there at verse 1, chapter 9.

The Bible says, then he called his 12 disciples together and gave them, what? Power and authority over, what? All demons.

[24 : 01] All demons and to cure diseases. So, I ask the question again, so why couldn't they do it? Well, that's what they wanted to know, by the way.

Now, Matthew's the one that tells us about that. In Matthew 17, 19, the Bible says, then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, why could we not cast it out? And so Jesus said to them, because of your unbelief, because of your lack of faith.

The New American Standard translated, because of your littleness of faith. Now, that seems to line up, I think, with what Jesus said in Luke 9, 41.

Oh, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father.

I think that lines up, you see. The disciples' faithlessness, their unbelief, in order to cast out the demon, because they'd already been given the authority and the power.

[25 : 12] Now, I entitled this sermon this morning, Hope on the Mountain, Faith in the Valley. Our hope is the one who revealed himself, his true nature to Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration.

And our hope is in him, in Jesus. But we do not live on the mountain, we live in the valley. And faith is required in the valley.

But how can we have the kind of faith that God requires in the valley? I think that would be the natural next question. And we can find that out from this passage as well.

And so I want you to notice third and finally this morning. First, recognize the reality of troubles.

We're living in the valley. Second, recognize the, or rather, respond to the requirement of trust.

We're living in the valley and faith is required in the valley. But third and finally, rest in the revelation of truth.

[26 : 16] rest in the revelation of truth, God's revealed truth. Jesus said in verse 41 that the disciples were faithless. That's what he said of them.

And in Matthew 17, 19, he said, you have a little faith. They have a little faith, the littleness of their faith. Now, the object of faith is to be God, right?

We've already established that. Certainly, I hope you came here already knowing that. The object of our faith is God. But let me ask you this. What is to be the foundation of our faith?

That is, on the basis of what does your faith rest? You say, God. Well, that's right, but not totally right.

The basis of our faith, it rests upon truth, revealed truth, divine truth.

[27 : 22] It is founded upon God's word. You see, we're not just believing in God with some kind of blind faith.

God has been gracious to give us his word. Now, God and his word are the same, all right? I'm not saying that we ought to idolize the Bible, make it one of our idols and set it up there and worship it.

But what we are saying is the truth, God's divine truth is revealed and so our faith that is directed toward God has God as our object.

Our faith is founded upon the sure word of God. Now, in our passage we are taught this.

In fact, we're given two lessons here on the foundation of our faith. The first one I've really already mentioned a little bit and it comes in the first part of this passage and it is the answer to this question, why were the disciples unable to heal this demon afflicted boy?

[28 : 34] And the answer to that is because they had a weak faith, right? We've already talked about that. And why was their faith weak? Because they did not fully believe the words of Jesus.

They didn't take him at his word, right? Because Jesus had already said in verse one, I have given you power and authority over all demons and the disciples did not fully believe it.

In fact, I really think that Jesus allowed his disciples to fail at this point just so that he could reveal to them how weak their faith was. So he could reveal to them that they were not founding, basing their faith upon his word, taking Jesus at his word.

All right, so that's the first lesson on faith. The second lesson comes in the second part of the text and we've not looked at this. In verse 44, Jesus said to his disciples, let these words sink down in your ears for the son of man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.

Both Matthew and Mark in their accounts give a full statement of what Jesus said. He said the son of man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men and they will kill him and after he is killed he will rise on the third day.

[29 : 55] Rise the third day. What is this? This is the word of Jesus. this is God's word. This is what Jesus said will happen.

This is the word of God. Did the disciples take Jesus at his word? No. Did the disciples believe in Jesus based upon the truth of his word?

No. They did not. Verse 45 says, but they did not understand this saying. even though by the way this was not the first time Jesus told them this.

You can go back to verse 22 in this very same chapter. Jesus says almost the same identical words. They didn't believe him then, didn't believe him here.

In fact, they were so ashamed of it they were afraid to even ask him about it. Now, for the disciples, I mean, this is a lesson on faith.

[30 : 55] Take God at his word. Before the disciples, this full lesson of faith would be deferred until a later date. A time when Jesus' word that he gave them would be actually fulfilled.

And you can go all the way almost to the end of the gospel of Luke and see this in Luke 24 and verse 5. Jesus has now already gone to the cross. He died. He was buried.

He was raised on the third day just like he said he would be. But they didn't believe it. And now we're at the empty tomb and there are two angels there.

And the angels said this, why do you seek the living among the dead? Remember this? He's not here, but is risen. And then the angel said, remember?

Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee? That's a reference clear back to our text here in Luke 9. Remember how he spoke to you when he was still in Galilee saying the son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and the third day rise again.

[32 : 11] Remember that? And the Bible says and they remembered his words. Interesting. You see, the disciples faith was weak.

It was weak because they did not take Jesus at his word. They didn't take Jesus at his word when he said, I've given you all power and authority over all demons, and they didn't fully believe it.

And so they failed. They weren't able to heal this son of his demon possession. And Jesus gave them his word that I'm going to be delivered over into the hands of wicked men, and I'm going to die and rise again.

And they did not believe it. Their faith was weak. Their faith was not founded upon the word of God. Now, how about you?

I mean, you know, you might be tempted to point your finger at the disciple and say, well, why didn't you just believe Jesus? I mean, it's just so clear. I mean, he said it so plainly. Why didn't you believe him?

[33 : 20] And I think that the disciples could have every right to point their finger at every one of us and say, why don't you believe him? Why don't you believe Jesus? You have his completed word.

We didn't even have that. And you have everything God wants to say to you right here in one book. Why don't you believe him?

And you know, the greatest proof that we do not believe, fully believe God's word, you know what the greatest proof of that is? It comes when we are suffering the troubles of this life.

And we all do. How we respond, how we react in the troubles of life, give perhaps a better proof of whether or not we are fully believing God's word, taking God at his word.

And I'll just give you one example. God said in Romans 8, 28, a verse that probably nearly every one of us in here could quote by heart. God said in Romans 8, 28, that he causes all things to work together for good to those who love God and those who are called according to his purposes.

[34 : 50] That's what God said. That's his word. Do you believe it? Well, first I'd have to ask, do you love God?

Then I would have to ask, have you been called according to his purpose? Are you saved? And then I asked, do you really believe this verse? It's God's word.

And the verse is a promise. Did you know that? Of course. I mean, nearly every Bible promise book that you could buy at any Christian bookstore, even some secular bookstores, promises of God are going to have that verse in there.

This is a promise. But do we really know what God is saying? Promising. God is saying that everything, everything that happens in your life, everything, I am purposing for good, for your good. Everything. Does that leave anything out? No. No. Everything. Including troubles.

[36 : 15] Which we all have, all experience. Do you believe that? Believe God's word? Now, if you truly believe that word from God, then you're not going to be asking, Lord, why is this happening to me?

God's word, you're not going to be asking, why are you, God, letting this happen to me? You're not going to be asking, do you care about me?

Are you really in control? Are you really sovereign? You're not even going to ask, Lord, are you going to use this for my good? You know why?

Because if you really believe his word, you already know that he is. So you're not going to ask any of those questions. If you really believe God's word, then you're going to ask two questions.

You're going to ask, Lord, what do you want me to learn from this? And you're going to ask, Lord, what do you want me to do? Now think about that.

[37 : 23] That's all you ask. Not why are you letting this happen to me. you're going to ask, what is it you want me to learn from this?

To learn about your word. What do you want me to learn about you? Who you are? What do you want me to learn about the relationship that I have with you in Christ?

What do you want me to learn about life itself and how I am to live it? And what it's all for? And what is your purpose? And what is your goal?

What do you want me to learn, God, from this? And then you're going to ask, what do you want me to do? That's it.

If you really believe God's word, take him at his word in Romans 8, 28, and we're just talking about that one verse, then you're going to learn all you can from your time of trouble, whatever it may be, and you're going to do everything God wants you to do.

[38 : 37] No more and no less. . Thank you.