

## Mountain Worship and Valley Work - Matthew 17:1-13

**Introduction:** We used to get the opportunity to take Gabe and Griff to MacDonald's for supper. Well, as soon as we got there, they wanted go play on the playground. We'd try to get them to eat first, but that didn't always work.

Elaine and I will watch while they played. But after awhile, it's time to leave. And that's when the fun starts. So we'll say, "*Okay boys, get your shoes on. We've got to go!*" And being the perfect little grandsons they are, they'd jump up and "*Yes sir Pop Steve,*" or "*Yes mam Nana Laine*" and immediately do exactly what we told them to do! Right? Wrong!

You know what comes next don't you? All you parents and grandparents say it with me... "*Just a little longer pleaaaaassssee! Just 5 more minutes pleaaaaaasssseeeee! Just one more time down the slide pleasssssseeeee.*" Sometimes they wouldn't even ask...they'd just take off and pretend they didn't even hear.

Usually, by this time, there's a lady standing at the door with her broom and mop...tapping on her watch, trying to get us out of there so she can clean up.

Sometimes it's hard for kids to understand that there comes a time when you've just got to leave MacDonald's and go out into the real world!

Sometimes it's hard for us to do the same. Last week, we had a great week in Mexico. When you see and experience a spiritual hunger in the lives of folks who are really looking for God, you don't want to leave.

I hear you had a wonderful singing last Sunday morning and a great service Sunday night. For the past several weeks, we've seen God's Spirit move in a mighty way during VBS and Super WOW as youth and children gave their hearts to Christ, and have been baptized. Hasn't it been wonderful? Can't you feel the excitement and glory of God in this place? Wouldn't it be great if we could just stay in this kind of atmosphere where the Holy Spirit is so real and powerful and everyone is being blessed?

Wouldn't it be great if we could just sit back and listen to inspired music like Tennessee Harmony sang Sunday after Sunday? Wouldn't it be wonderful to just listen to this great choir and our wonderful special music all the time?

In fact, some people do just that! They just travel around from church to church, from camp meeting to camp meeting, and from revival to revival, looking for that feel-good experience.

After you experienced the presence of God and His blessings, you want it to last and last. It's only natural. When God speaks, and you're drawn closer to Him, and you see results such as teenagers and children giving their hearts to Christ, you say to yourself, *"Please don't let it end."*

Wouldn't that be great if we just stayed in this kind of spiritual high all the time? Can we do it? Should we do it? Let's look to God's Word for the answer to those questions. **Read Matthew 17:1-13.** First, let's look and see what we find:

### **1. Up on the Mountian.**

If you've ever said *"Can't we just stay for 5 more minutes?" "Can't we sing a few more songs?" "Can't we stay at Super WOW?"* don't worry...you're in good company. In our text, *"Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters--one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."*  
Matt 17:4 (NIV)

Peter enjoyed God's presence in a truly remarkable way. It was an incredible spiritual experience for him. Just seeing His Savior and Lord being transfigured before his very eyes would have been enough to make him want to stay. I mean, there was Jesus literally glowing like the sun! There was a bright cloud which I'm sure reminded him of the cloud that represented God's presence in the Old Testament and led the chosen people through the wilderness. There was that booming voice...they literally heard the voice of God! What an incredible, glorious experience!

But look at who else was there...Elijah and Moses were there. Elijah who represented the prophets, and Moses who represented the Law. These patriarchs were men whom Peter had only read and heard about, but now there were standing there. He could see them and hear them talking with Jesus. No wonder Peter was hoping to stay a little longer. No wonder he offered to build shelters for the all. He didn't want to leave.

In the past few weeks, I hope you've all experienced the glory of God's presence in some way. Maybe you didn't see a cloud...maybe you didn't audibly hear the voice of God...but you knew God was with us because He spoke to your heart. You knew God's presence was here because you could see the results.

You might be like Peter and want to put up shelters...one for me and one for Ron, and one for the youth and children and mission leaders, and one for Jesus.

After we've experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit...we just want it to continue for awhile longer. There's nothing wrong with that. It's natural. We don't want this experience to end.

But, just like Peter....and just like it is with your kids and grandkids... there comes a time when you've got to leave MacDonald's. There comes a time when you've got to go down the mountain. There comes a time when Jesus says, "*Get up,*" Matt 17:7 (NIV) *and go down.*" So now let's now look:

## **2. Down in the Valley**

It would be great to stay on the mountaintop, but we must never forget...there is work to be done in the valley. You remember the valley don't you? Maybe you don't want to remember it, or maybe it's all too familiar.

Sunday is great, but down in the valley is where we get back to our routine. Sunday is uplifting but down in the valley is where discouragement sets in. Sunday is restful but down in the valley is where you have to go back to work. Sunday is refreshing but down in the valley is where you begin to feel exhausted.

Down in the valley is where the rent comes due, and you have to pay the bills. Down in the valley is where your car breaks down, and where the boss is on your case. Down in the valley, kids, is when you have to go back to school. Down in the valley there are drugs and alcohol and dysfunctional families. All this stuff happens down in the valley.

And when you're reminded of the valley, and spend a day or two down in the valley, you begin to wonder where the blessings are. You begin to wonder where the presence of God went.

Jesus disciples experienced the same thing. As soon as they came down from the mountain, they were faced with a demon-possessed boy. They tried to help him but they couldn't, and Jesus had to rebuke them and intervene. That must have been a harsh dose of reality after experiencing such a spiritual blessing.

Not only that, Jesus told them again about His impending death, and they "*were filled with grief*" (vs. 23). Then they faced having to pay a Temple tax! (vs. 24-27). Talk about throwing cold water on revival fires!

The mountaintop is nice, and we'd like to stay there. But there comes a time when we have to come down from the mountain, and get back to work. We've got to go down in the valley where the children of divorced parents are... where the dead-beat dads are...where the single parent moms are struggling to make ends meet...where the lonely widows are...where the teenagers who are struggling with a difficult home life are.

There's a story in the Old Testament about when King David got into trouble with Bathsheeba because he wasn't out on the battle lines with his men where he was supposed to be.

Sometimes I wonder...as great and wonderful as church is...., and I dearly love the church. I've dedicated my life to serving the church...but you know we've got to understand that the church is not this beautiful building with the cool A/C and the comfortable padded pews. We are the church and Jesus is calling for us to "*Get up!*" and "*Don't be afraid*" to go out there...down in the valley, and interact with people out there who don't know Him.

Now I know that in our text in vs. 9, Jesus said, "*Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.*" Matt 17:9 (NIV). You may be wondering why He would make such a statement and one like it in 16:20 where "*He warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ.*" (Mt. 16:20 NIV).

Well, the reason was because at that time, the disciples didn't have the complete gospel to share. Remember that Jesus said He would give them the "*keys (plural) to the kingdom of Heaven.*" Those "*keys*" were the gospel message. But at that point, they only had one "*key.*" They only had the fact that Jesus was the Son of God as Peter had confessed. He had not died. He had not been buried, and He had not been resurrected. Those "*keys*" had not been given as yet. To tell only part of the message would have only caused the religious leaders to intensify their hatred for Jesus and hasten His death. So Jesus wanted them to keep it to themselves for a little while longer so that God's timing could be fulfilled and they would have a chance to learn more of Him.

But now, because Jesus has died, been buried and risen again, we have been told to "*...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" We have the mandate to "*...teach them to obey everything I have commanded you...*" **Mt. 28:19-20 (NIV)**

The time is now! We don't have an excuse not to go and tell. Jesus may have told His disciples back then to not tell anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead, but after that, He wants everyone to know! After that, everyone needs to get busy. After that, He wants us to do everything we can to reach our neighbors and friends.

**Conclusion:** What we've experienced has been great, and I hope it continues. I hope people will continue to come and check our church out. I hope people will continue to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading them to give their lives to Christ. I hope the singing will continue to be spiritual and sweet, and the teaching and preaching will continue to be strong and powerful. But I can tell you one thing: None of that will happen if we get content with where we are and rest on our laurels.

It's time to come down off the mountaintop and be about our Father's business in the valley. That doesn't mean that we can't have the mountaintop worship and the valley work at the same time. We certainly can. And the reason is because in the last part of that verse we read earlier, Matthew 28:20, Jesus says, "*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

When these disciples came down from that mountaintop experience, they didn't leave Jesus behind. Jesus didn't stay on the mountaintop. He went down with them. He was there when they met the demon-possessed boy. Jesus was with them when they were paying taxes. Isn't that wonderful? The same Jesus who is with us "*Up on the mountain*" will be with us "*Down in the Valley.*" Just because we come down off the mountaintop and go out into the world doesn't mean we leave Jesus behind....He goes with us always and forever. We're never alone down in the valley.