

## Nature 2 Mountains

We are in our series “Nature Declares the Glory of God”

The main concept of this sermon series is to look at what the Scriptures say about nature and various creations and learn how God intended these creations to bring glory to Himself and point to Him. I believe the Scriptures teach that in creation we not only see there is a creator but we can learn about character traits of the creator and how He deals with us.

Let me again give you as disclaimer...I am not promoting “Pantheism” which basically says the universe is God, these are people that say things like “the universe went my way in this situation” or “the universe is looking after me”. They essentially worship creation.

We are “monotheists” which means we believe there is One True God. God created everything and also gave us His Word and His Word explicitly states that He is the creator and through His creation we can learn more about Him... *Psalm 19:1 “The heavens (creation) declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”*

Today we are going to learn about mountains.

We live in a pretty flat area here in south Jersey so it is a bit of a ride to see any real mountains but thankfully we are not too far away to really enjoy the sites, activities and beauty the mountains provide.

I still remember the first time I went to the ski slopes... I went on a ski trip with my high school ski club...I was 15 and never skied before and decided to join up and go.

This was right before snowboarding was popular and wasn't allowed on many slopes yet. A few of my friends skied and were part of the club and they encouraged me to join and give it a try. I rented the skis and didn't sign up for the lesson...because I was 15. I got out to the bottom of the mountain looked up and said "whoa I am not sure I will be good enough to go on that slope today".

My friend laughed and said "that's the bunny hill"

Needless to say the day was filled with falls, yard sales, and people saying things like “take a lesson” “learn how to ski”

Fast forward 5 years and in comes snowboarding...I learned it and loved it because it felt like surfing or skateboarding down the mountain.

As I would go I was so intent on learning and getting better that I kind of neglected my surroundings. One day as I was getting off the lift and getting ready to head down the slopes I looked out and thought “wow this is so beautiful” I took in the panoramic view and was amazed at what I seeing.

Now anytime I am in the mountains I appreciate the beautiful views.

The scriptures talk about mountains a lot and there are at least two themes you see in the Scriptures when it comes to mountains they are the height of mountains and barriers that mountains create.

Lets start with

**Height**

Some mountains are very high in fact Nepal's Mount Everest's peak is the highest altitude above sea level at 29,029 feet. Just to put it into perspective commercial planes cruising altitude is 35,000 feet.

Roughly 4000 people over the course of documented history have made it to the summit of Everest and just over 3000 have died trying. It takes about 3 months to make the round trip and most years during climbing season there are only 11 days that wind blows less than 30mph.

When I hear about people doing things like this it makes me wonder...why are people drawn to the heights of mountains?

Think about this when you were a kid and you saw a mountain you may have thought...I want to to the top of that. If you have kids and you go to a park they always seem to try to find the highest hill, mountain or structure to climb.

Last spring my family and I went to California and visited Palm Springs. In Palm Springs there is an Ariel

Tram Ride that brings you up a mountain to 8500 feet overlooking the valley.

Why do we do these things or more specifically why are drawn to heights?

Because at great heights we feel we have a sense of power...,think about this...when people reach the summit of a mountain what do they do with their hands?

Do you remember the account of the Tower of Babel? Do you remember why the people decided to build the tower? Genesis 11:4 *“Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves”*

Naturally there is something powerful about heights... here is the reason why?

*Psalm 95:4-5 In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.*

Because God is the creator and He owns the heights.

I think there is something about heights that make us feel closer to God and get a sense of His power.

*Psalm 121:1 I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?*

We are not physically closer to God on a mountain but to call on God we tend to look up.

The psalmist reminds us...

*Psalm 121: 2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.*

*Psalm 92:8 but you, O LORD, are on high forever.*

Consistently in the scriptures we see people going up to mountain tops...we have that term “a mountain top experience”

Noah’s Ark rested on a mountain top, Abraham went up a mountain to sacrifice, Moses received the commandments on a mountain top, the transfiguration of Jesus with Peter, James and John was on a mountain top, Jesus went to a mountain top to pray and Jesus preached the best sermon ever preached...the Sermon on the Mount.

Which should remind us that great passage in...*Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."*

Jesus had the beautiful feet when He preached that sermon...and we are called to bring the GOOD NEWS to the people around us. GOSPEL

Hearing the Good News and trusting the Good News will result in experiencing the Lord lifted high for eternity...Listen to what the prophet Isaiah said about that.

*Isaiah 2:2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,*

The great heights of the mountains should point us to the Lord.

Now lets look at the **barriers** that mountain create.

Most realize that mountain ranges cause barriers...

Last year my family went to Shenandoah National Park. One night we went out to dinner in the town of Harrisonburg which happened to be on the other side of the mountain range. It took 45 minutes to drive because we had to drive south to the road that passed through the mountain range then drive north to the town. I remember looking at the GPS and thinking if there was a road straight there it would have taken less than 10 minutes...but the mountains were a barrier.

Jesus used the illustration of mountains to remind us that when we do not trust in His power we are putting up a barrier for our faith...but when we trust in His power, that act of faith tears down the barriers.

There is account in Matthew in which a young boy was possessed by a demon and the disciples tried to cast the demon out but could not. This was a special gift that Jesus gave to His disciples to do during that time and the account is recorded in Matthew 10...they were to proclaim the kingdom of God and cast out demons, heal the sick and raise the dead.



Jesus came along and cast out the demon and the disciples could not figure out why they couldn't but He could...after all He did tell them they would have the power to this .

Here is what Jesus said to them...

*Matthew 17:20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."*

There are a few issues that this Scripture brings up.

The first is...

**Does our lack of faith limit the work of God?** I have heard people say things like "*oh that didn't happen or that person did not get healed because you did not have enough faith*". I call that spiritual abuse.

Lets look at the situation in context...did Jesus do the work of healing this boy? Yes

Could He have done that work through the disciples?

Yes...if not He would not have commissioned them

What was the problem? Why couldn't they heal him? The most probably answer is that they were over confident in themselves and they were not doing the work in the power of Jesus.

Our lack of faith can never limit what God desires to do but our lack of faith can and evidently will limit the involvement we have in that work. The boy was healed but the disciples were not used to do it.

The second issue is the...

### **Faith moving mountains issue.**

Have you ever witnessed someone praying a mountain to move and it does?

Obviously Jesus is using this as an illustration of how faith in Jesus can do things that we think or may normally may be impossible.

Using a mountain is a reminder of the barriers that are in the way and we do not have the power to move...But Jesus does and although we are small and weak like a little mustard seed Jesus through us can and will do things that we never thought possible.

Let me ask you... **What are the “mountains” in your life?** Addiction? Relational issues, financial issues, emotional issues...is there a specific sin that you consistently struggle with? These are all barriers that hinder your faith and the only one that can move them is the Lord.

*Listen to Psalm 97:5 The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth.*

The Lord is the one we need to have faith in to do the seemingly impossible...

On the other hand some of you have strong faith and have seen God do the seemingly impossible in your life.

You may be so excited about what God has done for you that forget about the people around you that don't have faith.

You get so into what you know about the Lord, about His Word...so into church and your fellow believers... and surrounding yourself with like minded people of

faith and you forget the call to love those that do not know the Lord.

The apostle Paul talks about that very thing to the church in Corinth.

*1st Corinthians 13:2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*

We want to have knowledge of the Word, a vibrant faith community and have the type of faith in the Lord that literally breaks down barriers in your life.

But if you take all that and forget to show others love... you are not really living the way God fully desires you to live.

Because our God is a God of love and that love will never leave us...

*Isaiah 54:10 For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you.*