

“UP WHERE WE BELONG”

I am a mountaineer. My ancestors settled in the rugged mountains of West Virginia long before the Revolutionary War. The motto of West Virginia, "*montani semper liberi*" – Mountaineers Always Free, captures the character of mountaineers and why they choose to live there.

For the seniors especially my sermon is based on what the mountains can tell us about life. For that I'm going to use three songs and three Biblical scenes on mountains.

1.) On top of a mountain you can get a clear perspective of what is ahead and what route to follow to meet your goals. In "Sound of Music" by Rodgers & Hammerstein the Mother Superior sang:

"Climb every mountain, Search high and low,
Follow every byway, Every path you know.

Climb every mountain, Ford every stream,
Follow every rainbow, 'Till you find your dream.

A dream that will need All the love you can give,
Every day of your life For as long as you live.

Climb every mountain, Ford every stream,
Follow every rainbow, Till you find your dream."

In the book of Exodus we read that God called Moses up onto a mountain for forty days on two occasions. What God revealed to Moses is recorded in the first five books of the Bible. They are the foundation for all that God revealed in the centuries to follow through prophets and apostles and through His own Son Jesus Christ.

At this point in life you are faced with dozens of conflicting pulls and tugs, not to mention demands. What should you do next? For twelve

years you have known what is expected, you've had a goal – finish school. Now what? How do you know what is best? How do you know what is the right choice? Where do you turn when there are half dozen possibilities or worse, when there is no possibility? I hope that you will turn to the Bible often. That is the ground of truth. That is a compass for life that always points true.

2.) Going up a mountain takes exertion and perserverance.

Miley Cyrus has a new song "*The Climb*" by j.Alexander and J.Mabe:

"I can almost see it The dream I'm dreamin'
But there's a voice inside my head sayin' You'll never reach it.

Every step I'm taking Every move I make feels
Lost with no direction My fate is shaking

But I gotta keep tryin' Gotta keep my head held high
There's always gonna be another mountain
I'm always gonna wanna make it move Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes we're gonna have to lose Ain't about how fast I get there
Ain't about what's waiting on the other side It's the climb.

The struggles I'm facing The chances I'm taking
Sometimes it might knock me down But, No, I'm not breaking
I may not know it But these are the moments that
I'm gonna remember Most, yeah Just gotta keep goin'

And, I, got to be Strong Just keep pushing, oh
Cause there's always gonna be another mountain
We're always gonna wanna make it move Always gonna be a up-hill battle
Sometimes we're gonna have to lose Ain't about how fast I get there
Ain't about what's waiting on the other side It's the Climb. Yeah"

The prophet Elijah was fleeing the wrath of the wicked Queen Jezebel who had ordered his death. After days of fleeing, he came to a desert and sat down under a bush and begged God to let him die. The LORD

sent an angel to minister to Elijah. Then He sent Elijah on a journey for forty days to meet with God on Mount Horeb. Elijah hid in a cave.

Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11-12)

The Lord began speaking to Elijah in that quiet voice. In your life there will be many crises like great and strong winds, earthquakes, and fires that speak with loud demands for your attention. Do not let them drown out the still small voice of God who is always there to help you.

3.) Standing on a mountain can give us hope.

In "*An Officer and A Gentleman*" with Richard Gere and Debra Winger, Joe Cocker and Jennifer Warnes sang "*Up Where We Belong*"

"Who knows what tomorrow brings In a world, few hearts survive
All I know, is the way I feel When its real, I keep my pray'r alive

The road is long There are mountains in our way But we climb steps every day

Love lift us up where we belong Where the eagles cry, on a mountain high
Love lift us up where we belong Far from the world we know
Up where the clear winds blow

Some hang on to "used-to-be" Live their lives looking behind
All we have is here and now All our lives, out there to find

The road is long There are mountains in our way But we climb steps every day

Love lift us up where we belong Where the eagles cry, on a mountain high
Love lift us up where we belong Far from the world we know
Up where the clear winds blow

Time goes by No time to cry Life's you and I, alive, baby

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him up on a mountain. There Jesus was changed into a glorious form of intense whiteness and brilliance. Then Moses and Elijah appeared there with Him and spoke of His coming death. The disciples even heard the voice of God from heaven. It was an experience that the apostle Peter recalled many decades later.

For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (2 Peter 1:17-18 NKJV)

When we have an experience with God of special closeness, encouragement, and love wherever it may occur, we call it a "mountaintop experience." These may only happen once or twice in a lifetime, but the memory of such experiences rekindles our faith and hope many times. I wish for each of you a life in which you are always aware of God with you.