

Mountains and Valleys - a homily by Michael Palmer

Personally I enjoy both Mountains and Valleys. Their geographical beauty different but equally valued. Nevertheless we have sometimes used these words to symbolically identify opposites as though one were better than the other.

Frequently, we talk of 'Mountain Top' experiences as expanding us, with the corresponding inferred opposite that 'Valley' experience are somewhat restrictive or diminishing. Certainly, 'Mountain Top' experiences give us a greater horizon and more exposure to the light.

In relational terms, 'Mountain Top' experiences might be when grow in appreciation of one another (or self) and 'Valley' experiences are when we are tempted to diminish our view of the other (or self) .

I think it is relevant here to remind us all of a wise axiom, namely, 'I often judge others by their actions and words,while I want others to judge me by my intentions.'

The assumption is that my intentions are 'the reliable/real me', the mountain top which I would like to be valued for, while my words or actions may sometimes misrepresent the real me. In keeping with our theme, the former, the Mountain, the latter, the Valley.

How can I train myself to judge others by their intentions? (Their inner core of intention despite their presenting words or actions?) (Consider the duration of time we spend with others, our attitude to listen, our willingness to think honestly about my emotions, etc. etc.) *It might be good to consider situations where you have been encouraged towards a larger appreciation of others? Or self?*

So to our passage Luke 9:28-36. The passage is a 'Mountain top' experience in both geography and also for what it tells us about the core reality of Jesus' personhood - we see more of who he is. This 'more of Jesus' inspires in us towards an enlarging of both attitude and action. *(Please read again Luke 9:28-36)*

What do we learn of Jesus? Let me suggest a few things that might point us to expanding our view of Jesus:

1. His willingness to spend time with others - verse 28
2. His habit of prayer - verse 28
3. The fleeting and surprising altering of his appearance - verse 29
4. The exalted company that appears with him - verse 30
5. The content of their discussion - verse 31
6. The voice from the cloud - verse 35

The more that we see of Jesus in this mountain top experience is extensive:

There are good things that we can imitate, namely the commitment to relationships and prayer.

And there are good reasons to have 'settled views' of Jesus expanded, namely concerning the centrality of his departure in Jerusalem (his death, resurrection and ascension) and the importance of his words ('Listen to Him', inferring that his words might be more weighty than Moses' 10 commandments or Elijah's call to look back to any 'golden age of obedience').

The challenge for us of this mountain top description of Jesus is to both allow that more of Jesus to be seen and also to allow that more to shape our core of faith - its content and practice.

And this is why we gather as Church
