

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

I invite you to go on a trip with me, we're going up the mountain. If you are carrying a burden right now, just leave it here, it will be here when we come back down, but you don't have to pick it up again if you don't want to do so.

I know it's a little hard for you, you want to be in control, you want to know what the itinerary is, where we'll stop, what we'll do when we get there, how long we'll be gone. I know it's a little hard to let go, to leave everything including your worries behind, but come on, let's go, it will be an adventure.

Since you're setting things down, leave your phone and your watch and your credit cards, leave it all behind for a while. Forget about everything else but the way right in front of us. Let your imagination go and don't worry if this doesn't seem to make sense, give up the judging, let's go.

We're on our way to see our Lord Jesus, in fact, he's the one inviting you on this trip. Yes, Jesus, *that* Jesus, who was and is and ever shall be. Yes, it's God stuff, the most important *stuff* in the world. And he invited you, in fact, he called you by name before you were even conceived, and you are his.

So Jesus invites you to come up the mountain, just leave your cares, your burdens, your whatever here and let's go. You know you can stay here if you want to, you can keep carrying all the stuff you carry, but you need to know there is another way to be, a way with Jesus, I promise you, you'll see, you'll hear things that are simply impossible to even imagine much less explain. No, don't worry about not being in control because truthfully, you're not in control anyway, even if you think you are. One email, one phone call, one knock on the door, your questions about what went wrong, how did you get where you are, what happened to the life you planned, no, you're not in control. Now here's the thing, you'll lose your life but you'll gain your life, because we're going to see the Son of God.

We're going to see Jesus, the bread of life, the light of the world. Whatever darkness surrounds you, whatever darkness you take refuge in, whatever darkness has been crushing the life out of you, shame or loss or guilt or grief, whatever it is, just leave it here, lay it down because Jesus will pick it up. I can hear him now, lay it down, leave it behind, just leave it and come to the mountain.

And we see Jesus, the light of the world, his face shining like the sun, his clothes dazzlingly white, so bright we can't look. And we see ourselves, not as we think of ourselves, not as we pretend to be, not as others see us, but we see ourselves broken, in need of healing, burdened by sins both ours and some we've picked up along the way. We see ourselves scheming, hating, angry, tired of being lied to and used by others, afraid of seeing ourselves, afraid of dying, but longing, longing for life, true life.

We see Jesus, we see Moses the lawgiver, Elijah one of the greatest OT prophets, they stand on either side of Jesus. Jesus who has kept the law we can't possible keep, he has kept it and he has done so to the full extent of the intent of the law. Jesus who is the fulfillment of OT prophecies, whom the entire OT was pointing toward. Jesus who was with God in the beginning, through whom everything that was created was created. Jesus the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. We see Peter, James and his brother John, our parents and grandparents, all those we have loved who are in that great cloud of witnesses that surround us.

On the mountain we are there with Jesus and all his people from every time and place, and we prostrate ourselves because we are in the presence of the Light of the World whom darkness doesn't understand and can't overcome. We find ourselves enveloped by a brilliantly bright cloud and we hear a voice from the cloud "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased, listen to him." God is talking to us and prostrate we respond in trembling fear.

We feel a touch, we hear a voice, the voice of Jesus "Get up and do not be afraid." We get up and see Jesus, himself alone, we see Jesus alone, we see Jesus alone on a cross with criminals on either side of him. We see Jesus on that cross and we know that the sinless has carried our sins to the cross, has carried our burdens and fears to the cross. We see that he has carried all we have laid down, left behind to the cross. We see our foolish, sinful thoughts and desires, words, and deeds on that cross. We see Jesus who was despised and rejected by people, we see Jesus the man of sorrows well acquainted with grief, we see Jesus pierced for our sins, crushed by our sins, we see his wounds, we see Jesus looking through death to the certainty of the resurrection, the ultimate triumph, we see this and know that we are healed.

We fall on our knees in thanksgiving, in praise, we fall on our knees reaching to take hold of him, to take hold of his precious body and blood, to take it, consume it, we hear the words "Take and eat, this is my body given for you, do this in remembrance of me," we hear the words "this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins, do this for the remembrance of me." We feel freed, we are freed, and Jesus tells us to go and make disciples of all people, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to teach them all he has commanded and lo, he is with us always to the end of the age.

And as we come down from the mountain, he is with us always and forever.

AMEN