

## **Sermon**

### **Mountaintop Moments**

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It is difficult to turn off the noise of this life and focus on the messages before us each Sunday. To follow an ancient Messiah that brought messages to a world much different than our world today. Yet, I think we can all agree, those messages are as powerful today than ever.

This device we carry around with us everyday is a powerful tool for both good and bad. It helps us keep in touch with our loved ones in a moment, allows us to keep on top of our finances and banking with a simple click, creates clear communication between us so we no longer have to wonder what someone else is thinking.

Wait, what? Clear communication? Would any of you agree that our phones promote clear communication? I think we all know, thanks to AI and precise algorithms, we are all pigeon-holed into seeing information that we are fed by a few powerful, wealthy people to guide our spending habits, control our thoughts of one another and even change how we view our religion.

You know, lately I've been thinking about something Jonathan Haidt has been saying. He's a social psychologist who's been sounding the alarm about what's happening to our kids in the age of smartphones and social media. He's been traveling, teaching, testifying before Congress — doing everything

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Inspired by [workingpreacher.org](https://www.workingpreacher.org) commentaries on our scripture.

he can to help us see what he believes is right in front of us: that we've given children a kind of "digital mountain" to climb long before they're ready for the altitude.

Haidt talks about how social media pulls kids into a world where they're constantly comparing themselves, constantly performing, constantly exposed to pressures their developing hearts and minds aren't built to carry. And he's urging us — parents, teachers, communities — to step in, to set boundaries, to give kids more time in the real world and less time in the curated, addictive world of the screen.

And as I sat with our scripture this week — Moses climbing the mountain, Joshua following close behind, the cloud of God's presence settling like a blanket — I couldn't help but notice the contrast. Moses goes up the mountain to meet God. Our kids go up the mountain of social media and meet...well, not God. Not peace. Not clarity. Not identity rooted in love.

Mountaintop moments in scripture are places of revelation, grounding, and transformation. But the "mountains" our kids are climbing today often do the opposite — they disorient, they fragment, they exhaust.

And maybe that's part of why these ancient stories matter so much right now. They remind us that God's way of forming people has always involved stepping away from the noise, stepping into presence, stepping into something real and holy and human. Moses needed that. The disciples needed that. And our children need that and we do too.

In these platforms, we are being persuaded to not believe what we see, what we feel but a narrative created for us by whom we don't really know, but we know it's not from God.

If you think about it, nobody stays on the mountain forever. Not Moses. Not Jesus. Not the disciples. Not us. The mountain is never the destination — it's the place of clarity that prepares us for the work waiting below.

When Moses comes down the mountain, he's carrying something the people desperately need: a way of life shaped by God's wisdom. When Jesus comes down from the mountain of Transfiguration, he walks straight into the needs of the world — a hurting child, a confused crowd, a community longing for healing. The light they saw on the mountain wasn't meant to stay up there. It was meant to shine in the valley.

And that's true for us too. Our mountaintop moments — the times when God feels close, when something finally makes sense, when we glimpse who we are and who God is calling us to be — those moments aren't escapes. They're preparation. They're gifts meant to steady us for the ordinary, complicated, beautiful work of living faithfully in the world.

Which brings me back to our kids, and to Jonathan Haidt's warning. He's not just saying, "Phones are bad." He's saying, "Our children need real formation. They need real community. They need real moments of clarity and connection." They need mountaintop moments — not the kind that come from likes and followers, but the kind that come from presence, from love, from being grounded in something deeper than the digital noise.

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And maybe that's part of our calling as a church right now. To be a place where people — especially our young people — can step out of the swirl and step into something real. A place where they can hear a voice that doesn't compare them or judge them or demand something from them, but simply says, "You are my beloved." A place where they can breathe again.

Because the world is loud. The valley is busy. And if we're going to live with courage and compassion down there, we need moments of holy clarity up here.

One of the details I love in these mountaintop stories is the cloud. We tend to think of mountaintop moments as bright and shining—clear skies, sweeping views, everything finally making sense. But in scripture, the mountaintop is often covered in cloud. Moses steps into a cloud. The disciples are overshadowed by a cloud. The presence of God is not always dazzling clarity. Sometimes it's mystery. Sometimes it's not seeing more, but seeing less.

And it's in the cloud that the voice speaks.

On the mountain of Transfiguration, the disciples are overwhelmed—by the light, by the glory, by the sudden appearance of Moses and Elijah. They're scrambling to make sense of it, to build something, to hold onto the moment. And then the cloud comes. And from the cloud, a voice: *"This is my Son, the Beloved...listen to him."*

**Listen.**

*Not “figure it out.” Not “capture the moment.” Not “build something impressive.” Just...listen.*

Maybe that’s the heart of every mountaintop moment. Not the view. Not the feeling. Not the spiritual high. But the invitation to listen—to hear again the voice that tells us who God is, and who we are.

And maybe that’s exactly what’s so hard for us today. We live in a world where listening is almost impossible. There’s too much noise, too much distraction, too many voices telling us who we should be, what we should fear, what we should buy, how we should look. Our kids feel it even more intensely. The digital world never stops talking. It never stops comparing. It never stops demanding.

But God’s voice doesn’t compete with all that. God doesn’t shout over the noise. God invites us into the cloud—into stillness, into presence, into a moment where we can finally hear again: *“You are my beloved.”*

Mountaintop moments teach us to listen. They teach us to tune our hearts to the voice that matters most. And when we learn to listen up there, we’re better able to live with purpose and compassion down here.

So here we are, standing with Moses in the cloud, standing with the disciples in the light, standing in our own longing for moments that steady us and speak truth into our lives. And the question is: what do we do now?

Because the mountain is not where we live. The mountain is where we listen.

We live in the valley—where the schedules are full, where the news is heavy, where our kids are navigating pressures we never imagined, where the noise never seems to stop. But the God who meets us on the mountain walks with us into the valley. The voice that speaks in the cloud keeps speaking in the everyday. The light that shines in Christ is meant to shine through us.

As we travel through Lent, maybe give up the noise. Create moments of quiet in a noisy world. Help our children and grandchildren find spaces where they can hear a voice that loves them. Be a community that practices listening—really listening—to God and to one another. Remember that clarity is a gift, but faithfulness is a practice.

Mountaintop moments don't remove the challenges of the valley. They prepare us for them. They remind us who we are. They remind us whose we are. They remind us that even when the cloud feels thick, God is near, God is speaking, God is guiding.

So may we go down the mountain with open ears. May we go down the mountain with steady hearts. May we go down the mountain carrying the light we've seen—for the sake of our children, for the sake of our neighbors, and for the sake of a world that is longing for a glimpse of God.

Amen.