

WB Friends Meeting  
6-21-20, 10:20 AM  
Sue McCracken, pastor

### “Be a Mountaintop Person”

As I sat thinking about what great words of wisdom I might impart in this last message, I realized – if I really think I’m imparting wisdom, I have an even bigger ego than I realized! So, I decided I’d look back and read what I said to you in the first message I brought, four years ago, to see if anything had changed.

Turns out I talked about my spiritual journey and the things I believed at that time – God is love, Jesus gave us the example of how to live our lives, and that I still had questions. I think I’ve covered the whole ‘asking questions’ topic, but I decided it might be a good idea to consider what additional thoughts I might share this morning that would help us know how to live out Jesus’ teachings day-by-day on our spiritual journeys.

I remembered something I read a long time ago about being a mountaintop person, and as I considered that idea and what it might include, I thought – wow! That’s a great way to ponder our interactions with others and how we might more fully love our neighbors as ourselves. So let me first define what being a mountaintop person might entail.

It seems we might all fall mainly into one of two groups of people: Valley people and Mountaintop people. Valley people often drag you down and are really hard to work with a lot of the time. They are negative, critical, and seldom care about anyone but themselves. Valley people always have an excuse: “That’s not my job!” or “That’s too hard.” And they never take responsibility for their harmful words or actions; ‘I’m sorry’ is not in their vocabulary. And finally, anytime something negative happens in their lives, it’s always someone else’s fault.

Maybe you remember the Old Testament story found in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers when 12 spies who were sent out to explore the promised land of Canaan after being freed from the Egyptians. These twelve knew Moses had said this was the land God promised they would have, but 10 of the spies were

Valley people....they just knew it was too dangerous to even try to inhabit the land. They reported there were impossible giants who would devour them, big armies that would surround and defeat them, etc. Only two of the 12 spies, Joshua and Caleb, enthusiastically reported they could take the land from those occupying it. Valley people disagreed; Valley people usually drag you down.

The Mountaintop group, however – the one we'd probably like to always think is OUR group, is the group of people we love to be around. Mountaintop people lift us up, encourage us, believe in us, do things to help us be successful, help us turn problems into steppingstones; they are a part of the solutions to problems, and they have a 'never give up' attitude. Joshua and Caleb were the two spies who were definitely mountaintop people; they convinced the doubting Israelites they could enter the land promised to them – and they did!

Paul was also a mountaintop evangelist, continuing to build new churches in spite of being imprisoned and shipwrecked more than once. In fact, looking at his letter to the Romans in chapter 12:9-21 from The Message, he gives some perfect guidelines for being mountaintop people when he wrote these words:

***“Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.***

***Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.***

***Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody.***

***Don’t hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you’ve got it in you, get along with everybody. Don’t insist on getting even; that’s not for you to do. “I’ll do the judging,” says God. “I’ll take care of it.”***

***Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he’s thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will***

***surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good."***

I think of Martin Luther King, Jr. who was certainly a mountaintop person in more modern times. Many of you may recall the speech he gave less than 24 hours before he was assassinated when he said,

***"We've got some difficult days ahead, but it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop ... I've seen the Promised Land."***

So why wouldn't we all just go out and be mountaintop people? From my perspective, that's an easy question to answer .... it's HARD! And let's face it.... we're probably all Valley people at times.... either complaining or just burying our heads in the sand. We're still in a pandemic, choosing to stay away from crowds, wearing masks, not visiting the sick and dying. We're tired of trying to be upbeat, and with rising cases of the virus, we don't see an end in sight anytime soon. And my annual six-day family reunion event at my sisters' in Milwaukee just got canceled!

And we are angry and frustrated with the treatment of non-whites, especially Blacks. We want answers, and we have to do more than just say, 'it's going to be alright, we'll just change a few laws. Systemic racism is so deeply engrained in many of us that it will take a change of heart and a new understanding before the hard work of real change can happen.

Some might say, which type of person you are just depends on your personality. And we could all probably list the people in our lives who are the kind, compassionate, caregivers that we enjoy being with. It might be easy for me to say, "Well, I'm an introvert, so people shouldn't expect me to be happy and upbeat all the time." I'm not convinced, however, that there aren't things we can do to work to ***become*** mountaintop people.

One of the ways we might start is to upgrade our level of enthusiasm. Dale Carnegie once said, "A person can do anything if s/he has unlimited enthusiasm!" Ralph Waldo Emerson had a similar comment when he wrote,

***"Nothing great was ever accomplished without enthusiasm."***

Maybe cultivating enthusiasm begins by choosing to associate with, and learn from, enthusiastic friends. One of the teachers I worked with in a team-teaching situation was always pointing out someone else's issues and making me laugh; and I really liked her, probably because it fed my ego to think of someone else's idiosyncrasies. But then – I found myself doing similar things.... talking about other's faults and problems. Eventually I had to choose to stop doing things with this friend because of the person I was becoming that I didn't like –I was becoming a Valley person.

Charles Jones once said,

***“What you will be in five years will be determined by the people you associate with and the books you read.”***

Now there's a challenge for us! And maybe, just maybe, we begin to become a mountaintop person when we learn to simply love ourselves and then our neighbors. Another Emerson quote that helps is this one:

***“One of the most beautiful compensations in life is that no one can sincerely try to help another without helping him or herself.”***

I may have already shared this story Marie Curling tells, but I think it holds one of the keys to being a mountaintop person.

*Jamie Scott was trying out for a part in his elementary class' school play. His mother knew he REALLY wanted a part, but she was afraid he wouldn't be chosen. On the day she picked Jamie up from school, she was prepared for him to be heartbroken because she knew the parts in the play were to be awarded that day. But Jamie rushed up to her, eyes shining with pride and enthusiasm. “Guess what, Mom?” he shouted, “I've been chosen to clap and cheer.”*

And maybe that's what we've all been chosen to do: clap and cheer on those around us. Offer words of encouragement, do work that supports important causes, and remember the things Paul suggested centuries ago: don't quit in hard times, help those in need, bless our enemies, laugh and cry with others, make friends with nobodies, don't hit back, and let God do the judging.

Many of you are already Mountaintop people a majority of the time, but we can all occasionally do some soul searching, giving consideration to which group of people we might fit with most of the time... Valley people or Mountaintop people? That's my challenge, and it's my goal to be that enthusiastic person that makes life just a little bit better for those around me.

*I'd like to close with these five goals I shared with you on that first Sunday four years ago. I said I know I will always be on a spiritual journey. But I still:*

- *Want to know more – Jesus said we are to hunger and thirst after righteousness*
- *I want to love God and my neighbors more*
- *I want to see the presence of God in all of life*
- *I want to continue growing with all of you. Just as the aspen trees have roots that are shallow but intertwined so that no single tree can fall over when a strong wind comes, so we as a church body can be that same kind of support for each other.*
- *I want to share the Light of God: by living fully, loving wastefully, and being all I can be.*

Thanks for letting me share in this spiritual journey with you these past four years. It's certainly been a mountaintop experience for me!

And always keep this in mind:

***God is love, all the time....and all the time, God is love!***