

## **TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY 2021**

Jesus takes three of His disciples to the top of a mountain. On the mountaintop, they had a taste of His glory. The disciple's hearts were glad, and they wanted to stay on the mountain forever. They had no idea Jesus was about to walk into a dark valley of death. The same crowd praising and celebrating Him as the Messiah would turn against Him. Jesus would be betrayed, arrested, and tortured. He would be publicly humiliated, condemned, and executed in the most shameful manner.

But death is not the end of His ministry! Jesus would later rise from the grave and enter into glory. So, shall all of us who know Him as our Lord and Savior.

Are you experiencing storms in your life? Whatever they are they will come to an end! The day will come when God will remove us from the pain of this world. He'll take us to Heaven and give us new, glorified bodies. We will reign with Christ "forever and ever".

Life is a series of mountains and valleys. We go from one mountain to a valley. Then from one valley to a mountain. Where are you today? Perhaps there's a mountain or valley right around the corner for you. God has always used valley and mountain experiences to accomplish His purposes.

What is a mountain? The Oxford English Dictionary defines a mountain as "**a natural elevation of the earth surface rising more or less abruptly from the surrounding level and attaining an altitude which, relatively to the adjacent elevation, is impressive or notable.**"

I'll put it in laymen's terms: a mountain is ground higher than its surroundings. Individual mountains are connected by ridges and separated by valleys.

Figuratively, mountains represent the high points in our lives. Mountains are peaks. It is an elevated position. A mountain is a higher ground. It is a situation above normal or mediocre level. Mountains are exalted places. It is the high points in your life. Mountains are places of clear vision. When you are on a mountain, it seems like you can see forever. Mountains helps us to see the potential of the future because of the possibilities that lie ahead. Mountains give us the view of hope. What can you do when you are experiencing a mountaintop moment?

**Here's one: You can appreciate the goodness of the Lord.** Gratitude empowers us to scale higher heights. Gratitude turns healing into wholeness. Thanksgiving brings restoration. If He chooses to keep you on top of the mountains, then be grateful.

But if God decides to take you to the valley first. Before leading you to another mountaintop, so be it. He's the Potter and we're the clay! Believe that God has good reasons for this. There is something better waiting on the other side of the valley. The mountaintop is a beautiful place but to get there we will have to walk through valleys! We cannot get from one mountain to the next without going through a valley. So, for every mountain there is a valley!

The valley is a deep hollow between mountains. There is always a valley between two mountains. Valleys are depressions in the earth's surface between ranges of mountains. A valley is a low land surrounded on both sides by mountains. Mountains cast a shadow on the valley denying it direct sunlight. The terrain is dark, harsh, and dangerous. Figuratively, the valley represents the low moments in life. It is the difficult seasons. To be in the valley is to find yourself down and out between a rock and a hard place. The valley is a place where you struggle with painful memories and situations. It is a rough place. But as rough as the landscape is, there is always a path through it. Valleys are the lows after the highs of being on top of a mountain. It is a place of fear, worry and frustration.

But valleys are the paths to success. It is the access to the mountains. Valleys are ground zero. Most life changing decisions are made in the valley. Valleys are scenes of battles. The David and Goliath battle took place in a valley between two mountains. Valleys are seasons of hurt, heartbreak and pain. To be in the valley is to be abandoned and forgotten. It is a place of wasted opportunities.

The valley is a place of broken relationships, aborted dreams, and shattered hopes. In the valley it's so dark. When you step into your valley it is so difficult to see the path ahead. Valleys blur visions. To be in the valley is to struggle with addictions. Valleys could be seasons of desperation and loneliness. Some valleys are wide, some are narrow. Some are rough. Depression is common in the valley. But here's the promise. Here's the hope. Psalm 23:4 reads, **"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me."**

Everyone will go through the valley, and more than once. They're a normal part of life! Don't be astounded when it comes. While passing through the valley, many will criticize, talk evil, and judge you unfairly. When you're journeying through the valley, you sometimes tend to question God's timing and goodness. Every time we go through valleys, we tend to wonder why God allows us to go through them.

When walking through the valley, it's easy to lose focus. But the valley is not our destination! It is a transit point! When we're in a valley we often think it's a dead-end situation, but it's not. There is a beginning and an end. Your valley won't last! Whatever you might be going through is nothing but a transient phase.

It shall pass because its season will end, and a better season will start. Be rest assured, God's taking you to the high places, where the sun is warm, and the grass is green. You can't have success without a scar. A triumph without trials. Testimonies without tests. A breakthrough without a breakdown. Keep believing!

God on the mountain is still God in the valley! Your blessings will come. God's in control. He will help you to get out of your valley situation. Keep learning and preparing. Soon it will be time to leave the valley and climb up the mountaintop. Every valley is a pathway to something better.

Psalm 84:11, **"For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."** Valley situations prepare us for a new mountaintop! It can be used by you to draw closer to God. A relationship with Jesus is the starting point.

Isaiah 43:2-3 reads, **"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."**

Ask the Lord to show you any sins in your life that are hindering intimacy with Him. Then, repent, accept God's forgiveness, and embrace the grace He offers. The valley is not a permanent place. Keep walking by faith. Refuse to give up. Don't quit. Failure is not falling down. It is remaining there when you have fallen. You can rise from a fall. Keep walking. Be persistent in faith. Live a life of thanksgiving and praise.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 reads, **"Praise be to the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God."**

Gratitude has a way of changing our attitude. It takes your focus off yourself and your situation. Thanksgiving keeps your focus on God who alone is able to take you from your valley situation to the mountaintop. As 1 Thess. 5:16 reminds us, **"rejoice always."**

Faith does not exempt us from trials and difficulties. We may not like the valleys but that is where faith is strengthened. Faith is strengthened in the valleys. Your faith in God will be tested in your valley situations! And, for every testimony there's a test.

So, what do you do in the times of testing? Repeat the words of Isaiah 26:3 over and over again. Commit them to memory. Write them down in a journal. Put them in your phone. Post them on the fridge door and the bathroom mirror. Isaiah 26:3 tells us that God **"will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you."** Did you hear that? **God will keep in perfect peace the person whose mind has stayed on Him? Why? Because such a mind trusts in Him.**

In the valley we can become overwhelmed by fear. Fear most times looks greater than the actual problem. Fear distracts. When you're walking through dark valleys, don't be afraid of the dark. It's the place where the light of God in you will be seen. Focus on Jesus. Lift your eyes beyond your circumstances.

Recite I John 4:4 over and over again, **"Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world"**. Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

God is there with you in the valley. John 1:5 reads, **The light shines in the darkness.**

This is John 8:12, **"Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"** John 8:12 reads, **"Jesus is our Light in the darkness, He is our Light in the dark places!**

When you're walking through dark valleys, look at the Light. Are you in a valley? Are you wondering when it will end and where to go next? Are you walking through the valleys of sickness, pain, debt, or frustration? Has COVID-19 taken someone whom you love? Has the isolation and inability to gather with others brought you to a low place? Are things falling apart in your home, family, or business?

Have you been passing through the valley of poverty, unemployment, or rejection? Maybe you are struggling with betrayal, confusion, or disgrace? Are you wondering when it will end?

Are you walking through the valleys of uncertainty, fear, discouragement, and depression? Is it a broken relationship? Perhaps you are going through a stressful marriage. Rest assured, it will surely come to an end. Your hopeless situation is not hopeless when the Hope of the righteous is still involved.

God's interested in you! He's working behind the scenes to take you to your next mountaintop! So, hold on! Keep believing in God.

Are you somewhere in-between the mountains and valleys? Do you feel stuck there without hope? Don't give up. Keep walking. You can't turn back! Don't be discouraged! You're almost there! Refuse to compromise your salvation. Stand firm and don't lose your faith. Don't stop believing in God and His purpose for your life. You're on the right path. Your mountain-top is just around the corner.

The Most High God is right there telling you to keep going. He's in control. Focus your attention on Him. Trust that He knows the way through the difficult valleys and will see you safely through. God will help you! Your situations won't last forever! It may seem that way, but soon, it will surely come to an end. Soon you'll be standing on the mountaintop. Keep walking in faith! You're on your way to a higher place! You are destined for greater heights. You are destined to heaven itself.