

Thought for the day 11th June prepared by Caroline Barratt

I want to begin by reading from Matthews Gospel ch 17 vs 20

20 “You don’t have enough faith,” Jesus told them. “I tell you the truth, if you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it would move. Nothing would be impossible.^[d]

I think during these challenging uncertain times we are currently facing; it amazes me to think how much we used to take for granted. Everyday tasks like worshipping in a Church, going out for a meal or even hugging and kissing our loved ones, it now seems so far away and at times unreachable. It can make us feel like we are standing at the base of a mountain and we cannot see the peak. This got me thinking about when does a hill become a mountain. I wonder if you know the answer. A hill becomes a mountain at 305 metres (1,000 feet). According to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, a mountain is ‘a raised part of the Earth’s surface, much larger than a hill, the top of which might be covered in snow’. It’s quite vague, obviously, but when defining a mountain, I guess what’s important is its height, how far it is above sea level and, to a certain extent, what can be seen from the summit.

God has used mountain-tops to speak to many of the great biblical figures. Interestingly, the life-changing encounters that these individuals experienced on mountain peaks were always a forerunner to a test or challenge after they came back down. In the book of Genesis God asked Abraham to go to a mountain to sacrifice his son. This mountain is traditionally believed to be Mount Sinai, which was also known as Mount Horeb. It was also on this mountain that God later gave Moses the Ten Commandments.

There is also Mount Ararat, where Noah’s Ark came to rest after the great flood.

Another significant biblical mountain is Jerusalem’s Mount Zion, which was a mountain stronghold that King David captured. David built his palace there and called it the City of David.

Mountains were also important in the life of Jesus. For example, Jesus went up a mountain by Lake Galilee to give his disciples key teaching, which we now call the Sermon on the Mount. On the night before Jesus died, he and his disciples went to pray on the Mount of Olives, just outside Jerusalem. Jesus met with Elijah and Moses on Mount Tabor for transfiguration.

It isn't just in Christianity that mountains play a key part in the way in which God reveals himself to key people. Mountains are deemed to be sacred and special in many ancient religions. They are where temples are built and where people have climbed to look for closeness with God.

This time last year we had just returned from our Annual camp with Boy's and Girls Brigade. This time is seen as the highlight of the year. Its hard work as a leader with all the preparations and planning but it is totally rewarding. During our time away together, new friendships are formed, relationships among the adults and the young people are deepened and its amazing to see how much the young people change over the course of the time, growing in confidence and learning new skills. When we return from our trip it feels that we come back with a renewed sense of togetherness because of the experiences we have shared. Last year we went to Govilon activity centre in Abergavenny. Whilst we there myself and a group of senior boys and girls climbed a mountain called the Skirrad, this is a popular peak located in the Black Mountains on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

At 486 metres (1,594 ft), it is one of the smaller summits in the area. However, the ascending path should not be underestimated. The start is very steep. The Skirrad is known locally as the 'Holy mountain' like some of the other mountains in the vicinity, legends tell the tale of a lightning strike occurring at the time of Christ's crucifixion resulting in a terrible landslide. It created a prominent feature that is clearly visible as you view the peak from the town of Abergavenny. As we started the steep climb it struck me how different we all faced the challenge ahead of us. We had a small group of mainly boys who sped ahead trying to sprint up the mountain but soon realised they could not keep up the pace and soon settled into a steady more manageable speed. A small group that stayed close to the instructor and the other adults who were interested in listening to facts and learning about the history of the surrounding area. The final group of young people was the group that I walked with, moaning about how hard the climb was, complaining about their achy legs and sore feet. This group needed lots of encouragement to keep on. They did not really notice the beautiful scenery around them. When we finally reached the summit of the mountain all the effort that we had put in to the climb was rewarded as it was a spectacular view, you could see for many miles, much further than we could ever imagined, a panoramic view stretched out in front of us, to the side of us and behind us. At the top of the mountain was a cairn that was said to be built on the site of a place where many pilgrims had travelled for spiritual renewal. We all put one hand on the cairn and prayed

together thanking God for the creation of our beautiful world, it was a profound spiritual moment where I felt we encountered God on that mountain and it will remain with me for ever.

A mountain can be a place to reflect and understand because anything that might worry us or crowd us is at the bottom. The time on the mountain is your time to be, to consider yourself and what is below you. Maybe this is why God chooses mountains to talk to people and why they have been held to sacred for so long. When you are up there, there is nothing but air and clearness.

The song I want to share with you is popular music called the Climb it is from the Hannah Montana Film.

Miley Stewart is like any other teenage girl. She juggles friends, school and family, but unlike most teenagers, she is secretly a pop star called Hannah Montana. When her popularity starts to take control of her life, her father sends her on a vacation to his hometown in the Tennessee back country, to give her a perspective on what really matters in life. I have attached a copy of the lyrics which are beautiful, and I pray that they will speak to you during these tough times. I have also shared a picture of our special mountain moment.

The Climb

Miley Cyrus

I can almost see it
That dream I'm dreaming but
There's a voice inside my head saying
You'll never reach it,
Every step I'm taking,
Every move I make feels
Lost with no direction
My faith is shaking but I
Gotta keep trying
Gotta keep my head held high
There's always gonna be another mountain
I'm always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes I'm gonna have to lose
Ain't about how fast I get there

Ain't about what's waiting on the other side
It's the climb
The struggles I'm facing
The chances I'm taking
Sometimes might knock me down but
No I'm not breaking
I may not know it
But these are the moments that
I'm going to remember most yeah
Just got to keep going
And I
I gotta be strong
Just keep pushing on, 'cause
There's always gonna be another mountain
I'm always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be an uphill battle
Sometimes I'm gonna have to lose
Ain't about how fast I get there
Ain't about what's waiting on the other side
It's the climb (yeah)
There's always gonna be another mountain
I'm always gonna wanna make it move
Always gonna be a uphill battle
Sometimes you gonna have to lose
Ain't about how fast I get there
Ain't about what's waiting on the other side
It's the climb (yeah yeah ea ea)
Keep on moving
Keep climbing
Keep the faith baby
It's all about
It's all about
The climb
Keep the faith
Keep your faith