SERMON WOW!!!

It’s said to be a true story of a 33-year-old truck driver

by the name of Larry Walters,

who was sitting in his garden chair one day **wishing he could fly**. He spent a lot of summer afternoons sitting in his ordinary old aluminium chair – the kind with the webbing and rivets.

One day Larry hooked 45 helium-filled surplus weather balloons, to his chair - put a radio in his lap - tied a paper bag full of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to his leg - and slung an airgun over his shoulder to pop the balloons when he wanted to come down.

He lifted off in his little chair expecting to climb a couple of hundred feet over his neighbourhood.

**But amazingly he shot up 11,000 feet, right through the approach corridor to the nearby International Airport.**

When asked by the press why he did it, Larry answered:

**“Well, you can’t just sit around.”** When asked if he was scared, he answered, **“Yes - wonderfully so.”** **“WOW”**

Larry Walters will never be the same again after his trip to the mountain in his little chair. He has seen things and felt things that will shape the way he lives the rest of his life.

So, our Gospel reading starts off ordinary enough.

Jesus and his three closest friends - Peter, James, and John – go up on a high mountain. Nothing unusual there.

Jesus often went off from the crowds to pray and rest.

All very ordinary. **But from here on, ordinary ends.**

No sooner do they arrive than Jesus is suddenly **“transfigured.”** He “glowed.” As the text has it,

 “his clothes became dazzling white,

such as no one on earth could possibly bleach them.”

Not only out of the ordinary, but, **absolutely,** out of this world.

 And if that is not enough, two of faith’s most honoured heroes, suddenly appear by Jesus’ side.

Moses, the great lawgiver, and Elijah, the prophet.

the Law and the Prophets – paying respect to Jesus.

This is both literally and figuratively,

 **“a** **mountain-top experience.”**

No wonder Peter, James, and John are terrified.

Of course, a little terror never stopped Peter from speaking up. For lack of any other ideas, he suggests erecting three shrines to commemorate the event!

A big enough deal so far, but now, a cloud overshadows the mountain. The damp air closes in and all the world slips away into a greyness.

Then the voice of God echoes around them saying,

**“This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”**

Glowing face and clothes - visits from famous figures of the past - hovering clouds and heavenly voices…**WOW** It was so extra ordinary that, when it was all over, and Jesus and Peter and James and John were heading back down the mountain, Jesus told them to,

**“tell no one about what they had seen.”**

That made sense. Who would have believed it anyway?

But the three of **them** believed it - they had been there,

and those moments on that mountain would forever mark their lives and change the way they looked at everything.

**“WOW”** moments have a way of doing that.

It was the same with Peter, James and John.

Up on that mountain they had been given nothing less than a glimpse into the future. For one brief shining moment God had cracked the door to the end of time and they would never be the same again. **WOW!**

What do we think? When **we’ve seen** how everything turns out in the end, will it affect how we view the present? Of course, it will.

Brice Hughes had been at the bedside of many who have had experiences of **“seeing past the veil.”** He writes: ‘One patient, I became close to, had a typical experience. While in the hospital his heart stopped.

And aggressive intervention returned his heartbeat.

When I came on-shift the next day, he had been moved to the ITU. As I entered his bay, his face broke into a big grin. The first words out of his mouth were:

 **“I’ve seen the light.”** He described a fairly typical

‘Near Death’ Experience: bright light, overwhelming sense of peace. The upshot of this…was that he insisted his doctor to issue a **“Do Not Resuscitate”** Order.

WE read in Paul’s letter to the Philippians the famous declaration:

**“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”**

There was a sit-com episode in which Murphy Brown asks the staff about their thoughts or feelings about God.

The response of the character Jim stands out.

He was an ordinary person and went to church every Sunday with his wife. He said,

**“I haven’t had any experience of God.**

**I go because it is obvious to me that the people who attend, are experiencing God,**

**and I am hoping that one day I will too.”**

I wonder how many real-life “Jims” there are in our congregation - waiting?

No great mystery. After all, life is lived in the valley, not on the mountain top. Things are different between the two.

* On the mountain, we encounter almighty God;

 in the valley, there is an encounter with the demonic.

* On the mountain we find our faith’s heritage.

 in the valley, we find those who consider questions -

 of faith as occasions for battle.

* On the mountain, God’s calming voice is heard;

 in In the valley, human argument is heard.

* On the mountain, disciples are ready for worship;

 in the valley, the disciples are spoiling for a fight.

* On the mountain, the glory of God is revealed;

 in the valley, the power of sin and unbelief is revealed

**“O Lord, carry me away to the mountain,”** might be our prayer. but then we remember the place of our ministry is with those who need our help **down in the valley.**

Do we want to be ready for an invitation to the mountain top?

Let’s make a few suggestions.

**Firstly, perhaps we should make ourselves available.**

Peter, James, and John were invited up the slope because they were already in the company of Jesus.

The company of Jesus this year is right here –

the **church.** We must find ways of making contact with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Secondly, we should learn all we can about our faith**.

The text does not tell us how Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah, but they did, and they knew how incredibly important these men were.

If they had never heard of them, the moment on the mountain would not have been nearly so special.

**Thirdly, we should listen to Jesus.**

Only twice in the gospels does God speak – once at Jesus’ baptism, and again here. God minces no words. **“This is my son, the Beloved; Listen to Him.”**

**Fourthly, we should remember where our work is.**

**The valley.**

If we listen to Jesus, we hear him say again,

 **“GO…make disciples.”**

Then we will be ready when the WOW presents itself.

All this “mountain” talk puts me in mind of Martin Luther King’s last sermon. He delivered it April 3, 1968, on the eve of his assassination,

He concluded his remarks that night:

**“I don’t know what will happen now.**

**We’ve got some difficult days ahead.**

**But it doesn’t matter with me now.**

**Because I’ve been to the mountain top**

**and I don’t mind.**

**Like anybody, I would like to live a long life.**

**Longevity has its place, but I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will.**

**And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain.**

**And I’ve looked over.**

**And I’ve seen the promised land.**

**I may not get there with you.**

**But I want you to know tonight,**

**that we, as a people will get to the promised land.**

**And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man.**

**Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming**

**of the Lord.”**

**WOW!**

Amen!