Title: "**Mountain-tops and mess**"

*Matthew 17:9, 14-23*

**Theme:** Powerful faith to overcome all enemies

**Aim:** See that faith in God is powerful in all situations

**Call:** Place your faith in Christ to overcome the ultimate problem

*Sermon arc:*

1. *The father: faith while in the valley*
2. *The disciples: faith while on the plain*
3. *Christ: coming to lift us to the mountain*

Introduction

* Going to be speaking about something with which we here in Cambridgeshire don't have much experience – mountains and valleys
* Some of the most impressive mountains I've been able to see were in Austria
  + Older sister is a big fan of the film "The Sound of Music"
  + A few years ago she and I went away together to Salzburg
  + Largely me taking pictures of her in poses from the film
  + Coach tour out of the city into the mountains
    - (singing songs)
  + Round every corner: another lake, another valley, another thing to take your breath away
  + Even the airport as leaving is beautiful - a plateau surrounded by mountains on every side
  + ...and then come home to Stansted, and back to the fens. Northstowe
  + Post-holiday feeling
  + Common in many places - we seek for thrills

Mountain-top meets the mess – the father

* Peter, James, and John have the ultimate “mountain-top” experience
  + Own experiences – spiritual
  + Glories of these moments
    - Forget about the woes of this life
    - Focus on Christ
    - Experience God as he speaks in scripture, through others, etc.
* Come down into the valley
* Encounter a man in a catastrophic valley
  + A demon possessed son
    - Explore what brings a Father to plead for his son.
      * (speak to fathers)
    - Disciples (talk about later) unable to do it. Unrest in the crowd?
* Relate man’s situation to people - Persistent, long-term, helplessness
  + Health problems (own or others): mental, physical, spiritual
  + Difficult work situations, people, financial
  + Evangelism: friend, family. Child who has turned away
  + Culture: Christian values pushed to the side-lines

*Application*

* The valley drives the man to Christ
  + Psalm 123
  + The valley is not a time to move away from Christ
* In the valley, Jesus is there
  + Recognises faith

Mountain-moving in the mess – the disciples

* Disciples were given authority to cast out demons on 10:1,8
  + Assume something they have put into practice since then
  + Now find they have failed
* Spiritual had become mundane for the disciples. Complacent?
  + Had such great faith in themselves, no longer relied on God
  + *There is nothing automatic about miraculous power, it may not be taken for granted*
* Sometimes it’s easier to see God in the valleys and mountains than in the ordinary.
  + Dig into ‘ordinary’

*Application*

* We can sometimes presume upon God’s grace
  + Feels like things are taking care of themselves
* We can neglect God’s grace
  + Faith that can move mountains!
    - **7:7-8**, 13:31-32, 21:21
  + Faith is not a measurable commodity
    - Miracles are performed by the unlimited power of God
  + Invitation to explore the extent of God’s generosity, secure in the knowledge that only what is “good” will be given.
  + Childlike faith
  + Weight of glory mudpies?

Mountain of the Son of man - Jesus

* Imagine you’re Jesus
  + Things have been tough recently (recap recent chapters)
  + Taken yourself away with closest friends, encountered prophets, heard father speak
  + Son who from eternity was in relation to the father, the closest he has been to him in all of his human life. Face radiant, clothes shining
  + Could stay there forever!
* Doesn’t stay there: comes down the mountain
* Another crowd of people
  + A father comes begging
    - Son demon possessed, burnt
    - Unrest in the crowd and in the disciples
  + Look round and see a people who could be enjoying God, instead focussed on themselves – even the disciples
* What we have here is a picture of the story of salvation: Christ leaving the father’s presence, entering a broken and sinful world, bringing healing through his death, and calling for a response of faith
  + Philippians 2:6-11
* Jesus predicts his death a second time
  + The reason he came
  + Psalm 24:3