

Let Us Go Up to the Mountain of the LORD

Isaiah 2:1-5 (NIV)

¹ This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ² In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵ Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

When you think of majestic mountains, what do you think of? (slide) Maybe you think of our mountains here in Utah, how close we are to them, living in the foothills. I googled "majestic mountains," and was in awe of what I saw. (slide) There is the Rainbow Mountain in Peru. (slide) There's Kirkjufell in Iceland. (slide) The Dolomites in Italy. (slide) Mount Rainier in Washington state. (slide) Mount Fuji in Japan. (slide) And, of course, Mount Everest.

(slide) Maybe it's one of these mountains that you think of when you heard what Isaiah saw. "In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it." (verse 2) (slide) Maybe that mountain with the LORD's temple would look like this – just majestic, breath-taking, the kind of scene from nature that makes you say that this is God's country.

The real Mount Zion in Jerusalem, though, looks like this. (slide) Its elevation is 2,510 feet. That's nothing compared to our mountains that reach over 9,500 feet! Mount Zion where the temple was built back in Solomon's day seems more like a hill than a majestic mountain soaring through the heights. Is this really the church that rises above everything else and nations of people stream to it?

Is that how we view our church, the place where we gather for worship? Do we think of 1074 N. Fairfield Rd in Layton as a majestic gathering place, or do we think of it as this kind of plain red brick building that blends into the scenery and it not terribly impressive, like Mount Zion? Is our church building something we look up to as we are driving into the parking lot and puts a smile on our faces, or do we find ourselves looking down at all the cracks and the faded parking lines and the weeds in the grass? Are we mystified by the colorful banners in the sanctuary, or do we remember other, more appealing churches with their big windows bringing in natural light or their real stained-glass windows that harken back to a time of classic church architecture? Does the structure up front, the chancel, make us feel like we are in the presence of God, or does the molding and the popcorn ceiling seem out of date? Does looking at our church feel like looking at the real Mount Zion in Jerusalem, that it's not this great majestic place of worship?

Maybe you don't really put much thought at all in the aesthetics of our building, but I wonder how we picture our place of worship to other people? How do we describe it? Do we describe it as a majestic place, like the mountain of the LORD's temple as Isaiah did? Do you excitedly invite people as Isaiah described: Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." (verse 3) Are you eager to have people come and join in what goes on here? Or, when we invite people to church, do we make it sound about as interesting and majestic as asking our kids if they want to go grocery shopping with us? Are we giving the impression, painting the picture, that this place of worship is kind of ho-hum, plain, lacking majesty? If that's our attitude, we need to ask ourselves what it is that happens here.

What does happen at the mountain of the LORD's temple, the highest of mountains? "[The LORD] will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore." (verses 3-4)

At the mountain of the LORD's temple, the LORD teaches us his ways. It's not just that he shows you and me the 10 Commandments, a to do list of holy living. He certainly does show us those in order to show us how he wants us and has designed us to live. At the same time, though, any honest evaluation of how well we have kept his commands ends with us seeing that we have fallen miserably short of his standard. Try as hard as we can and as long as we can, we can never be perfect because just one single time of doing wrong results in our imperfection and we can't change that status. We want to think of ourselves as this big, majestic being that would make God proud, but we kind of look like Mount Zion. We don't look like all that much. We don't rise above into the

heavens, taller than anyone else. We see our cracks and weeds and fading paint. We see the out-of-date décor. We need to be fixed. We need to be restored. We need to be made majestic, and we can't do it.

This is the bigger thing that God teaches us on his holy mountain. He has kept those laws, those 10 Commandments, that to do list of holy living, for us in our place. He substituted his life for ours. He did all things perfectly, all the things we could never do. And he took all our imperfections on to himself. He paid the penalty of death and damnation that we deserved for all our failings. He came as a babe in Bethlehem some 2,000 years ago and lived perfectly for you and me so that we are raised up and made majestic, covered with his perfection. He fixed us. He elevated us. We are raised up on the highest of mountains when his Word, what he has done for us, is brought to us.

God now judges you in light of what his Son has done for you, how he lived for you. Your account of sin, all the ways that you have failed to keep God's commands, these have been settled. You have this peace that Isaiah saw on the mountain of the LORD's temple. Think about what that means for you and anyone that you invite here. Here, we lay down our hostility with God because Christ has paid the price. We lay down our hostility with each other, no matter what we have done to other, no matter what has been done to us, no matter where we have come from, no matter what we were taught growing up. Our hurts, our wounds that people have inflicted on us, we put it at the cross because Jesus already paid for it. He took those wrongs on himself. All of it gets laid at the foot of the cross so that we have peace not just with God but also with each and every brother and sister in Christ.

This is what God teaches here in this brick building that used to be a mortuary. This is what we have here. This is what makes this place majestic. This is what elevates us. This is what makes this place a place where I want to beckon all people from every nation, from every walk of life, to come to the mountain of the LORD. Here, we are forgiven by the LORD. Here, all are made majestic and pure. Here we have the peace that only God can give.

(slide) This is what makes us look at this building that we gather in for worship and treasure it. Not because of all the aesthetically pleasing touches, but because of the Word of the Lord that is taught here. Yeah, I can revel in this picture of our building with the mountains in the background and one of God's rainbows casting its beautiful light over us. But it's more beautiful what goes on inside here. Here we share what our God has done for us. We share the peace that we have through what he has done for us. We get to share the life-changing message of what he has done to make us majestic on this mountain of the LORD's temple.

Even better is that one day, all the conflict and hostilities will cease. God has come once and so removed our conflict with him. He will come again on the Last Day to end all disputes among all nations, with another one never to rise again. Peace will reign for all of God's people as we live in that majestic purity that he has given us.

Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD's temple. Let's invite the people we know to a church, to a place, that proclaims that message, one where the LORD elevates them, makes them pure and majestic. This is the beauty of what happens here week in and week out. This is the highest thing we can be a part of. "Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD." (verse 5) Let us go up to the mountain of the LORD's temple and be made majestic by what he has done for us. Amen.