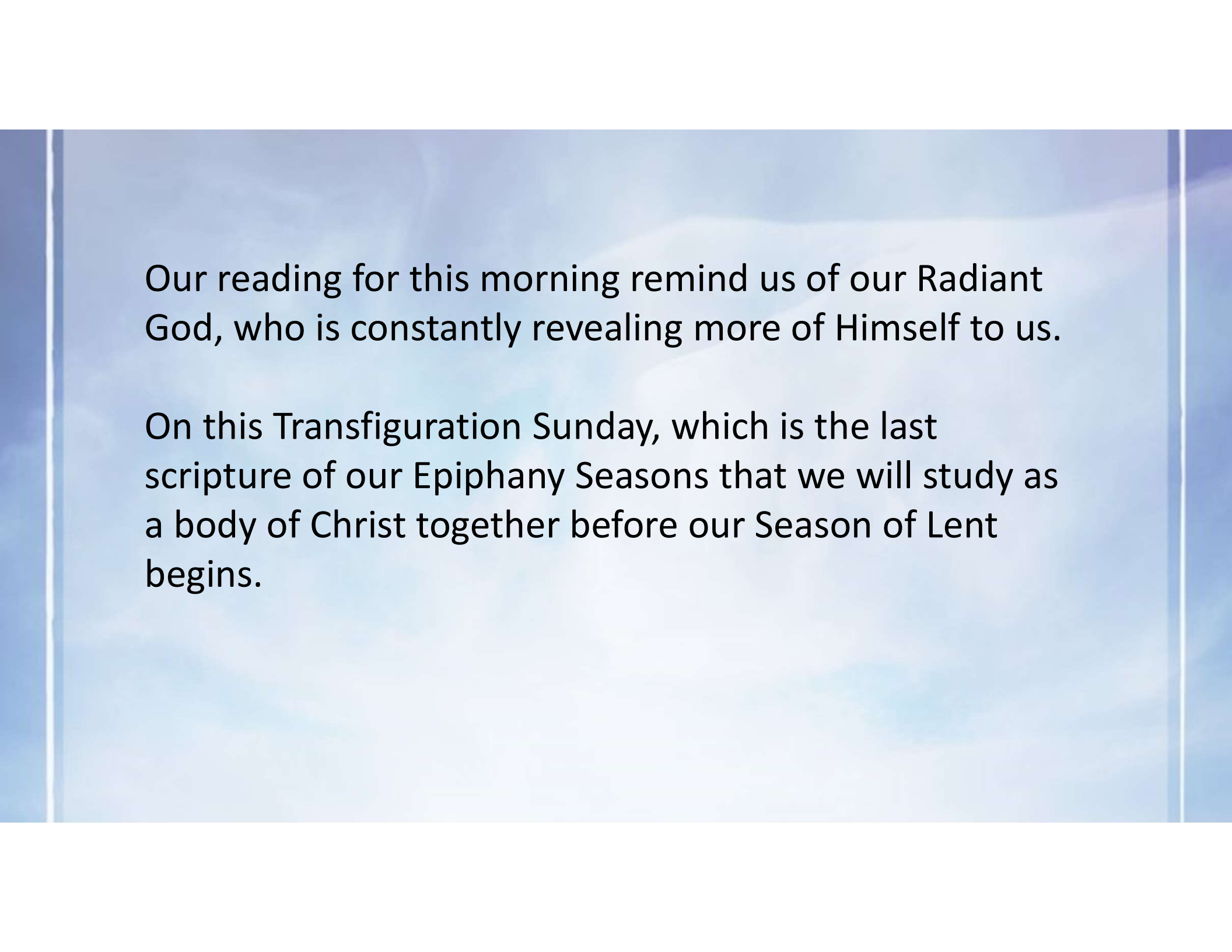


A wooden cross is positioned on the left side of the frame, set against a vibrant blue background. A bright light source, possibly the sun or moon, is visible behind the cross, creating a lens flare effect. The background has a subtle, swirling pattern.

Sermon Talking Points: Your Heart His Dwelling Place

Exodus 24:12-18; Psalm 99; 2 Peter 1:16-21;

Focal: Matthew 17:1-9



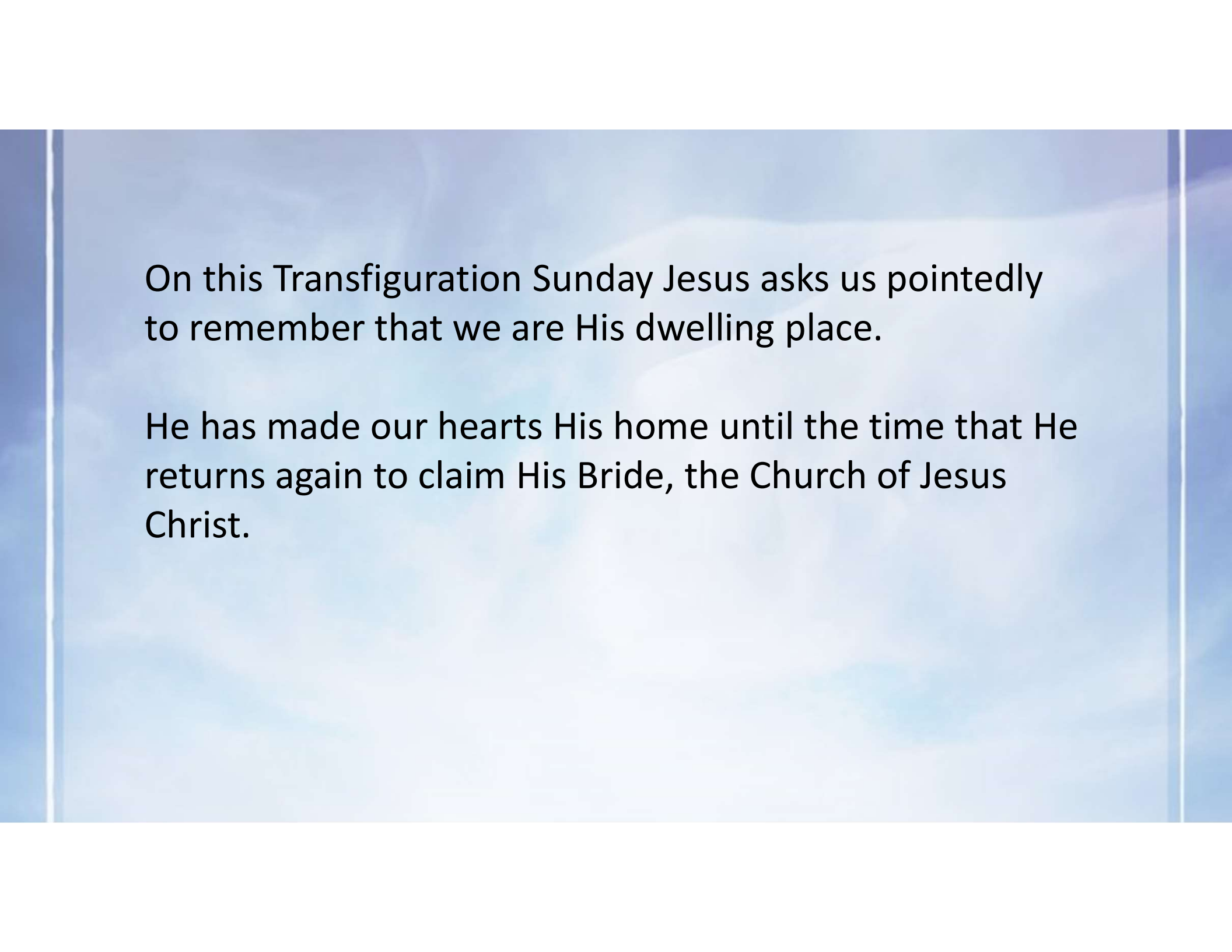
Our reading for this morning remind us of our Radiant God, who is constantly revealing more of Himself to us.

On this Transfiguration Sunday, which is the last scripture of our Epiphany Seasons that we will study as a body of Christ together before our Season of Lent begins.

It's a perfect way to end the season of Epiphany.

Which is a season when God seeks to reveal Himself to us and as He shows Himself to us, we are reflected back as we are to ourselves,

The light of Christ then illumines for us how much we need a Savior, Our Lord and Our Friend Jesus.



On this Transfiguration Sunday Jesus asks us pointedly to remember that we are His dwelling place.

He has made our hearts His home until the time that He returns again to claim His Bride, the Church of Jesus Christ.

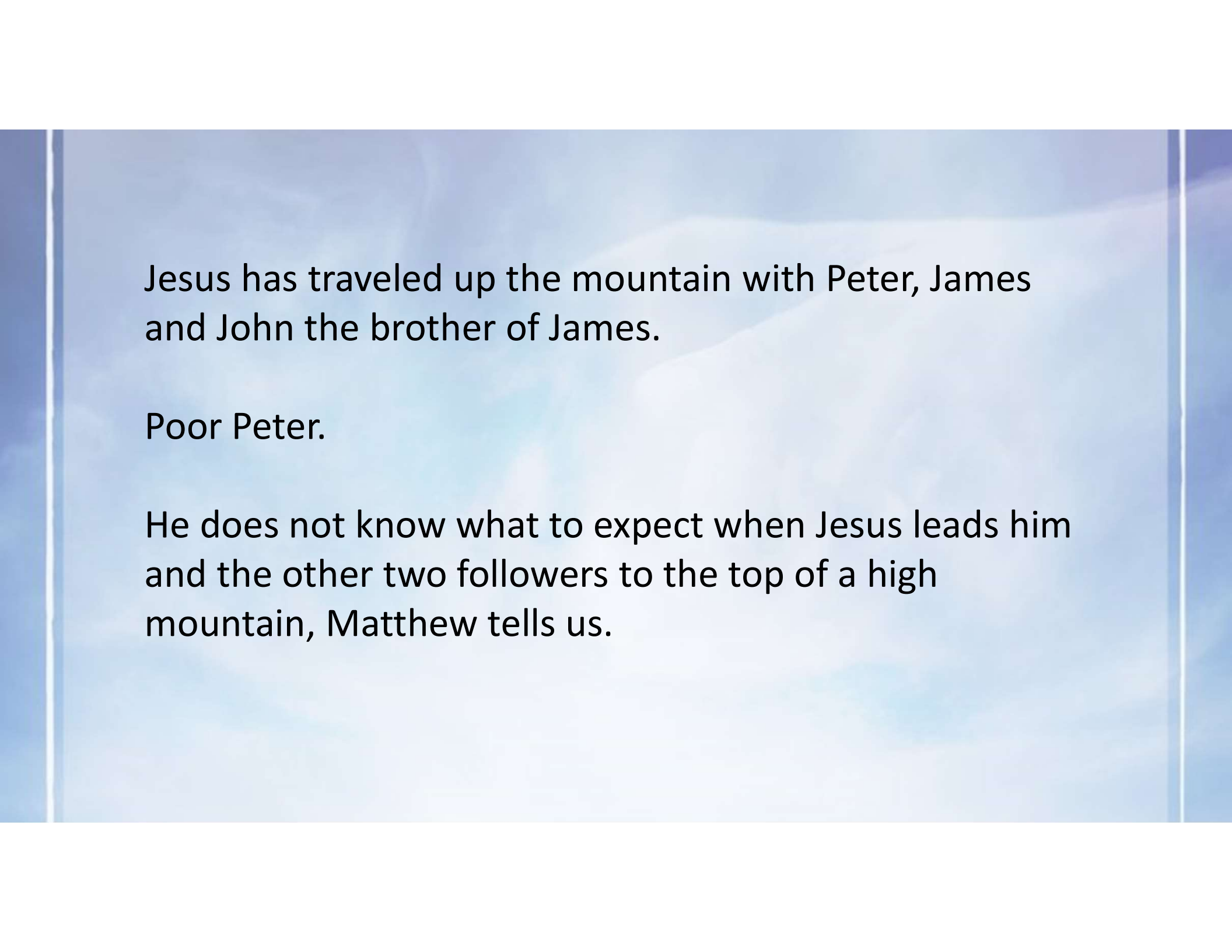
Christ asks us to remember as we move into the Lenten Season and journey with Him to the cross of Golgotha, to open our hearts this day in the name of the one who surprises us with the fulness of His compassion and make the choice to receive Him in a new and unexpected revelation to us.

What a Mighty God we serve!

Who would not only die on the cross for our sins but will gather us together and remind us of His presence each and every day of our lives.

And so we come to Matthew 17:1-9.

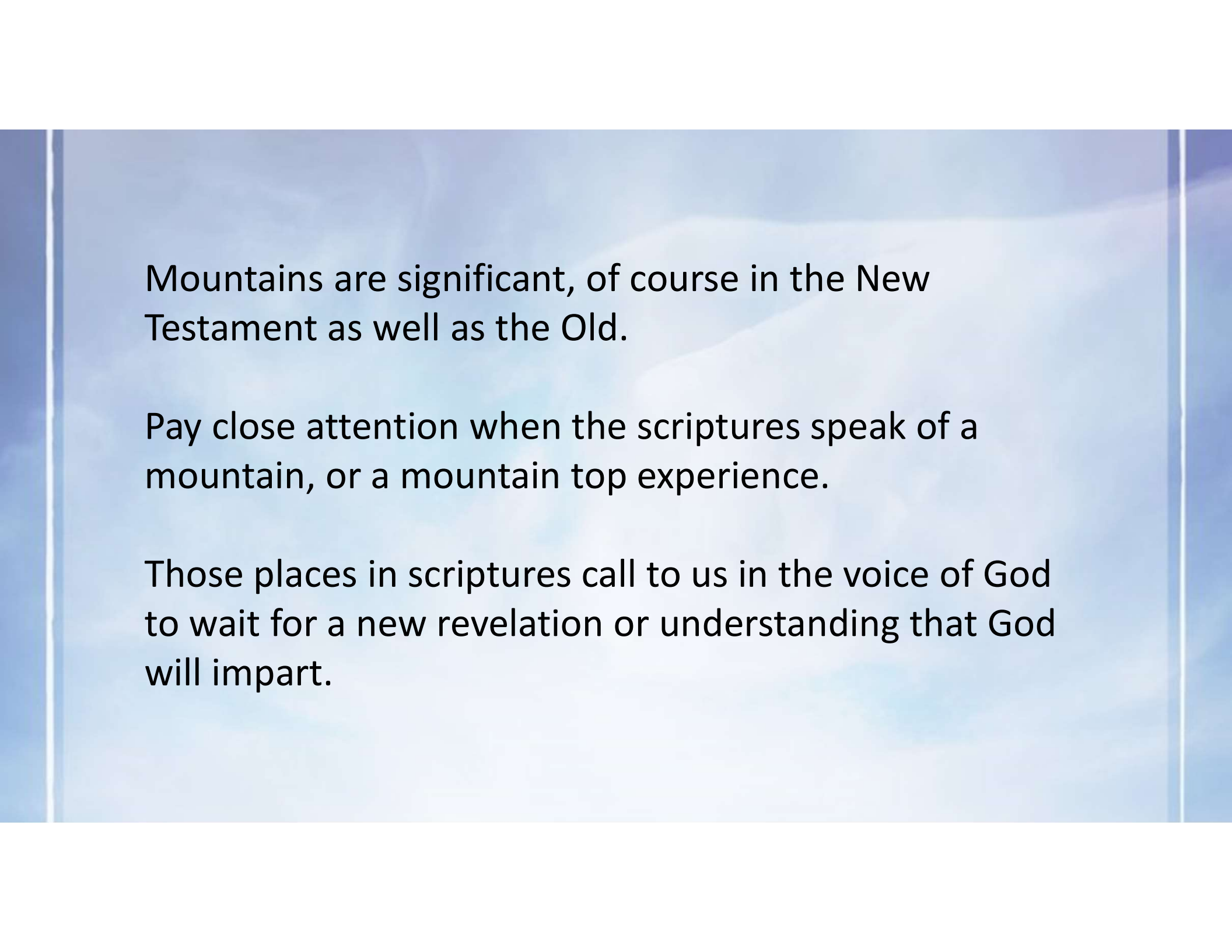
Where we find a handful of the disciples with Jesus.



Jesus has traveled up the mountain with Peter, James and John the brother of James.

Poor Peter.

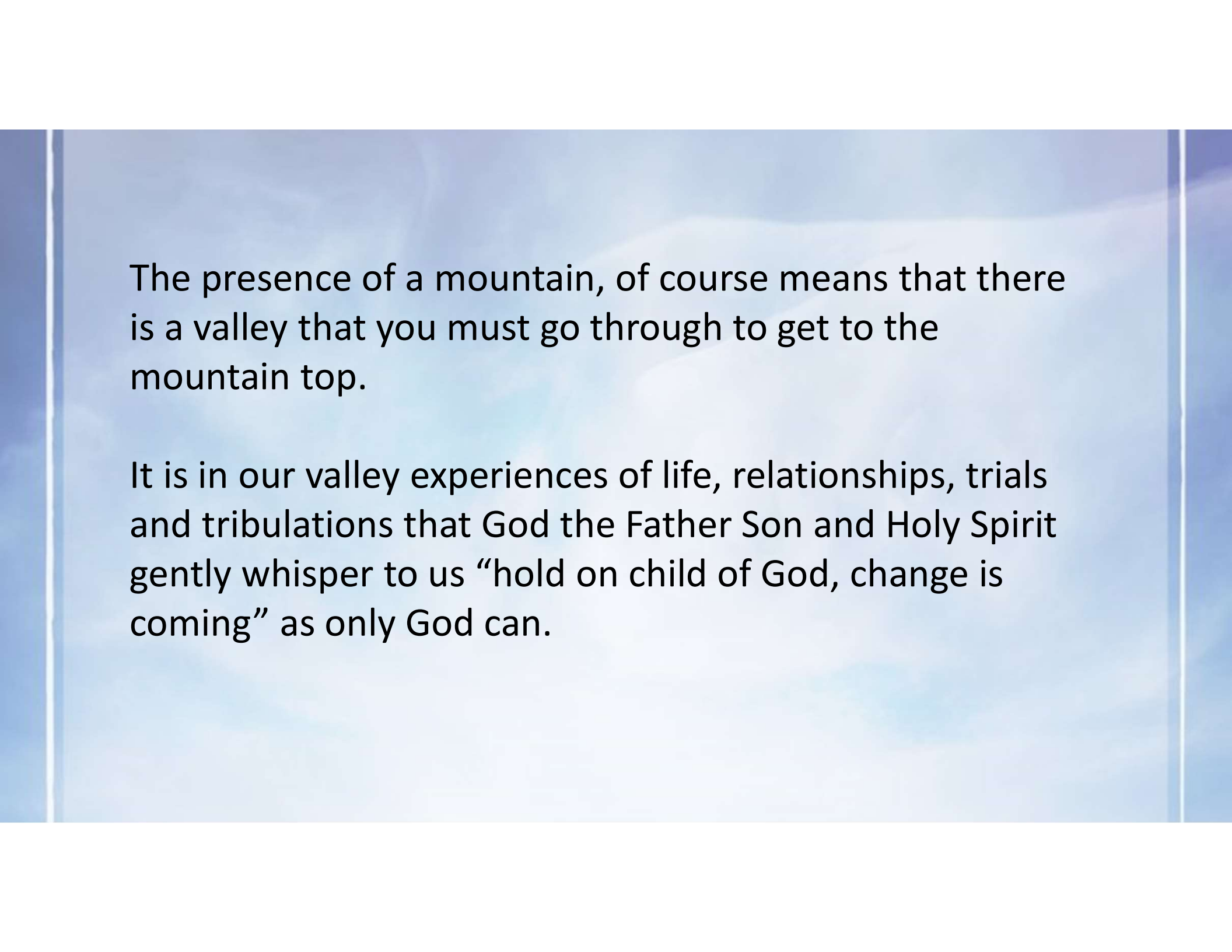
He does not know what to expect when Jesus leads him and the other two followers to the top of a high mountain, Matthew tells us.



Mountains are significant, of course in the New Testament as well as the Old.

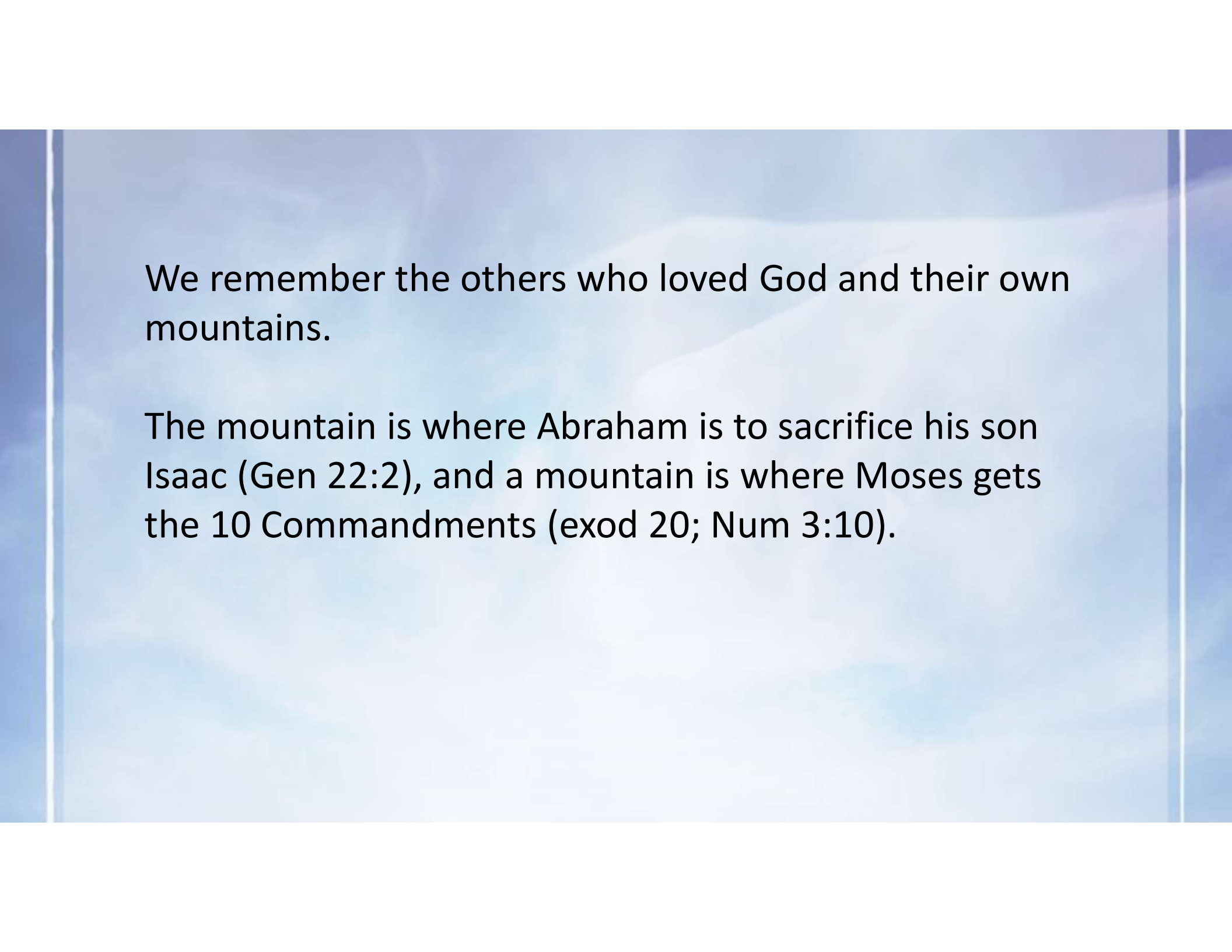
Pay close attention when the scriptures speak of a mountain, or a mountain top experience.

Those places in scriptures call to us in the voice of God to wait for a new revelation or understanding that God will impart.



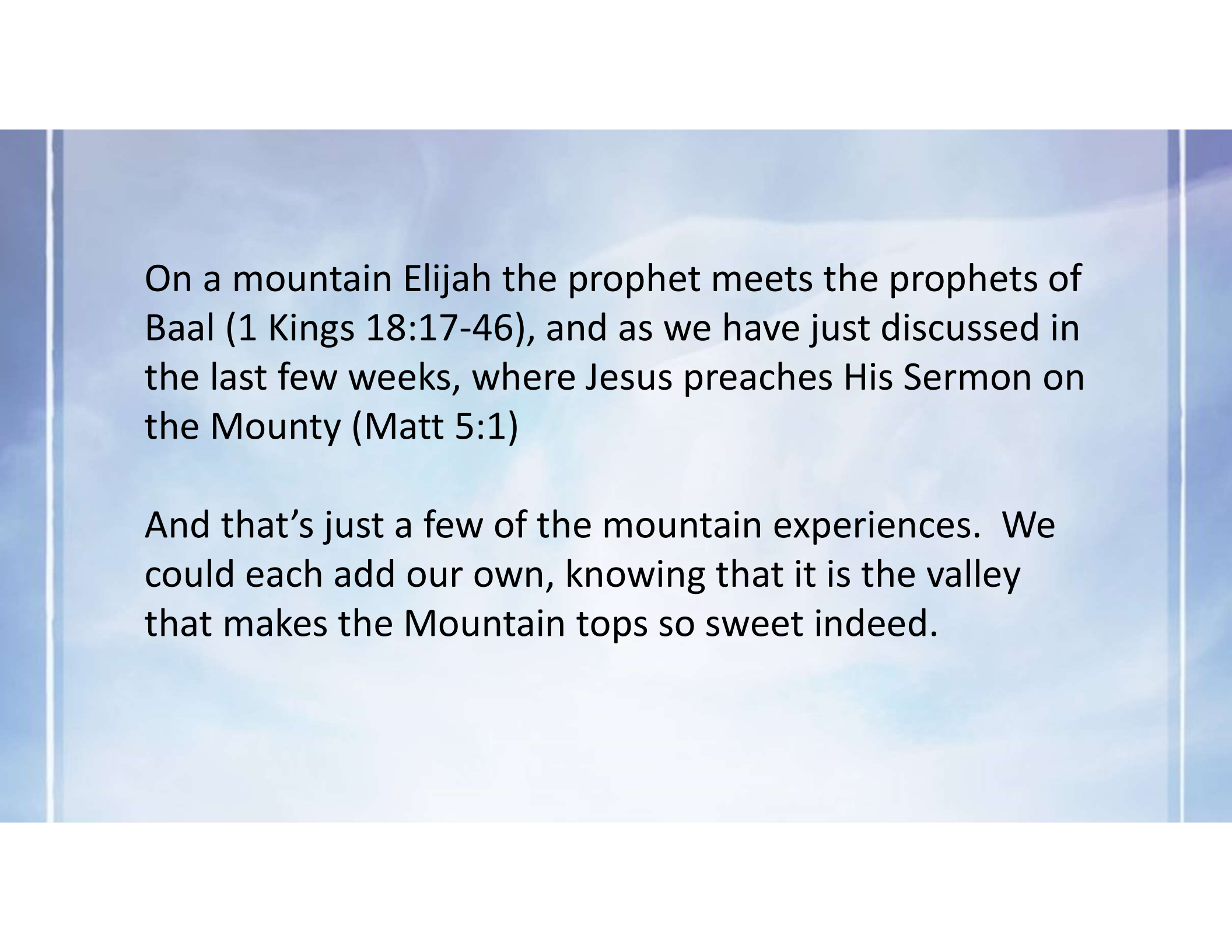
The presence of a mountain, of course means that there is a valley that you must go through to get to the mountain top.

It is in our valley experiences of life, relationships, trials and tribulations that God the Father Son and Holy Spirit gently whisper to us “hold on child of God, change is coming” as only God can.



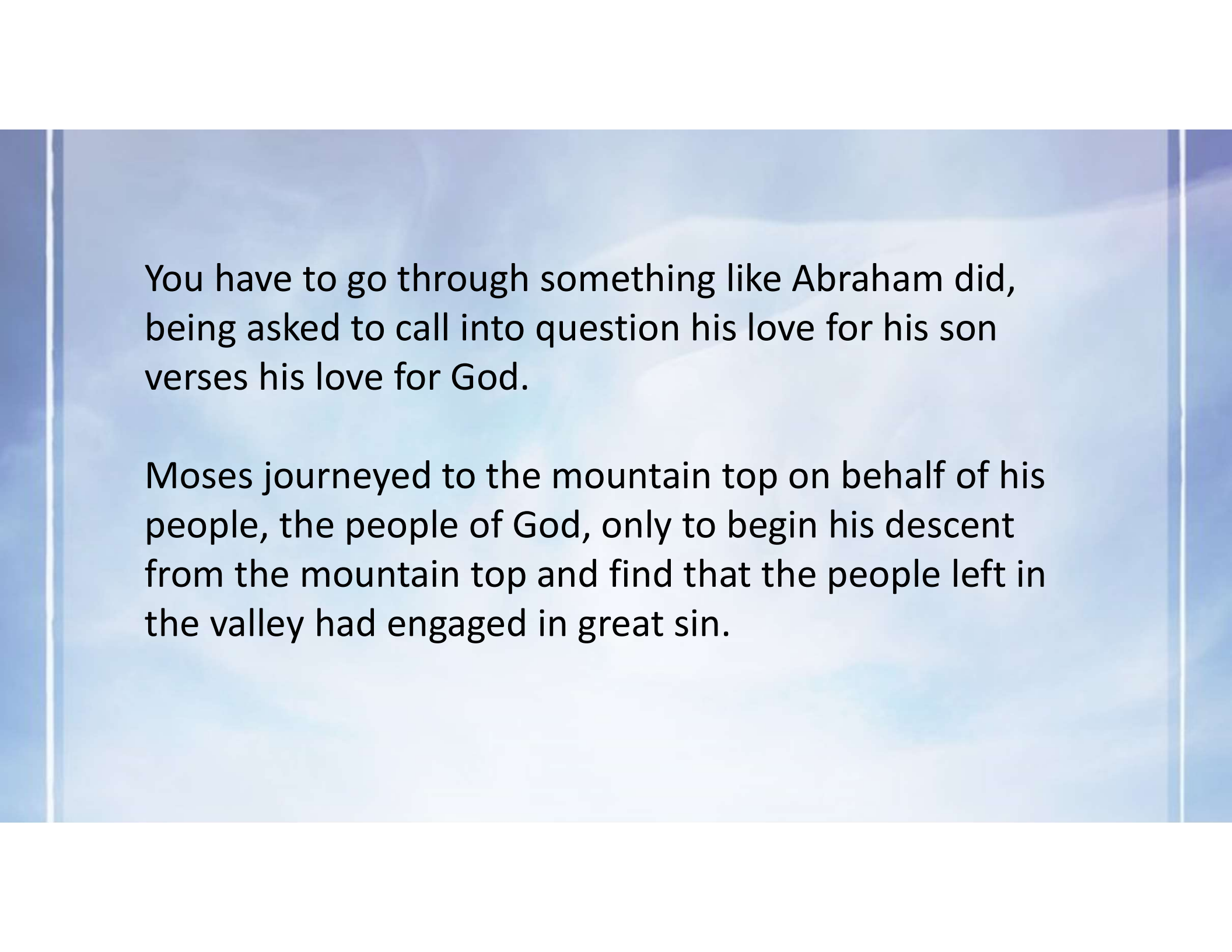
We remember the others who loved God and their own mountains.

The mountain is where Abraham is to sacrifice his son Isaac (Gen 22:2), and a mountain is where Moses gets the 10 Commandments (exod 20; Num 3:10).



On a mountain Elijah the prophet meets the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:17-46), and as we have just discussed in the last few weeks, where Jesus preaches His Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1)

And that's just a few of the mountain experiences. We could each add our own, knowing that it is the valley that makes the Mountain tops so sweet indeed.



You have to go through something like Abraham did, being asked to call into question his love for his son versus his love for God.

Moses journeyed to the mountain top on behalf of his people, the people of God, only to begin his descent from the mountain top and find that the people left in the valley had engaged in great sin.

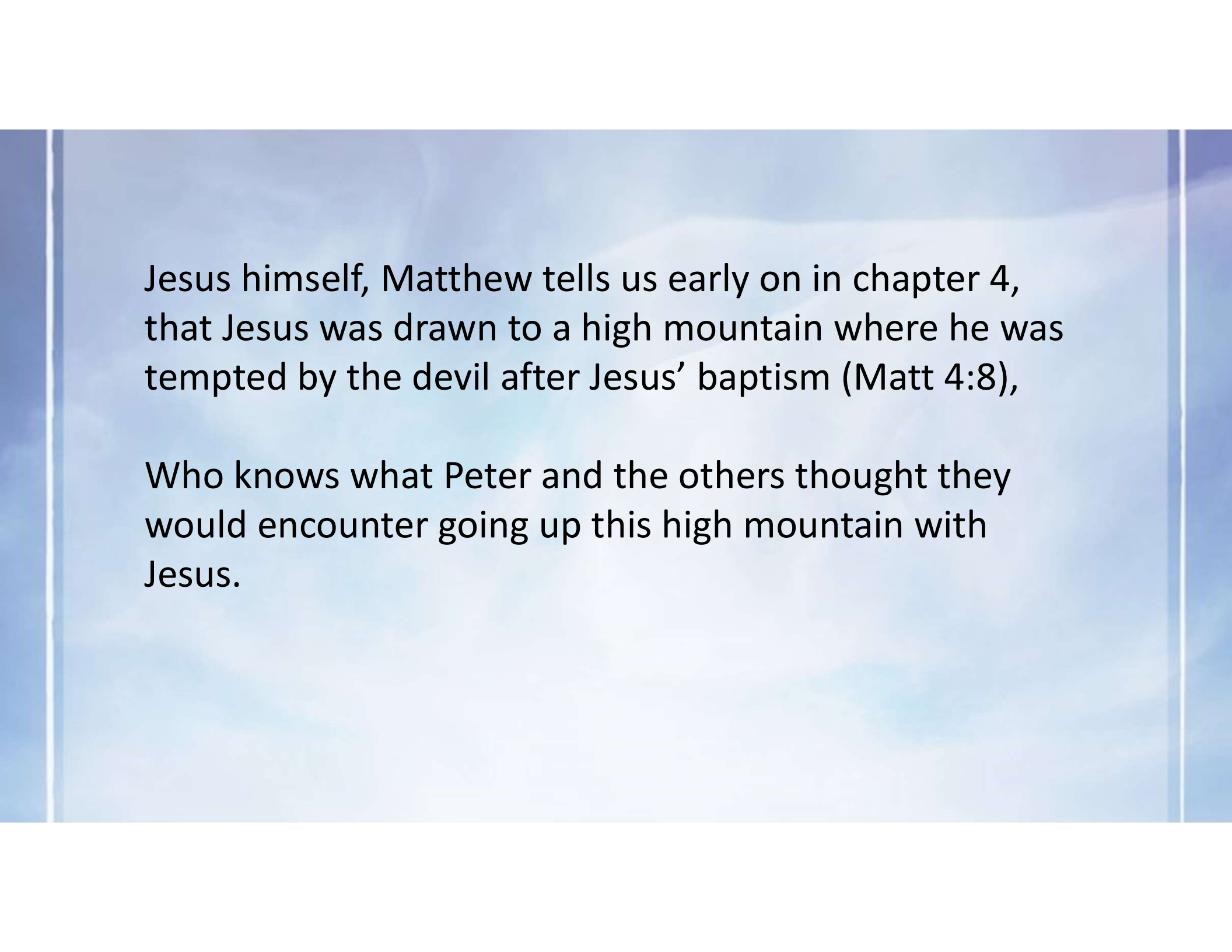
The people of Moses had little patience for God to send the revelation to them He had promised, and their patience, anxiety, and callousness towards God and one another, caused them to engage in all sorts of sinful behavior including making an idol of their own choosing rather than wait on their God.

Church, the valley and the Mountains go hand in hand in the scriptures and in our lives and the lives of those who love the Lord.

It is how we wait upon the Lord that gives us light to understand the valley we are in.

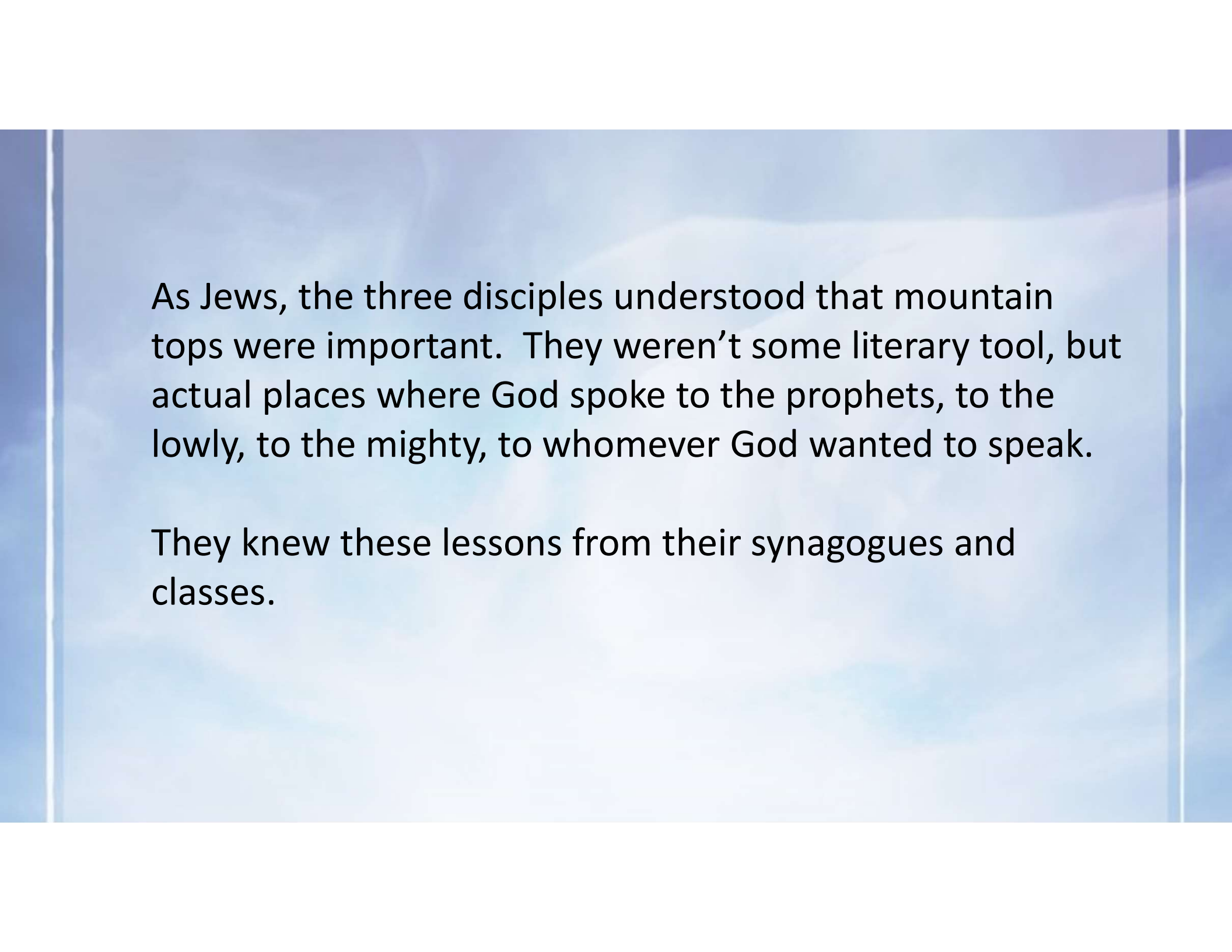
All of those wonderful events on the mountain tops and all of the valley crossings, the Bible is filled with them.

Why? Because those are the places where God brings meaning to our struggles, answers to our prayers, and where often times, He tells us that we have to tarry a little while longer in the valley to understand the lessons that He will bring to us.



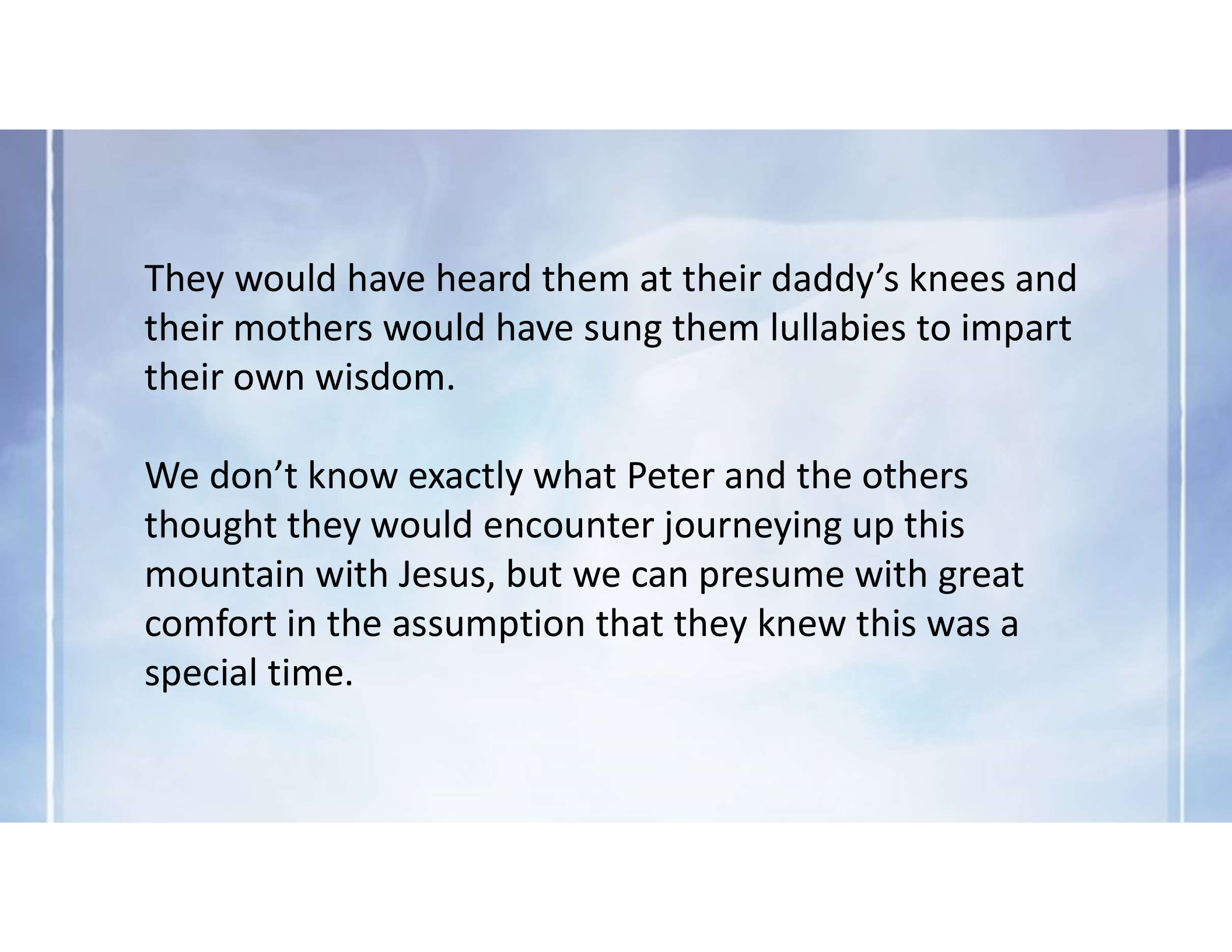
Jesus himself, Matthew tells us early on in chapter 4, that Jesus was drawn to a high mountain where he was tempted by the devil after Jesus' baptism (Matt 4:8),

Who knows what Peter and the others thought they would encounter going up this high mountain with Jesus.



As Jews, the three disciples understood that mountain tops were important. They weren't some literary tool, but actual places where God spoke to the prophets, to the lowly, to the mighty, to whomever God wanted to speak.

They knew these lessons from their synagogues and classes.

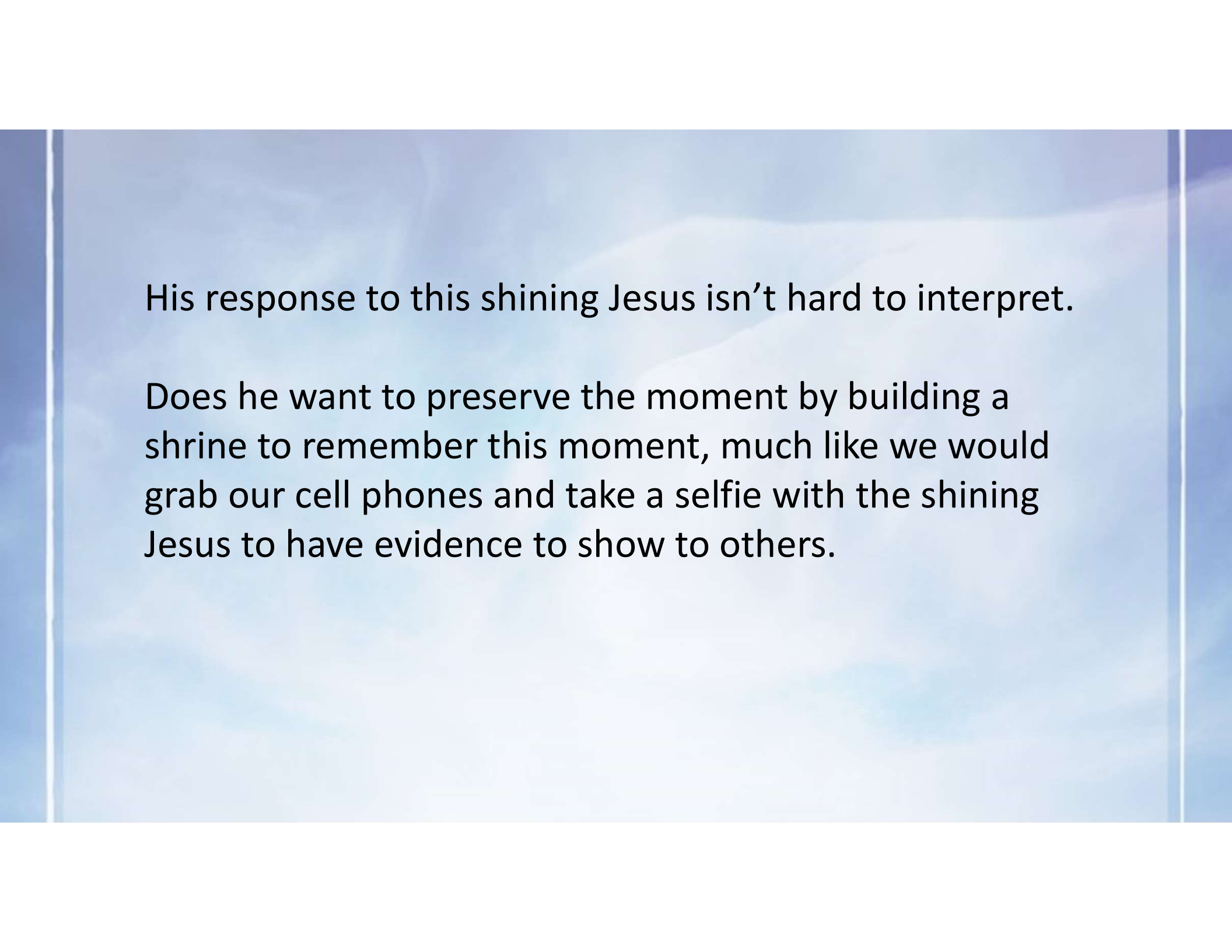


They would have heard them at their daddy's knees and their mothers would have sung them lullabies to impart their own wisdom.

We don't know exactly what Peter and the others thought they would encounter journeying up this mountain with Jesus, but we can presume with great comfort in the assumption that they knew this was a special time.

Here in the glory of the cloud of God, Jesus is transformed into something radiant and magnificent, something outside of their normal earthly experience and into the realm of the divinity of God.

When Jesus was transformed and talking to Moses and Elijah, heavyweights with the Law and the Prophets, it is Peter who is bold enough to speak when speech fails the others.



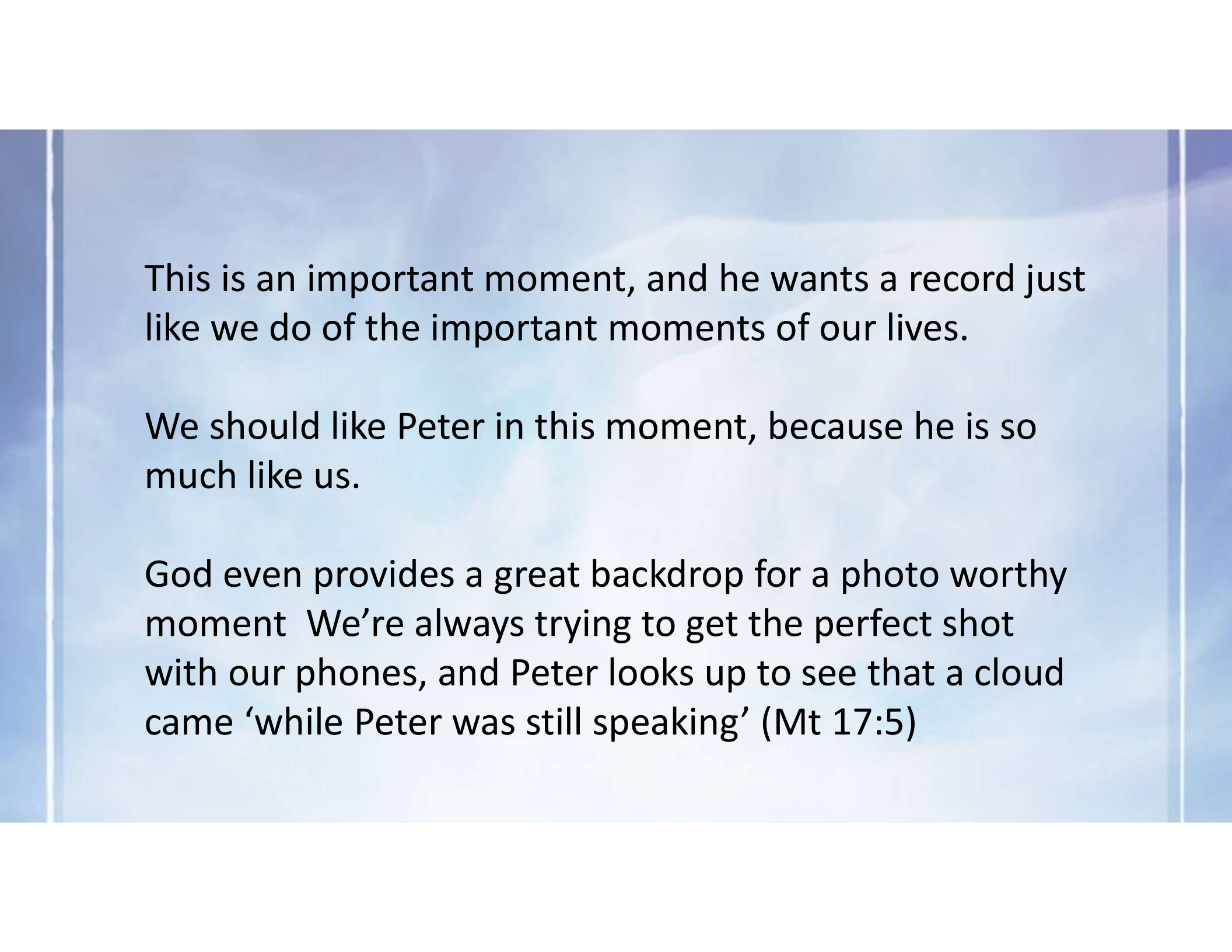
His response to this shining Jesus isn't hard to interpret.

Does he want to preserve the moment by building a shrine to remember this moment, much like we would grab our cell phones and take a selfie with the shining Jesus to have evidence to show to others.

Peter's thoughts when put in that context are not that different from our own actions.

I need something concrete to remember this moment.

Where we grab our apple and other tech, Peter is going to accomplish the same thing with the heavy tech of his day, rock and manpower to build a lasting memory that people might tell stories each time they too were brought up to the mountain by God.



This is an important moment, and he wants a record just like we do of the important moments of our lives.

We should like Peter in this moment, because he is so much like us.

God even provides a great backdrop for a photo worthy moment. We're always trying to get the perfect shot with our phones, and Peter looks up to see that a cloud came 'while Peter was still speaking' (Mt 17:5)



Isn't that wonderful?

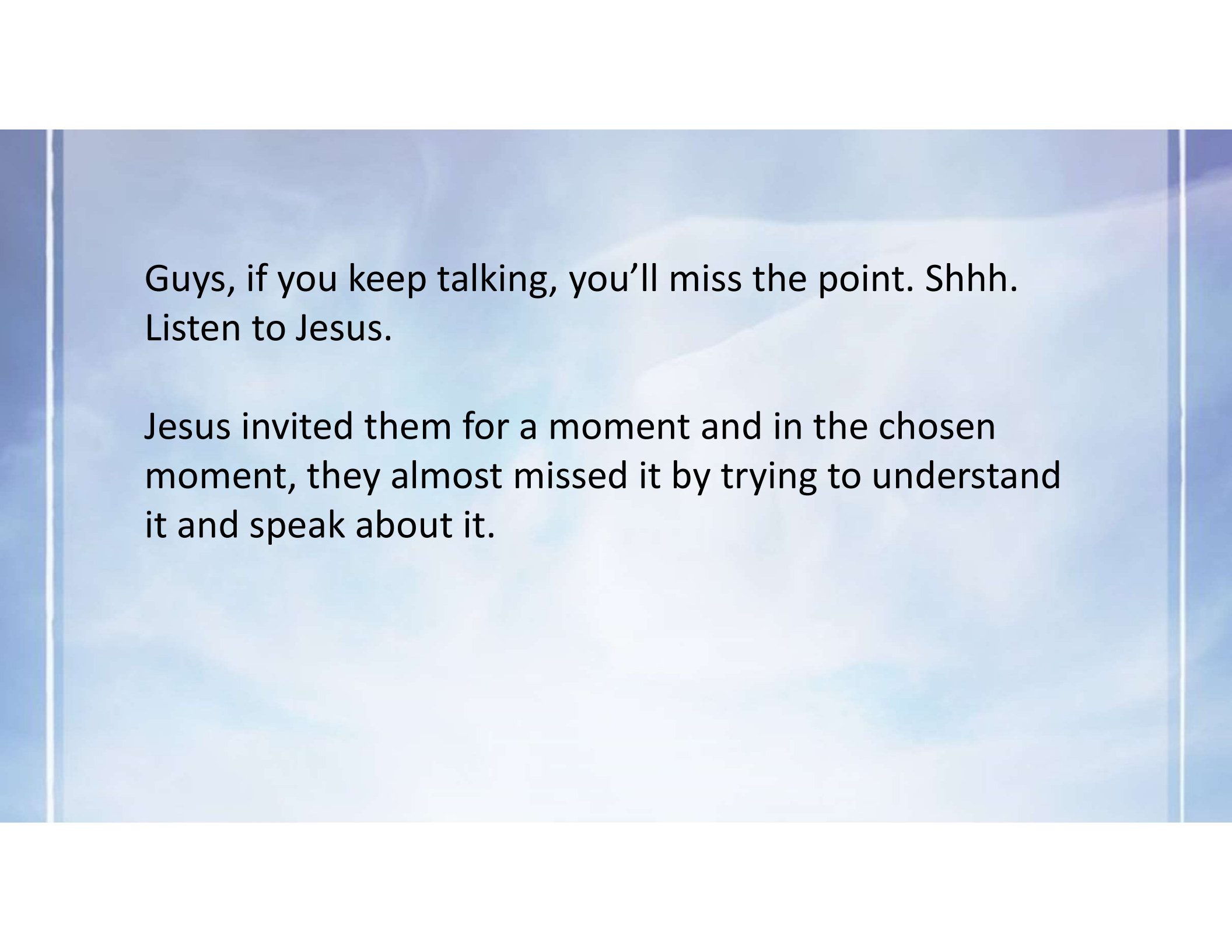
Here's God moving while others didn't know what to do?

The words from the cloud confirming the identity of Jesus as God's Son inspires awe and fear.

The last words from the cloud are the command in Mt 17:5 “Listen to him”

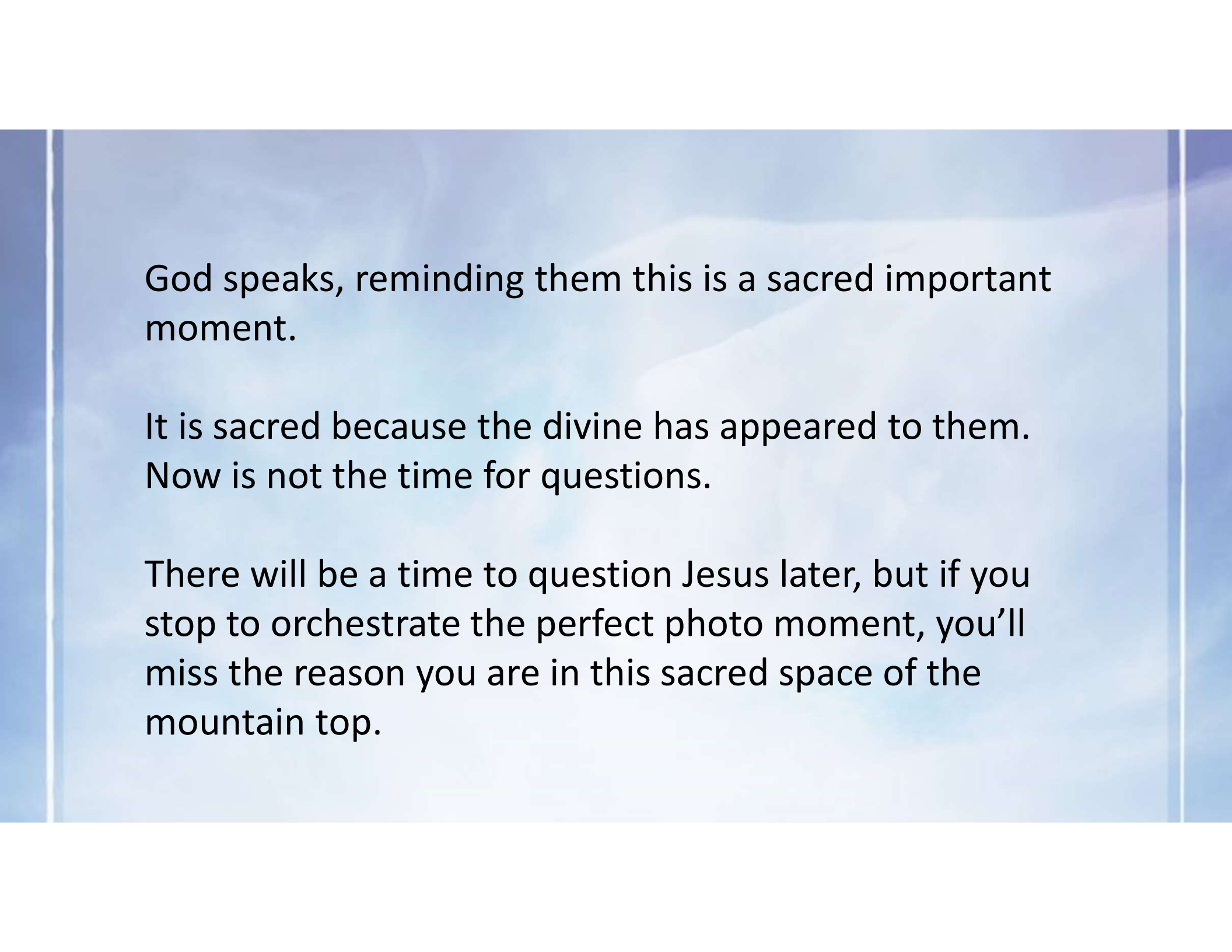
God recognizes what the disciples could not at this moment.

They can't pay attention and listen, if there are talking. God moved their words and speaks over Peter, just like any loving parent or teacher would do.



Guys, if you keep talking, you'll miss the point. Shhh.
Listen to Jesus.

Jesus invited them for a moment and in the chosen moment, they almost missed it by trying to understand it and speak about it.



God speaks, reminding them this is a sacred important moment.

It is sacred because the divine has appeared to them. Now is not the time for questions.

There will be a time to question Jesus later, but if you stop to orchestrate the perfect photo moment, you'll miss the reason you are in this sacred space of the mountain top.



What excellent instructions for us as we try to make sense of the sacred moments of our own lives.

The sacred moments in our lives are when God meets us where we are and shows Himself to be something greater than we ever thought or could imagine.



Sometimes we are like Peter.

We have journeyed through the valley of illness, divorce, strife, pain, loneliness, anxiety, the list is endless the things that we encounter going through the valley on our way to the blessing and the lessons that God intended for us to share in.

How often do we ruin the moments that are sacred and holy in our prayer time with God that we barely stop giving Him our wish list, our list of prayers, that we don't tarry in the moment and say as the prophet did "Speak Lord, your servant is listening"

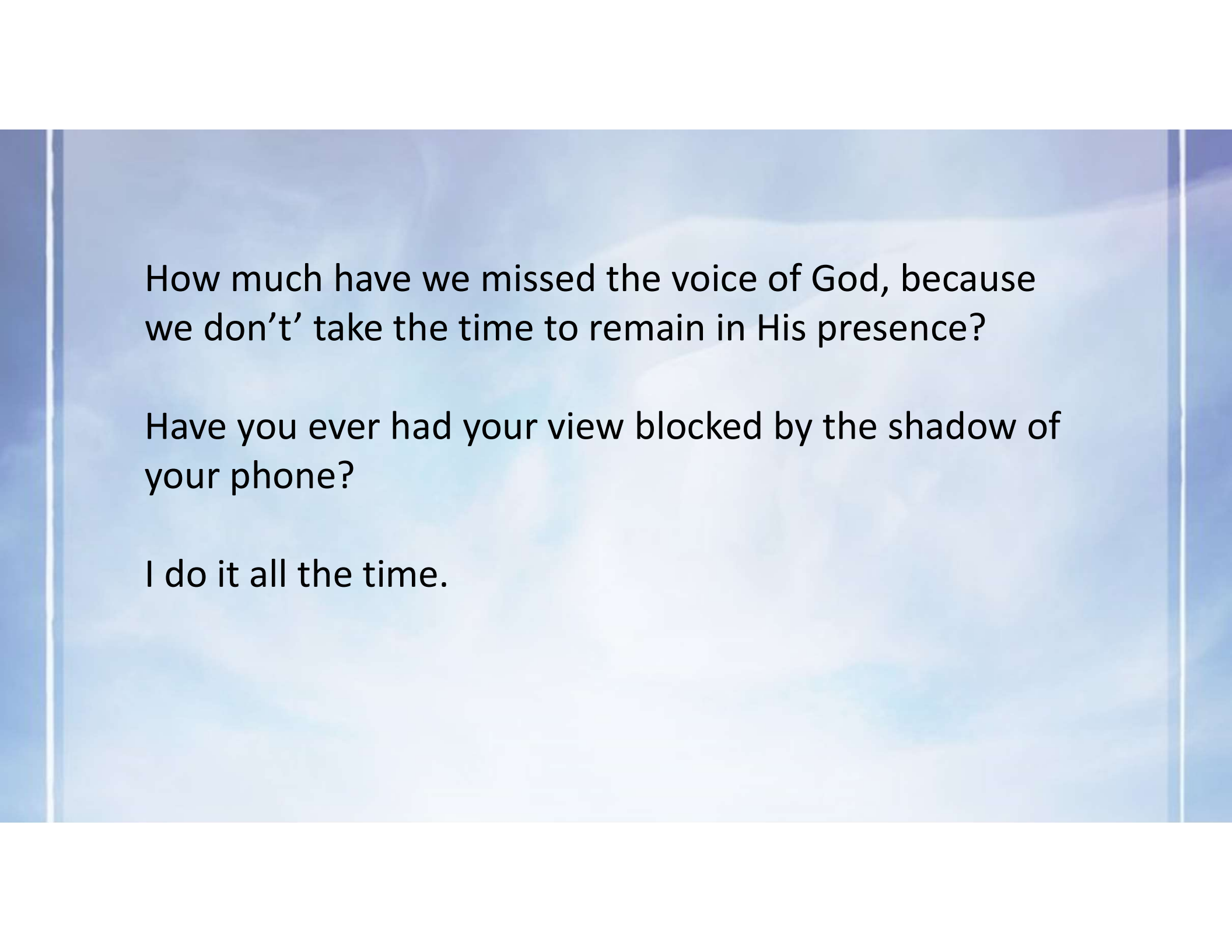
We are so busy crafting how we want God to respond to our perfect idea of what the scene should look like, that we miss the moment entirely.



God has promised that He will listen to our requests.

God has promised and He is not a man that He should lie.

The question is, will we listen when we are in His divine presence?




How much have we missed the voice of God, because we don't take the time to remain in His presence?

Have you ever had your view blocked by the shadow of your phone?

I do it all the time.

I have found just the right angle to capture all that I wanted to get in the photo of this special moment, only to see that the shadow or my hand holding the phone is in the way

Or worse yet, my thumb.



Sometimes in our moment an out movement to get the perfect picture we get in our own way.

That's what Peter was doing.

Just like us, Peter had gotten in his own way



God didn't chastise him.

God didn't make him feel bad.

God understood.

As the loving parent God understood and lovingly spoke to them all and said “Listen to Him’

Listen to Jesus. He’s going to show you in this moment that He transcends all you have known about me from the law and the prophets.

And in the next few legs of your journey with Him from here to Golgatha to the empty tomb, Jesus is going to reveal Himself to you.



Child of God, take time to listen.

How much we miss in this culture when we do not allow ourselves moments of silence and stillness in the face of the profound.

We relate to Peter's reaction.



We want to remember the moment.

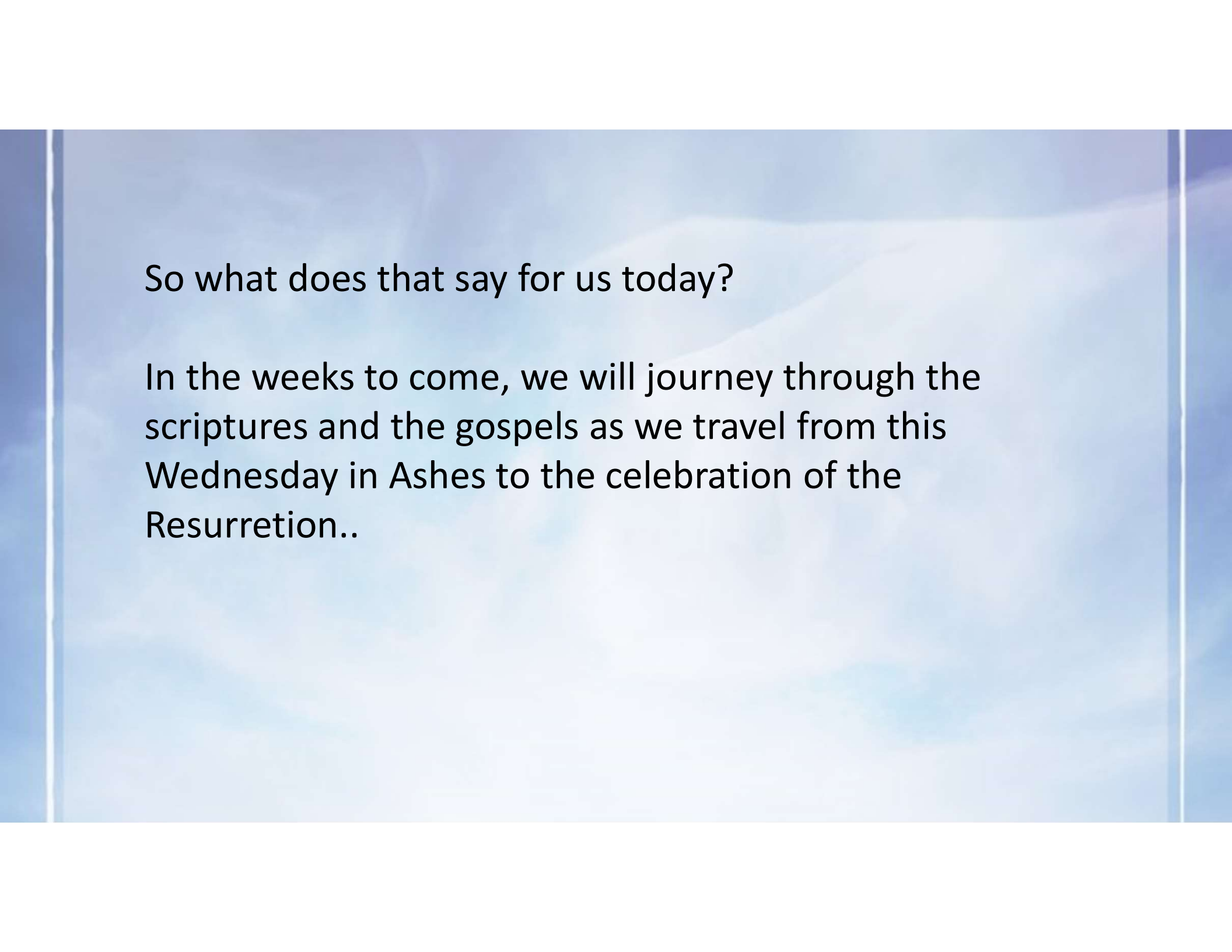
We want others to see the moment memorialized,
honored, and seen through our eyes.

God knew that wasn't enough.

Peter was the one that was talking, but the other two were having their own moment as well.

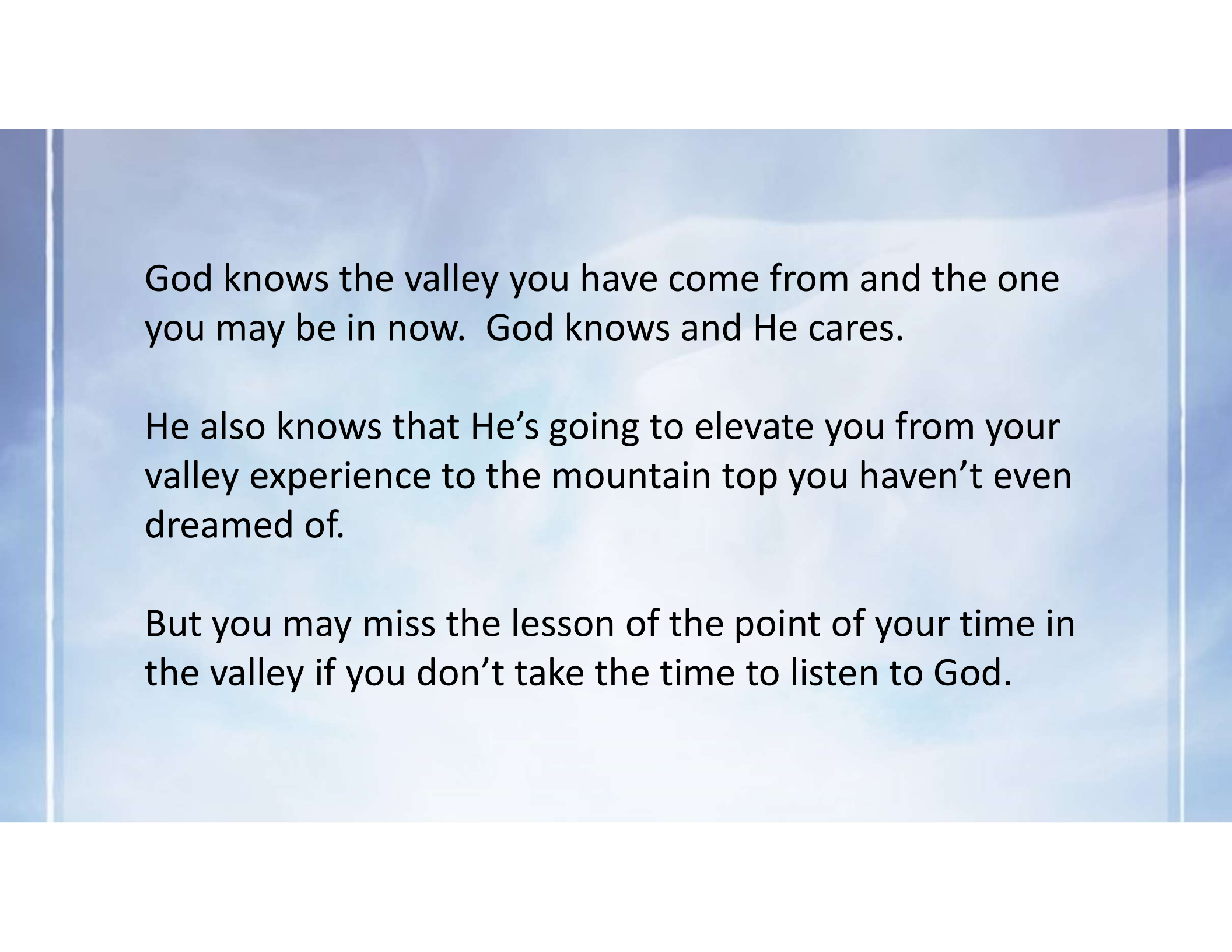
God wanted them to experience it as well through the filter of their own experience, their own eyes, their own beings.

“Shhhh. God says. Enjoy the moment. Listen. Otherwise, you may miss the bigger blessing.



So what does that say for us today?

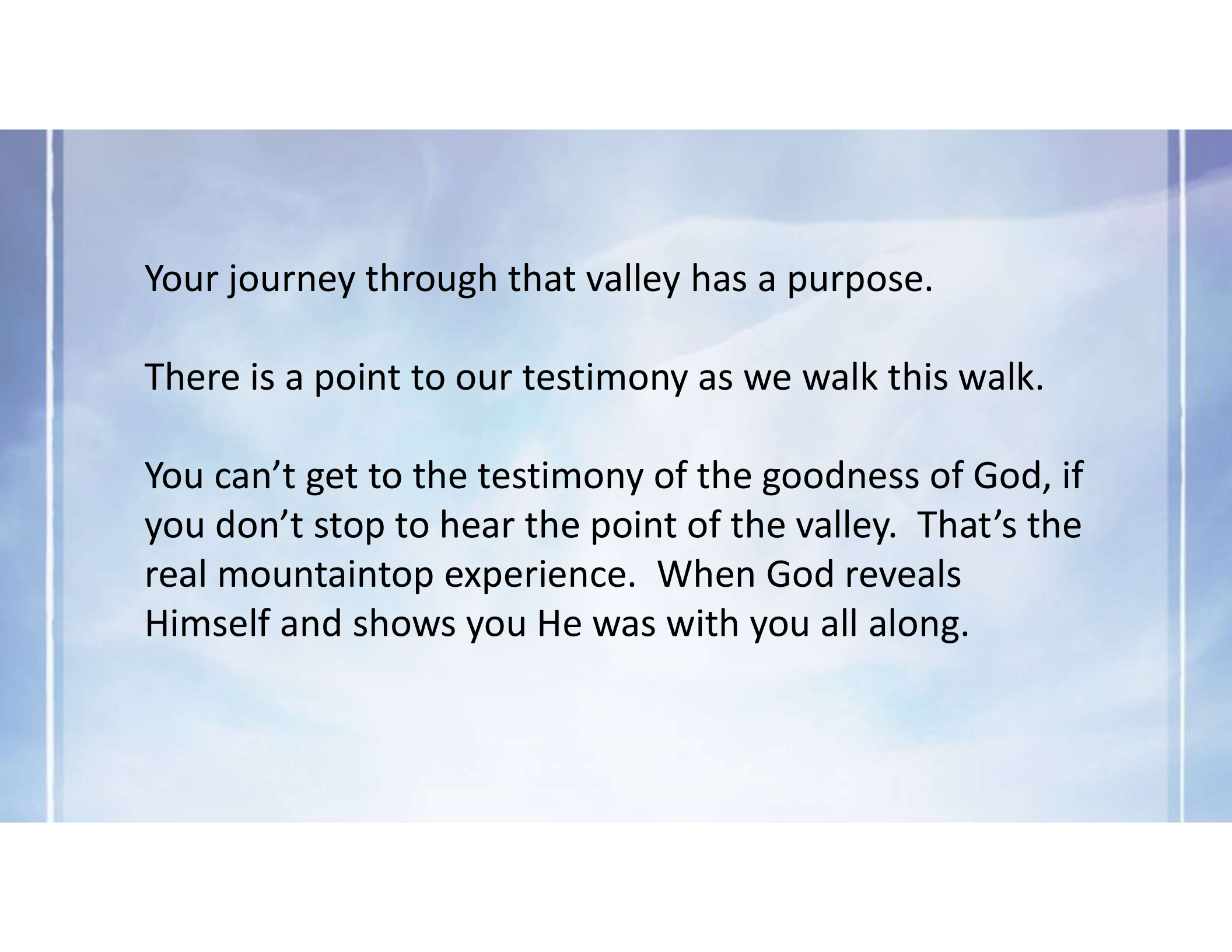
In the weeks to come, we will journey through the scriptures and the gospels as we travel from this Wednesday in Ashes to the celebration of the Resurrection..



God knows the valley you have come from and the one you may be in now. God knows and He cares.

He also knows that He's going to elevate you from your valley experience to the mountain top you haven't even dreamed of.

But you may miss the lesson of the point of your time in the valley if you don't take the time to listen to God.



Your journey through that valley has a purpose.

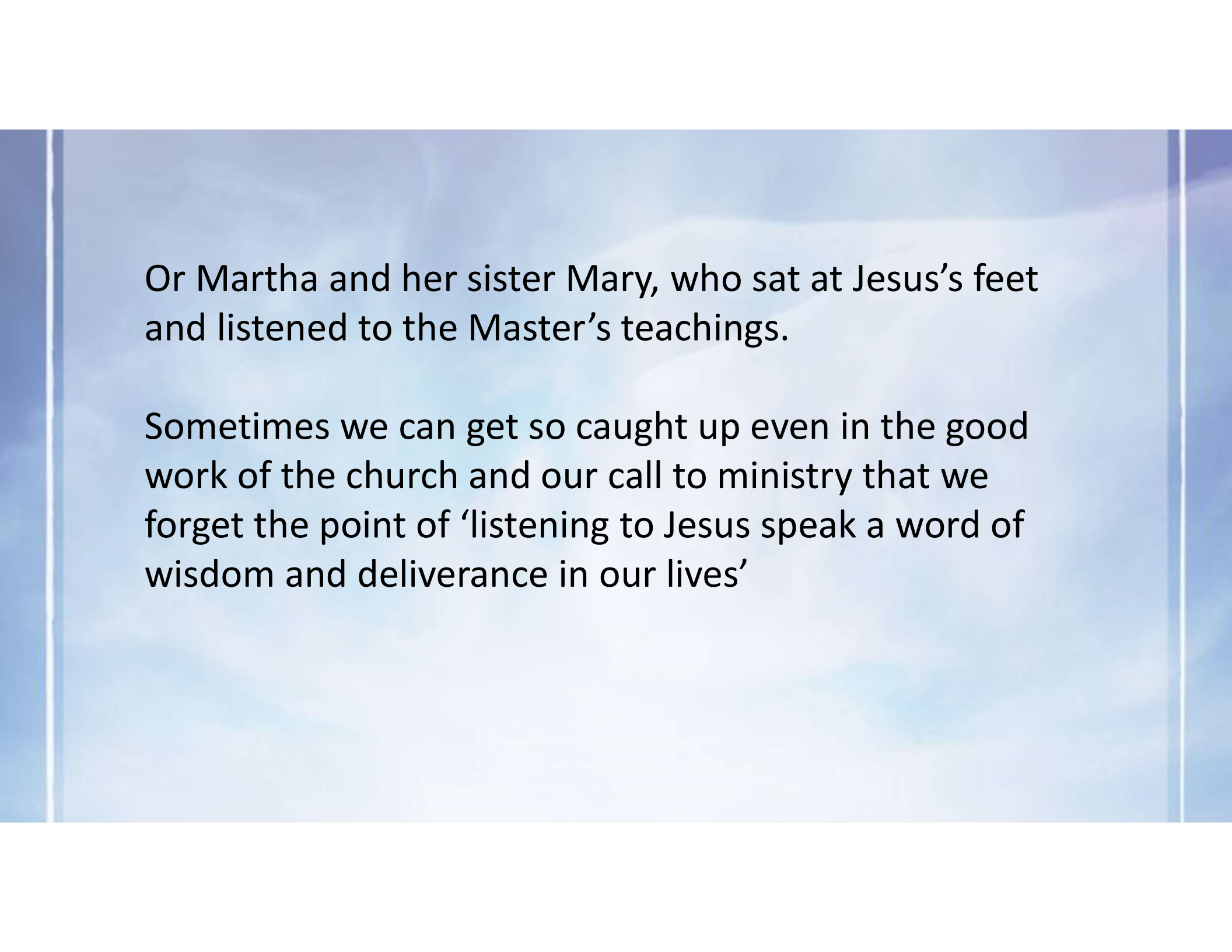
There is a point to our testimony as we walk this walk.

You can't get to the testimony of the goodness of God, if you don't stop to hear the point of the valley. That's the real mountaintop experience. When God reveals Himself and shows you He was with you all along.

Sometimes we forget that God acts for our good, even when we don't have the good sense to be quiet.

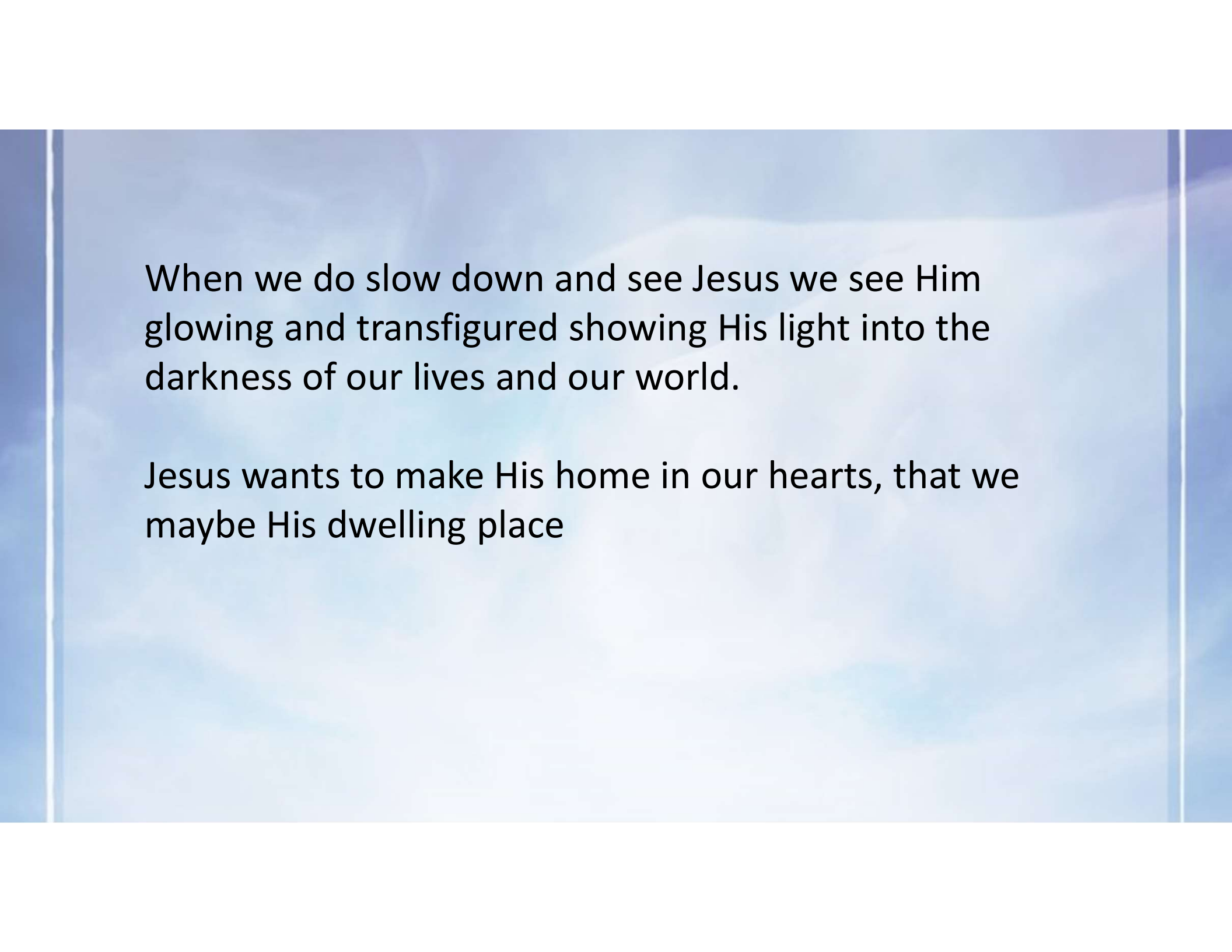
Some biblical examples of this behavior:

Mary the mother of Jesus who the scriptures say "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19)



Or Martha and her sister Mary, who sat at Jesus's feet and listened to the Master's teachings.

Sometimes we can get so caught up even in the good work of the church and our call to ministry that we forget the point of 'listening to Jesus speak a word of wisdom and deliverance in our lives'



When we do slow down and see Jesus we see Him glowing and transfigured showing His light into the darkness of our lives and our world.

Jesus wants to make His home in our hearts, that we maybe His dwelling place

In this way, when people look at us, they will see Jesus for themselves.

In the next few days, we begin our Lenten journey.

As we pray, as we fast, as we plan, as we worship, let's remember to listen for the voice of God.

AMEN.