

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

A catalogue just came in the mail, one that I'd never seen before, called "Sahalie." As I flipped through the pages, I thought, what in the world is "Sahalie?" And on the back of the front page, it said, "Sahalie" (sə·hâ·le) - the Chinook Indian word for "a high, lofty place." Then underneath, there was a tiny asterisk and a tiny statement "trick question; sahalie is more of a feeling than a place." I laughed because that's your today's theme almost. Remember, Pilgrim, in your last one you learned of my "Nine-Mile Hike" possibilities.

I did it! And it was the hardest hike of my life. Truly, I was the weakest link - but, by God's grace and the encouragement from the rest of the group, I did it. Nine miles with a 2,500-foot elevation change, starting at 10,000 feet. That's pretty impressive, I must say, for a sea level living lady like myself.

The air was thin and some parts really steep. On the hardest part, truly, I had to stop about every third or fourth step, just to catch my breath. The wildflowers were everywhere; some varieties we saw only grow 12,000 feet and above. The beauty was incredible. It truly was breathtaking; that is, if I had had any breath to take! My husband and son and daughter-in-law, and even the Lab puppy, were so kind and considerate and I thank them for that. My husband Paul was

like my coach. Thank goodness, as an OB/GYN who's delivered over 14,000 babies and knows how to handle women who think they've reached their limit. He started saying, "Think, Lucy, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can" like the little engine that could. "You can do it!"

But where I'd like to go back and linger for today is "the saddle." I didn't even know what a saddle on a mountain was! I'd experienced a saddle on a horse, both English and Western types. I'd fallen off the former and held on for dear life on the latter. I never learned how to saddle a horse or to ride bareback, but I did know, beyond a shadow of a doubt - if I was riding a horse or a camel, in one petrified instance, I wanted the animal to have a saddle.

You see, I'm not the bravest of the brave when it comes to equestrian sports. The only ribbon, red in fact, that I have ever won, was as a child at camp. I was rewarded the prize because of my excellent posture. Posture! Hello? Of course I had good posture; I was scared to death! Frozen fright helps give you a straight back. Right? At this early age, I learned to appreciate a saddle for it gives you some added padded comfort.

But what about a mountain saddle? Fortunately, I hadn't paid much attention to my son and daughter-in-law's prior description of the hike. I was trusting them and my precious darling husband. He knows my ability. Every mountain hike I've ever been on has been with him. (I've only

been a hiker for 2-1/2 years, which includes our courtship and married life.) So - if he said I could do it, I thought I could do it.

So, off we went, rather climbed. We reached the first crest and a lake and a sit-down rest and I thought we had reached the summit and I was really silently celebrating. "Yes! I did it!" -- only to learn now we had to do "the saddle" and then go to the real peak and then down. "Help!"

The dictionary says a saddle when referring to a mountain is "a ridge connecting two higher elevations" - to that definition, I'd like to add, "It can give you some added padded comfort" just like the animal's saddle, at least the mountain saddle did that for me. It softened the climb, helped me regain my strength and confidence. It gave me the break I needed - physically, emotionally, mentally. If I'd just climbed and descended and climbed and descended without the hike ever letting up, I think I would have become a basket case! Fortunately, that wasn't the case. I say fortunately for no one had any room in his or her backpack to carry a hysterical wife or mother home.

Sooo, I'd like to say, "Hip hip hurray for saddles!" And do you know what, Precious Pilgrim? I'd also always request a "saddle" to be included on life journeys.

My mind now skips to our Lord's Palm Sunday journey (John 12:13) and His ride on the donkey where He was met with a crowd proclaiming "Hosanna! Hosanna!" I bet one of

His disciples probably placed a blanket or a cloak on the back of the animal to soften the seat and be sort of a saddle which gave our Lord some added padded comfort. I bet those "Hosannas" shouted and palms waved, gave Him added padded comfort too. Those actions possibly helped fortify Him for His next peak, the one He'd climb in just a few days, to Calvary and the cross.

It wouldn't surprise me if the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-17) didn't become "saddle-like" when our Lord was transfigured and encouraged and strengthened by His Father God and Moses and Elijah. Possibly another "padded comfort" moment for Him.

Can you imagine those words being spoken by our Father God: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 17:5b) Oh, wouldn't such a declaration soften the peak, and melt it down into becoming more "saddle-like?" And those very same words were proclaimed by Jesus' Father God at His baptism: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matt. 3:17) What a way to start a ministry! What a way to be equipped for the desert and the devil's temptations. And then we are told in three different accounts of how our Lord "went up into a mountain" to be alone, to pray. (That's Matthew 14:23, Mark 6:46, John 6:15.) I've never noticed before that word "into" that each account uses. "Into" sounds rather saddle-like, doesn't it?

I bet that was a routine that our Lord adopted early on as a boy. I can just imagine Him asking His mother Mary - "I've finished all my chores, Mother, if you don't have anything else for me to do, might I go up into the mountain for a little while? I sense my Father God calling." -- "Run along, Son," she would have responded.

"Run along, Precious Pilgrim." Go. Seek yourself out today, a place of padded comfort, "saddle-like" in design. I found such a place between two high mountains. But do you know what, Precious Pilgrim? I believe they're not so rare. When we bend the knee of our heart and turn to our Lord in prayer, often-humongous mountains, those trials of life, which seem insurmountable, can melt and soften. It is my prayer that we can become more aware of the true "Saddle" of our lives - the hand of God. Each one of us is held lovingly, tenderly, in His palm.

Our Lord God says in Isaiah 49:16 "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hand."

And as our Lord Jesus was dying on the cross, Luke 23:46 says, "He said, 'Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'"

Into - "into Thy hands" - that's the saddle for me. Might it be for you, Precious Pilgrim?

And as Roy Rogers and Dale Evans would sing:

"Happy trails to you

Until we meet again

Happy trails to you

Keep smiling on 'til then."

I'm your cowgirl sister in Christ,

Lucy

Saddle up!