

Sermon Transfiguration 2021

January 24, 2021

2 Peter 1:16-21

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. This morning we meditate on the Epistle Lesson from Peter's second letter.

Those of you who have been in my new member's class could maybe see it. Or maybe who were in Bible Class last week, you could maybe see it too. This Epistle lesson is one of my favorites. I love it because of what we see said here. Look at how Peter speaks: **"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."** What a grand statement! Think about it all that Peter is describing there. We'll get into a number of the things he says today, but the thing I think it does well for us to begin with is the human aspect here. Look at the human perspective Peter brings in: "we were eyewitness of his majesty."

Now, hopefully, you grasped that this lesson is paired with the observance of Jesus' Transfiguration because what Peter is describing is being there with Jesus on that mountain. He's making sure that people know that he was there. He saw this with his own eyes. And that's what I think we need to think about for a minute. It's always easy to think about the great Peter, or the great Paul, or just the disciples, and not think about what that is like from a human perspective. In other words, think about what this was like for them as real people. Put yourself in their shoes. Or in this case, in particular, imagine what it would be like for you to be standing on that mountain and seeing Jesus shine like the sun.

You know we all sort of say, "Oh yeah, that's something Jesus did, and obviously He did that because He was God in the flesh, and this shows us that and..." Yes. That's all true. It's all correct. But take a minute to think about it! Take a minute to imagine you were Peter standing on that mountain. Here this man you know is amazing; He's performing miracles, after all. We don't know for sure that the Gospels were written in order, in fact, we think the order to an extent, serves the theological purpose of the writer. But in Matthew before this point, Peter has already walked on water, the disciples have collectively acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, Peter Himself confessing it in particular just before in Matthew 16. The point here being, Peter knew that Jesus was the Christ. But even still, do you think when they went up that mountain that Peter had any idea what was in store? I'm guessing he didn't.

You can imagine, then, what that would have been like to be standing on that mountain and suddenly to have Jesus begin to shine like the sun. I always say that's the sort of thing that would be seared into your memory. It's the sort of thing that you would remember for the rest of your life. It's the sort of thing the three disciples likely consulted with each other about after the fact to make sure they really saw what they thought they saw. But you can hear it in Peter's words how certain he was that he saw it.

As I say that, I think we can all acknowledge that this sort of memory, that sort of experience, is extraordinary. However, my experience with American Christianity has been that there is a stream of American Christians who have the expectation that this will be their experience too. They have the assumption that if they just believe enough, or in the right way, then they will get to have the experience of seeing Jesus in His majesty. Or maybe they'll be like Moses last week, and God will put them in the cleft of the rock to show His glory to them.

Now, I bring this up, not to just bash other people in their faith, but because we need to look at the broader teaching of Scripture. In fact, I think we should apply that not just to the mentality that we might have in American Christianity that we are Peter or Paul, or that we are Moses, but a certain narcissism that we all have. For example, think about how many people you have heard say, "Well, I would believe in Jesus if He would show Himself to me." Maybe they even know the story of the Transfiguration and they say, "It would be easy to believe if I was Peter and I was there on that mountain. If God wants me to believe He can just appear to me like that." It's a common perspective, isn't it? It's the idea that if God is that great, then I'll determine how He should appear to me, and He can just make Himself do that, isn't it?

But this is why I love this passage so much. Look at what Peter says here. He's been talking about this amazing experience. He's been telling about how he saw this change with his own eyes, how he heard the voice of the Father spoken from heaven lauding this Son, **"when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain."** Peter was there, and yet, what does he say? **"And we have something more sure."** Something more sure than you seeing this man change to shine with the glory of God? Something more sure than that experience on the mountain top, hearing the voice of God from the heavens? Something more sure than that memory

seared into your conscience, swallowing the entirety of your existence? Yes. Something more sure than that, Christian.

And what is that? It's the prophetic Word. It's the Scripture. These words of the Scripture are more certain than all of that. Why? He explains it. Because although these were recorded by men, they weren't only written by them. No, these words were written by God. In fact, it didn't matter what these men thought they were saying, because God was giving them the words, **"knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."**

Yes, these words were recorded by men, but those men were carried along by God Himself, carried along by the person of the Holy Spirit. You want to know about God? Look there. You want to know that God exists? Look there. Stop looking to your experiences. Stop looking to how You think about things, how You feel about things. Look at this Word.

As I mentioned those who say that if God would just appear to them like He appeared to Peter, I'm always reminded of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. Do you remember that? Lazarus was the poor man who sat begging at the gate of the rich man's house. Eventually, both the rich man and Lazarus died, and the rich man was sent to hell, Lazarus to heaven. After realizing the severity of his fate, the rich man finally asks for Lazarus to be sent to the rich man's brothers that they could avoid the same consequence. Abraham tells the rich man this won't happen. But do you remember why? His rationale is, **"They have Moses and the Prophets, let them listen to them... If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead."**

Do you hear the implication? This Word is sufficient revelation. If you don't believe it, you won't believe it if you see Jesus shine like the sun yourself. You won't believe if Jesus appears to you risen from the dead. And that's why Peter speaks of it as he does. Look again at his words, **"we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."**

You see that word comes to you as a light. It brings that light with which Jesus shined to the darkness of your life. It brings the light of His forgiveness to your sin. It brings the love of His suffering for you in the midst of your sorrows and suffering under the brokenness of this life. And His resurrection shines to give you the light to see your

own resurrection as He has baptized you and made you His own. His Word does this, works this in you and in your life.

Again, all of this is over and against everything else in the world. It's "**something more sure.**" In fact, I think we can draw from how Peter starts speaking in this lesson as we look to think about this concretely in our own lives. Look at how Peter describes his experience, or more so what he says his experience is not: "**we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" What's he saying? The eyewitness experience he had, the experience which the Scripture is even greater than, is not a "**cleverly devised myth.**" In other words, this isn't made up. In fact, the word there for "cleverly devised," has at its root in the word *logos*, wisdom. This transfiguration was not a wise myth. So, let me connect the dots very explicitly. There are wise myths, things that sound good but are made up. Greater than that is the eyewitness experience of the Transfiguration. Greater than both, however, is the God breathed Word of the Scriptures.

So Christian, why do you still delude yourself with the cleverly devised myths of the world? Isn't that the reality? We all do. We all have those ways where we inch toward those cleverly devised myths. We think "well, maybe I'll believe in Jesus, because that's all that matters, but I won't believe that Jonah was actually swallowed by a fish. I'll believe that Jesus is my savior, but I'll dedicate all of my energy to worrying about the things of this world. I'll confess that the Bible is that word, but I'll convince myself I'm too busy to read it or it doesn't matter how much I do what it says." Or as we look to the worries around us, we buy into the myth that the things like, old presidential administrations, new presidential administrations, Coronaviruses and vaccines, that these things are greater than God's Word and the One who has spoken that Word to us.

But Christians, in our time, then we have this comfort of the word spoken as the Spirit carried these men. The Word of the light of the World. Just as Christ shone, this word does too because it's His Word. It's the Word that says, you are living in darkness, but this One, this Christ, this One beloved by the Father with whom the Father was well pleased, that One has entered into this darkness and has devoured that darkness by shining the light of His love in it. A true love. Love that will not just make you feel better for a bit. Sometimes it does, but it's more than that. It's a love that will save you. That will take you from myth to truth, from darkness and suffering now and eternally to light and life and joy in the resurrection of our Lord now and eternally. Amen.