

## **The Echo of the Mountain**

In our Gospel lesson this morning, we witness the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, and there, the veil of His humanity is pulled back. His face shines like the sun. His clothes become as white as the brightest light. Moses and Elijah appear, representing the Law and the Prophets, all pointing toward the One standing in the center.

Peter, overwhelmed and perhaps a bit impulsive, suggests building three shelters. But he is interrupted by a bright cloud and a voice from heaven. “This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!” (Matt. 17:5). Peter never forgot the mountaintop experience.

Decades later, as Peter writes his final words to the Church, which faced persecution and false teaching, that mountain remained etched in his soul. As we’ll soon read today, Peter wasn’t just sharing a nice philosophy or way of life. He shares what he saw with his own eyes – and the experience changed him. If you have your Bible, or a Bible app handy, turn with me to 2 Peter 1:16-21. **Read 2 Peter 1:16-21.**

## **Not Cleverly Devised Myths**

Peter starts with a firm defense in our epistolary lesson this morning. He states, “For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we tell you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty,” (2 Pet. 1:16). When Peter first put pen to parchment nearly 2000 years ago to write this, skepticism was alive and well. Just like today, the skeptics dismissed the Gospel as a myth.

They viewed – they still view – the idea of a resurrected King as a convenient story to keep people in line. Or a poetic allegory for moral living. There are people running around Shelby County today, friends, who think that Jesus Christ didn’t really exist, that the Bible’s all made up, and He was invented by the Church to try to keep people in line and teach them how to live honest lives. They’re wrong. Peter pushes back with the weight of history, and his own eyewitness account.

The Church, and Christianity for that matter, is not founded on a feeling, a vague spirituality, or a “cleverly devised story.” It’s grounded in eyewitness testimony. Peter is saying, “I didn’t hear this from a friend of a friend. I was there. I felt the cold air on the mountain; I saw the blinding Light; I heard the audible voice of Almighty God.” In a world full of “fake news” and subjective truths, our faith stands on the bedrock of what actually happened in time and space. We follow a Savior who physically stepped into human history through a manger in Bethlehem, a cross on Good Friday, and who left a tomb empty on Easter morning.

## **The Honor and Glory of the Sun**

Peter continues in verses 17-18, Jesus “received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, saying, ‘This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain.”

Now church, why do you suppose Peter emphasizes the Transfiguration here? Because it was a preview of the “coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power.” See, he’s focused on Jesus, and making Him known, to draw more people to Him. And to encourage the Church, which was going through persecution by the Roman government at the time, and wrestling with false teachers within. The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ on the mountain was a “sneak peak” if you will, of the Kingdom.

When life feels dark – when the “power” of the world seems to be winning – we have to remember the “Majestic Glory” of Christ. He is not just a teacher or a martyr. He’s the beloved Son who holds the approval of the Father. If the Father is well-pleased with Him, then we, who are in Him, are safe.

### **The Prophetic Word Made More Certain**

Now we reach a fascinating turn in verse 19. “We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” Peter says something shocking here. He says that as unbelievable as the Transfiguration was, we have something even more certain – the written Word of God.

You may be thinking, “Peter, you saw Jesus glow! How is a book more certain than that?” Peter knew that experiences can fade, and memories can be questioned. But the Word of God – the “prophetic message” – is the objective anchor. Peter describes the world as a “dark place.” The Greek word he uses there refers to a dingy, parched, or murky cellar.

In other words, without the Word of God, we’re stumbling around in a dark basement with no light – and no flashlight. The world offers many “lights” – things like politics, wealth, self-help, technology – but these are all flickering candles that eventually blow themselves out – they burn themselves out. The Bible is a lamp for the night, but it’s not the end goal. The goal is the “Day.” Peter points to a time when the “Morning Star” – Jesus Christ Himself – rises in our hearts. We study the Word now so that we can recognize the true King when He returns. Right now, there are a lot of small-minded men, running around acting like, and thinking they are the true King. But they aren’t.

In another place, we’re told “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” (Phil. 2:10-11). Every knee – whether they want to bend the knee or not. That includes the high society folks – the Bill Gates, Elon Musks, Donald Trumps, Vladimir Putins, Ayatollah Khomeneis – and you and me. All these so-called “kings” are going to have a nice, large piece of humble pie some day. I don’t have a problem confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, saying He deserves all the praise and glory, and bowing before Him when I see Him face-to-face. And I know you won’t have any problem with that, either.

### **The Source of the Light**

Finally, Peter explains why the Bible is so reliable in verses 20-21. He writes, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the

prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." This is why we call the Bible the Word of God. The Bible isn't a collection of human opinions about God. It's God's revelation of Himself through human instruments.

The phrase "carried along" is the same word used for a ship caught in a wind (Acts 27:15). The prophets didn't lose their personalities. They still had their own styles and vocabularies. But the "wind" of the Holy Spirit moved them, ensuring that what they wrote was exactly what God intended.

Since the Holy Spirit is the Author, the Word is authoritative. It has the final say. The Word is without error. It will not lead us astray! The Word is sufficient. It's all we need to find our way through the dark.

### **Holding the Lamp**

Church, we are living in the "in-between time". The sun hasn't fully risen yet. The shadows of grief, confusion, and sin linger still. But we aren't left in total darkness. We have the eyewitness testimony of the Apostles.

We have the prophetic word of the Scriptures. We have the Holy Spirit who guides us, and who carries us along. So if you feel lost today, stop looking for a new "clever" story. Go back to the Lamp. Open the Word – the Bible. Pay attention to it as you would a light in a dark room. Let it steady your heart until the Day breaks and the shadows flee away!

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, Thank You for not leaving us to stumble around in the dark. Thank You for the "prophetic word" that is completely reliable. We ask that Your Holy Spirit open our eyes to the majesty of Jesus, our Morning Star. Help us to pay attention to Your Word until the day dawns and we see You face-to-face. Keep us steady, keep us faithful, and let Your Light shine through us into this dark world. In Jesus' name, Amen.