

## God's Light From Age To Age.

Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Suggested Hymns:

264, 37, 265, 283, 131

1) The Word of Scripture

2) The truth of the Transfiguration

3) The Word of Scripture for today

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 2 Peter 1:16-21, <sup>16</sup> *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.* <sup>17</sup> *For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* <sup>18</sup> *And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*

<sup>19</sup> *And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;* <sup>20</sup> *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,* <sup>21</sup> *for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Epiphany is the season when we discuss the light of the Gospel and its effect in our lives. We see God's light waking us up to our needs and the needs of our fellowmen. We are urged that this light from the cross and the open tomb must be kept shining brightly as "*a light that shines in a dark place.*"

Today as we celebrate the transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see Jesus revealed as the Light of the World on the mount of transfiguration as reported by the eyewitness Peter. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. The Words Of Scripture

Recall our Gospel lesson for today, *and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.*<sup>1</sup> This light was so bright that the accompanying disciples had to hide their eyes from the sight, much as we have to turn our heads when someone shines a spotlight on us. Here Jesus was revealed in His heavenly glory as the true Messiah He is, and the disciples were eyewitnesses of His majesty.

In our text, Peter reminds us that he had been present at the transfiguration, surely one of the most significant events in Jesus' life and work. Peter was an eyewitness. He saw the glory. He also heard the voice. Three different times during Christ's ministry, the voice of the Father had boomed over His dear Son. Once at His baptism in the Jordan, where John the Baptist anointed Him for His Saviour work.<sup>2</sup> Once during Holy Week, when the Father confirmed that Christ's work was indeed bringing Him glory.<sup>3</sup> And once in today's text, on the very high mountain up north, in front of three terrified disciples and the two great Old Testament prophets, Moses and Elijah.<sup>4</sup>

The glory and the voice forcefully proclaimed the Father's love, approval, and pleasure and greatly strengthened Christ in His determination to go to the cross for sinful mankind.

Toward the end of His two-year-long Galilean ministry, Jesus went on a retreat way up north in Caesarea Philippi, near the headwaters of the Jordan River. A few days later, He took Peter, James, and John to a "very high" mountain, perhaps the nearby Mount Hermon which is 9,232 feet high, to allow them to see something which no other human being would see before judgment day — the true glory of the Son of God.

Jesus was transfigured before them; that is, He began to glow with the brightness of the presence of God Himself. His face became like the sun; even His clothes shone as white as light.

Surrounding the shining Saviour was a bright cloud, which Peter calls the "*Excellent Glory.*" In the Old Testament, "*the glory of the LORD*" refers to an appearance of God in cloud and fire to mark a significant advance in His plan of salvation. God appeared to Abraham in a smoking firepot,<sup>5</sup> to Moses in a burning bush,<sup>6</sup> and to the people of Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.<sup>7</sup>

On the day of the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem, right after the priests brought the ark of the covenant into the Most Holy Place, the glory-cloud filled the temple. In this way God signified His approval and His actual presence among His people.

When the glory-cloud blazed around Jesus on the mount of Transfiguration, the Father was demonstrating His approval of His Son's person and work.

He also showed that through Christ He was present on earth among His people. We read in 2 Corinthians 4:6, *“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

### **The Words Of Scripture Fulfilled**

Our text goes on to remind the hearers that this honour and glory came from God the Father, who spoke the words *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”* They heard these words with their own ears, for they were with Him on the holy mountain.

This event and others confirmed the prophecies of the Old Testament. In Jesus all the Scriptures were focused and came true, for Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament promises.

God's action in the world was carried out through Jesus. God's plan of salvation for us sinners was worked out by His choice, through His only-begotten Son. His word, His life, His miracles, His transfiguration, His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost - all these confirmed the Scriptures for the witnessing disciples, and made the Old Testament *“prophetic word confirmed.”*

### **The Words Of Scripture Inspired**

These disciples, in turn, recorded their certain convictions for us. They shared them in letters to persons and young churches. They wrote the histories of Jesus' work among men. They wrote the record of the young church in action. They witnessed to their faith and the certain promises of Jesus. They did all these things moved by the Holy Spirit, as our text says. As they spoke and wrote, they spoke and wrote from God.

God gave them the inspiration to write, urged them to set down their faith and understanding, and gave them the words that have stood the test of centuries. Our faith today considers this process and calls it inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We cannot explain it. We simply believe it. We agree that the words of Scripture are special words given by God Himself, who has chosen to speak in a special way through men to men in the language of men.

Our faith looks back at these words and now agrees that these special records are God's words to which we *“do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place.”*<sup>8</sup> We must pay attention because every Scriptural Word is the Word of God from God and about God. His Word causes His day to dawn in our hearts and His morning star to rise. As we hold to His Word, His Word is a light for us in the darkness of this world. Surely, His Word is *a lamp to my feet And a light to my path*, as written in Psalm 119:105.

### **The Words Of Scripture Interpreted**

Since God's Word is His gift, the interpretation of God's Word must be in keeping with His intention for His Word. Our text makes it clear that the eyewitnesses were making known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the clue for all Biblical interpretation. As Lutheran Christians our touchstone is always the forgiving power of the cross and open tomb of Jesus Christ. If any interpretation of Scripture obscures or darkens this central message of Scripture, that *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself,”*<sup>9</sup> then that interpretation is rejected.

Any hindering of God's intended use of the Scripture would mean that we would be in error. God's Word does not err; but men — and men's interpretations — sometimes do. Our Lutheran interpretive safeguard is to test each interpretation by the honour it gives to Christ and the focus it gives to God's forgiving love in Him.

### **The Words Of Scripture In Christ**

On the other hand, just honouring a book as given by God would not be in order either. We would be in danger of admiring and worshipping the product rather than God the Producer. We would be honouring the creation rather than the Creator who made it.

We would have set up pages of words as a golden calf, rather than praising God for giving us His Word in words that fit human situations, problems, and opportunities in historical settings. The power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was to this world. God transformed Himself down in the person of Jesus. He was born in poverty, raised in obscurity, and died as a condemned criminal.

As Isaiah put it, “*He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*”<sup>10</sup> The power of God was veiled in the coming of Jesus. The manger of Bethlehem led to the cross of Calvary.

The plan of God was to make the prophetic Word of His forgiving love confirmed in the suffering and death of His beloved Son. God the Father was well pleased in Him, for Jesus patiently and obediently set His face toward Jerusalem, let His enemies take Him, and submitted to their tortures — when at any time His power could have called forth twelve legions of angels to protect and rescue Himself.

Jesus willingly gave up His life in order that we might share His new life. He came into the world that we might be His own, know Him as the Light of the world, listen to Him as sheep listen to the voice of their shepherd, and follow Him as true disciples of the Master. We love Him because He first loved us.

And in order to show His love, God masked Jesus’ power and veiled His almighty power for a time. If He had chosen to deal with us and our sins according to His uncovered power, none of us would survive. Scripture says in Psalm 130:3-4, <sup>3</sup> *If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?* <sup>4</sup> *But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.* God chose to make Himself known in Christ not as the God of power but as the God of forgiving love. This is the inspired record of all those events, which makes the Old Testament Word absolutely certain for us.

## **2. The Truth Of The Transfiguration**

The veil covering Christ’s majesty and power was torn aside in the Transfiguration. God allowed Jesus to be seen in a heavenly way in the brilliance that is rightfully His. But revealed in this way, the disciples could not look at Him or associate with Him.

Where does that leave us on this Transfiguration Sunday? Do we merely standing in wonder and awe at another miracle? What a sterile response open-

mouthed wonder is! What paralysis astonishment motivates! No — the eyewitness accounts of the Transfiguration show that the God of the cross and the open tomb, shares His heavenly power with His disciples now.

God's love and forgiveness are active in the world through His church to change things now. We are not just waiting for our turn on the mountain, or for the time when we will get to heaven, or for the moment when we will see Jesus and hear the voice of the Father.

The same Holy Spirit who gave the Words to the disciples, the same Holy Spirit who inspired them to spend their lives in the service of the early church, the same Holy Spirit who moved them to change the world in which they lived is the same Holy Spirit who now gives us the understanding of that same Word of God to apply to our human difficulties and troubles. The Word that shines in our hearts is to shine through our lives into the world and light it up.

### **3. The Word Of Scripture For Today**

When we apply God's Word and will to human situations, we have good examples and forerunners.

Think of Moses facing Pharaoh and demanding release for the oppressed slavery of the people of Israel.

Think of Amos, in fact prophet after prophet, thundering against unscrupulous business practices of short weights and faithless employees, and demanding restitution for those who had been exploited.

Think of the prophets who ranted against those greedy men who were thinking about their own fortunes and bank accounts rather than the needs of their neighbours.

Consider Jeremiah and other prophets who warned governments against trust in political alliances, armies and weapons.

Recall Jesus Himself, who cleaned up the temple area, driving before Him with a whip the robbers, the short-change tricksters, and the herders who thought money raising was more important than worship and prayer.

Think of Paul facing the mob at Philippi after ruining a fortune-telling business. Think about Peter warning the women of his day to watch out for the

extreme fashions in their clothes and reminding them that true womanliness is in the heart.

Remember James who warned against bending to the rich; for true religion shows itself in caring for orphans and widows in their needs. How up-to-date all these messages are!

We face the same problems and temptations. We need the same sure prophetic Word, the Word of God's prophets and apostles, preached and proclaimed to guard and keep us.

Our commitment to the transfigured Lord means that we must learn how better to speak for Him to this world that is becoming jaded by television, and swamped by weird books and magazines.

Let us come down from the mountain to speak *the prophetic word confirmed* in our hearts. Let us speak as the people in whom His Light shines. Let us be the lights of the world since Jesus is the Light of the world.

After all, "<sup>16</sup>*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,* <sup>17</sup>*that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"<sup>11</sup>

May God's Son shine in your heart through faith. May His Word shine forth in your lives, and may your lives shine with His light in this world of darkness! Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 17:2

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 3:17

<sup>3</sup> John 12:28

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 17:5

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 15:17

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 3:2

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 13:21

<sup>8</sup> 2 Peter 1:19

<sup>9</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:19

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 53:2

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16