

2 Peter 1:16-21

Our Gospel for today brought us a most **unique** and **exciting** event - an event which took place on a **mountaintop**. Jesus took Peter, James, and John up onto a mountain to pray, and while they were there, Jesus was **transfigured** before them. What does that **mean**? It means that an actual **change** in Jesus Himself took place. His human nature was **glorified**. For a brief time, the whole body of Jesus was allowed to **shine** forth with the light of **heavenly** glory. We also hear that **Moses** and **Elijah** appeared, and that they **spoke** to Jesus. The topic of their conversation was the approaching **death** of Jesus. Moses was there to represent the **Law**, while Elijah represented the **Prophets**. How do Moses and Elijah and Jesus all tie **together**? Well, every acceptable **sacrifice** of the Mosaic era was **acceptable** only through the sacrifice of **Jesus**; and every **hope** kindled by the Prophets rested its **fulfillment** on **Jesus**.

Peter, who wrote the words of our sermon text for this morning, was one of the **eyewitnesses** of this remarkable event. After seeing it, he would never be the **same** again. Maybe you've had a similar "mountaintop experience" - perhaps at a Church Leader's Workshop, or a Christian Retreat, or a Worship Conference. You get so **immersed** in God's Word, and experience so much **love** and **fellowship**, that it's difficult to **come down** from the mountain, and get back into the old **routine** at home! You come away with the feeling that **This Is As Good As It Gets**, and in many instances, that's probably **right**.

That was certainly the impression which **Peter** had as he contemplated the **transfiguration** of Jesus. It was a powerful event which left an **indelible** mark on the disciples. But in our text today, Peter goes on to tell us that **we** have a witness which is even **more** powerful. Our text begins, "*To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised **fables** when we made known to you the **powerful appearance** of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the **Father**, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my **Son**, whom I love; with him I am well **pleased**.' We **heard** this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.*"

As Peter and the other disciples endeavored to carry out the Great Commission which Jesus had given to them - to make disciples of **all nations** by **baptizing** and by **teaching** - the message which they proclaimed centered around **Jesus**. We can well imagine that many of the people who heard the disciples tell the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, regarded those events as mere **stories**

or **fables**. After all, the three years of Jesus' public ministry were filled with **miracles** - events which go **beyond** the natural realm of **science** and **physics**.

But Peter **counteracted** that suspicion by explaining that he himself was an **eyewitness**. There is no account which is more **credible** or **believable**, than that of an **eyewitness**. Think of today's news teams who get right into the **trenches**, to bring us **eyewitness** reports. Think back a number of years to Desert Storm, where the CNN reporters stood on top of Baghdad's El Rashid Hotel, and told us about the airplanes flying overhead, and about the bombs dropping, and about the anti-aircraft fire - all **as it was happening**. They practically made **us** eyewitnesses to that war in the Middle East.

That kind of technology was not **available** in Peter's day. But when he spoke to people about the things which he had **seen** Jesus do, and about the things which he had **heard** Jesus say, we can be sure that there was such a **fire** in his eyes and such an **excitement** in his voice, that there could be **no doubt** regarding the **truthfulness** of his message. Just imagine the events which Peter had seen in **addition** to the transfiguration. Peter had been present when Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding of **Cana**. Peter had been present when Jesus fed **multitudes** with practically nothing, when He calmed a severe **storm** on the sea, and when He caused a catch of **fish** which was so phenomenal, that it nearly sunk two boats. Peter had been present when Jesus healed a man who had been **born blind**, and another who had been **lame** from birth, and even when Jesus raised His friend **Lazarus** from the **dead**. Peter had been present when the **risen** Jesus appeared behind **locked** doors, to reassure His disciples that He was indeed **alive** again. Peter had **seen** these things happen **with his own eyes** - and even as we think about them **now**, the complete **truth, sincerity, and confidence** of an eyewitness account, comes **shining** through.

Yet, Peter tells us that **we** have something which is even **better** than that! Our text continues, "*We also have the **completely reliable** prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts.*" For centuries the Old Testament prophets had been telling bits and pieces about the future Messiah - where He would be **born**, what He would be **like**, things He would **do**, and things He would **say**. The people of Peter's day had **all** those prophecies, but in Jesus, they had even **more**. In Jesus they had the complete, 100% accurate **fulfillment** of all those prophecies - something which couldn't be **ignored**.

We have that **too**. We have the **prophecies** of the Old Testament, made **more** certain by their **fulfillment** in the New Testament. It's hard to **ignore** a light in a

dark place. In fact, it's **impossible** because of the great contrast. Light and dark are complete **opposites**. So, when you have a **light** in a dark place, you **have** to pay attention to it. There's just no getting **around** it. The Psalmist writes, "*Your words are a **lamp** to my feet, and a **light** for my path.*" Yet, as we travel down the dark paths of this **life**, we sinful human beings still seem to find ways to **ignore** the light of **God's Word**.

If our Lord Jesus showed up here today and told us that He had arranged to give each of us a **million** dollars next Sunday morning, we'd **all** show up to collect it, wouldn't we? If our Lord Jesus told us that He had information which could make us **healthy** for the rest of our lives, we'd **all** want to know the secret, wouldn't we? Money and health are issues which we find **difficult** to **ignore**. Well, our Lord Jesus hasn't told us **either** of those things. But He **has** told us that we can receive divine **guidance**, and **comfort**, and **strength** by studying His Holy **Word** - and He has also told us that we can have the **forgiveness** of sins, **eternal** life, and **salvation**, by coming to His **Holy Supper**. What **more** could we **ask**? **This Is As Good As It Gets!** We need to **pay attention** to those messages which God gives us in His **Word**, and we need to **use** the blessings we have been **given**. If we **don't**, then we run the risk of having them **taken away** from us.

Our text concludes, "*We know this above all else: **No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.***" This passage is considered to be a sedes doctrinae - a passage which is so **clear** and **concise**, that it actually establishes a teaching of the Holy Scriptures **all by itself**. In this instance, the passage speaks of the doctrine of **inspiration**. What is inspiration? We **talk** about it as though it is something quite **natural**. We are **inspired** by a certain piece of music - or the basketball team played a really **inspired** game - or an artist is **inspired** to create a certain painting or sculpture. But that's **not** inspiration. All those things have their origins in **us** - in our **feelings** - in our **determination** - in our **talents**. But **true** inspiration comes from **God**. The words of the Bible were not written down because **men wanted** to write them down. Rather, **God led** them to do it. It was **out** of their control, and was entirely in the hands of the **LORD**. It was like the false prophet **Balaam**, who tried to **curse** God's people, but every time he opened his mouth only **blessings** came out.

Dear friends, on this Transfiguration Sunday, consider how an event like the **transfiguration** forever **changed** the lives of Peter, James, and John. And then more importantly, consider how the **Word of God** - the **completely reliable** prophetic word - has changed **our** lives. We have been **rescued** from the depths of sin and hell.

We would be **foolish** to continue to roam around in the valleys of **doubt**, and **evil**, and **despair**, because we have been on the **mountaintop** with **Jesus**. We have seen and heard our Savior in His **Word** and **Sacrament** - and friends, **That's As Good As It Gets**. Amen.