

I.N.I.

Transfiguration Sunday
March 3, 2014
II Peter 1:16-21

In Christ Jesus, who is the Word made flesh, whose glory is that of the only begotten of the Father, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

For those of you old enough to remember, I am sure you can still tell me 50 years later, exactly where you were and what you were doing when you heard President Kennedy was shot. For others who are probably 20 or older you probably can remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard about the terrorists smashing planes into the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 9/11, 2001. When something happens in our lives that is so shocking, so surprising, so amazing or even so exciting we never forget it.

Well in our text this morning we find out that Peter also remembered a very amazing and shocking event that happened to him some thirty-five years earlier—the Transfiguration of Jesus. One can understand why Peter never forgot this event. In our Gospel reading we heard how Jesus' face shone like the sun. His clothes became as white as the light. Peter saw standing before him next to Jesus, Moses and Elijah—prophets of the Old Testament who had lived some 1,000-1,500 years before his time. Then there was the bright cloud that enveloped them and the voice from heaven---God the Father speaking: "**THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED. HEAR HIM!**"

Do you think something that amazing would be remembered? Every single detail!!! Now 35 years later Peter recalls this event to prove to his readers that what he and the other Apostles preached and wrote was not just some myths and fables, but eyewitness accounts.

By looking at the verses just prior to those of our text we sense an urgency in the words of Peter as he is writing perhaps for the last time to his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. He writes in vs. 12-15: **FOR THIS REASON I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO REMIND YOU ALWAYS OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YOU KNOW AND ARE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH. YES, I THINK IT IS RIGHT, AS LONG AS I AM IN THIS TENT, TO STIR YOU UP BY REMINDING YOU, KNOWING THAT SHORTLY I MUST PUT OFF MY TENT, JUST AS OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST SHOWED ME. MOREOVER I WILL BE CAREFUL TO ENSURE THAT YOU ALWAYS HAVE A REMINDER OF THESE THINGS AFTER MY DECEASE.**

Peter is sure that he soon will die, or as he says, will "**put off my tent.**" But before he does he longs to have his fellow Christians remember these things and not lose their hope for the Lord's return. Three times he writes: remind, reminding, reminder.

Do you remember to whom Peter was writing? ---People in Asia Minor who were undergoing persecution. Peter is saying the only way that they can remember all of these truths and not lose their hope for the Lord's return is by remaining in the **prophetic Word made more sure.**

Remember that when Peter wrote these words, it was now a generation since Christ walked the earth; over 30 years. Many people who saw and knew Jesus were now dead. Most all of the people's information about Jesus had come from the Apostles. How could they be sure it was true? How could they be sure that the Apostles didn't just elaborate or exaggerate certain details and make them more amazing, more astounding than they really were? You know, like the fish story—really catching a 2 pounder and stretching it into a 5 pounder. Or the golf outing, nailing a 15 foot putt and then telling everyone it must have been at least a 30 footer.

Perhaps Jesus didn't really raise the dead—just resuscitated those who were unconscious. Perhaps He really didn't give sight to the blind, or healed the sick. Maybe these stories were just fables, myths, exaggerated legends cunningly devised tales told by the 12 Apostles.

The Jewish Rabbis were fond of spinning old yarns about people of the Old Testament. Some myths about angels were taken very seriously. These Jewish myths together with the mythology of the Greeks and the Eastern religions of their day were blended together to lead people to really not believe the facts of the stories and events but to appeal to their intellect. These myths

provided images and shadows for higher thoughts and deeper introspection.

Peter says, "That is not us! When we proclaimed to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus, we were eyewitnesses of His majesty." He then refers to this particular event recorded in three of the four Gospels—the Transfiguration of Jesus. Peter says, "**WE SAW, we HEARD, we EXPERIENCED!** We saw Christ's glory as God." But then Peter writes a strange thing. He says, "But we have something even more sure than being eyewitnesses, and that is the very testimony of God Himself."

What could be more sure than man's eyewitness accounts? **GOD'S ACCOUNT!** The **WORD FOR WORD ACCOUNT** of what happened by the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of all things; by the Ruler of the universe; by the One who controls history.

In contrast to the cunningly devised fables of men we have the **WORD** of the prophets and apostles which comes from God the Holy Spirit. We read in the Old Testament that David said: **THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD SPOKE THROUGH ME: HIS WORD WAS ON MY TONGUE.** Jeremiah wrote: **THEN THE LORD PUT FORTH HIS HAND AND TOUCHED MY MOUTH, AND THE LORD SAID TO ME: BEHOLD, I HAVE PUT MY WORDS IN YOUR MOUTH.** Moses was told by God: **THESE ARE THE WORDS YOU ARE TO SPEAK TO THE ISRAELITES.**

The words of the Jews and the Greeks were based on human speculation and offered no real wisdom or truth. The Word of the prophets and the apostles do, for they are words from God.

That is why Peter says, **TAKE HEED TO IT, PAY ATTENTION TO IT!** Literally the word means: **hold onto it, devote thought and effort to it, be addicted to it.** That's a remarkable truth. We are to not let this Word of God go. We are to hang on to it and even be addicted to it. That's a good addiction---addicted to God's Word everyday of our lives. For God's Word is the treasure that God has carefully over all these thousands of years of history preserved pure and intact. And it is all His Word, every word of it. Peter writes; **KNOWING THIS FIRST, THAT NO PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE IS OF ANY PRIVATE INTERPRETATION, FOR PROPHECY NEVER CAME BY THE WILL OF MAN, BUT HOLY MEN OF GOD SPOKE AS THEY WERE MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

There is a strong double negative here in the Greek. No part of Scripture, absolutely no prophecy in all of the Scriptures arose from within man, apart from God. The Apostle Paul also states the same thing when he wrote to Timothy: **ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD.** All of Scripture is God-breathed! We also see in these words that the Holy Spirit Himself must expound Scripture. In other words Scripture must interpret Scripture. The Word of God is not open to any of man's private interpretation, not even the apostles.

Boy do we need to hear these words today! We are being bombarded by the myths of evolutionary science—there is no god, everything came by chance happenings over millions and billions of years. We are being bombarded by humanistic teachings—man is the measure of all things. We can do whatever we put our minds to. Don't look to any Supreme Being for help. Look within yourself or to other learned people for your ultimate help. Look to your government, your political party, your governmental leaders, look to science and technology—the gods of this age. If you watched the evolution-creation debate between Bill Nye, the science guy and Ken Ham, you heard that from Bill Nye. Science is the only knowledge that can be trusted.

Peter tells us: Look to your Bible.

CHERISH YOUR BIBLE!

When Peter was on that mountain with Jesus, Moses and Elijah, he said: "**LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE.**" Do we say the same thing when we open our Bibles to read, when we have family devotions. Do we say, **Lord, it is good for us to be here reading, learning, hearing You speak to us in Your Word?** Why is it good? Why should we cherish this Word as our most precious treasure, the Bible?

1) BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY ACCURATE ACCOUNT OF GOD'S DEALING WITH MEN.

The Bible is not just a book of stories. It is the history of God's dealings with the world of sinners. It tells us who the eternal God is; it tells us of the origin of human beings created by this

God; of man's fall into sin and of God's intimate dealings with His human creatures from God's point of view. It is the **TRUTH!** It is the truth from God.

The Christian faith is not built on legends, myths and allegories which need the clever minds of learned people to separate fact from fiction. The Christian faith is based upon God's Word of truth which declares the reality of sin in every single person---the reality of death and damnation which every one of us deserves because of our sins---the reality of the devil and of our own sinful flesh and of this sinful world which tries to daily pull us away from God and His Word.

His Word of truth declares the reality of God's Son existing in human flesh and blood, sent from the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary. His Word of truth proclaims to all that this God-Man Jesus took our place in living a perfect life for us; in dying the sacrificial death for us and in rising again as the first fruits of the resurrection of all believers to eternal life.

Why should we cherish our Bibles?

2) BECAUSE OF ITS PROMISES.

God's Word is **A LAMP TO OUR FEET AND A LIGHT TO OUR PATH.** It shines its light into the darkness, into the darkness of our minds and hearts, into the darkness of this world filled with unbelievers. The best way for us to grow in our certainty of what we believe about our God and about our salvation is to turn again and again to His Word and hear its many promises to us.

God's Word promises us **LIFE** and **SALVATION!** The same glory of the Transfiguration that Peter saw, he now enjoys and it is ours which we shall also someday enjoy in all of its fullness. Our assurance of heaven, standing face to face with our Savior God enjoying perfect eternal peace and joy does not rest upon what we have done or ever can do, but upon what Christ has done for us. We have been given Christ's righteousness through faith.

Time does not permit us this morning to quote all of the many, many promises that God has given us in His Word, but you have the time. You have the time tonight, this week; in the morning, maybe after breakfast; in the afternoon after school; in the evening after supper or before you go to bed. You have the time. Don't waste it! Don't misuse it! Read your Bibles! Read God's promises and these promises will strengthen you and keep you throughout all the days of your life.

Why should we cherish our Bibles?

3) BECAUSE OF THE CHANGE IT WORKS IN OUR LIFE.

God's Word has led us from the darkness of sin and unbelief into the glorious light of life in Christ. It has given us a new heart—a heart of faith. It has given us a reason and purpose to our lives, a new perspective on our everyday living. It has given us a future with God in heaven. It has made God real in our lives so that whatever we are going through we have our Savior and His Word at our side and in our hearts.

For the believer God is not just some unknown Supreme Being out there whom we acknowledge at baptisms, weddings and funerals. He is our Creator, our blessed Redeemer-Shepherd and our Sanctifier. He is part of our life, everyday of our life. He lives in us through His Word. He rules us by His Word. He bought us as His own through Jesus' blood and made us His own through the power of His Word and keeps us His own through that same Word. May we **CHERISH THAT WORD** till we breathe no more!

Peter saw a glimpse of our Savior's glory on the Mt. of Transfiguration. We see a glimpse of that same glory every time we pick up the Bible, God's Word, and read about its promises in Christ to all of us redeemed sinners. It is indeed good Lord for us to be here in Your Word!

Amen.