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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
February 23, 2020  
Transfiguration Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Exodus 24:12, 15-18, Mathew 17:1-9  
Hymns: 359; 135; 719; 344 (244:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1:12-21

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)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Marvelous Truth revealed in Jesus' Transfiguration --

Today we come to the close of the Epiphany season. Epiphany is about the manifestation or revealing of Jesus' glory as the Christ of God. The transfiguration of our Lord is certainly an event that fills that bill! There on the mountain top Jesus was changed, the Greek word is the source of our English metamorphosis, a real substantial change! Our gospel told us that His face shone like the sun and His clothing was as white as light. It was all about the glory! Added to that was the bright cloud from which the voice of God the Father spoke of Jesus' divine identity and the Father's endorsement, that in Jesus He was well pleased! That is no small thing for no one else on the face of this earth can by themselves alone meet that standard. The Father included the instruction for us all to "Hear Him!"

Without doubt this is a powerful presentation of Jesus' glory being revealed that we should know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, our Savior! Certainly such a glorious event should receive our attention annually as we worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

But that event of Jesus' Transfiguration has even more significance for us regarding our faith and salvation. Peter, who was there with James and John on that holy mountain, writes of the further impact of this event in our text.

**THEME: Jesus' Transfiguration Grounds the  
Theology  
of the Christian Faith.**

The authenticity of Jesus as the Christ the Son of God has been under attack consistently since the days of the apostles. That attack is what Peter is addressing in our text. People had gone out following after the apostles, claiming that they had a higher knowledge of Christ and

specifically attacked the teaching of the two natures of Christ, a teaching that is essential to our salvation.

These attacks continue to our day. They have intensified since the early days of the twentieth century. Highly respected intellectuals described themselves as theologians, and then commenced an attempt to dismantle the Scriptures in the name of de-mythologizing the Bible. As a result of this ongoing assault on the infallibility of God's Word many Christian denominations have abandoned many Bible teachings, labeling them as being little more than fables, or even stories. Yes, they like the use of the term Bible *stories* as it may leave such an impression of the Biblical record being no more than a fruit of people's imaginations. This had been used very much against the truth of who Jesus is, and what Jesus has taught, and what Jesus has done for us and for our salvation. Nothing new here. That is exactly the heresy Peter addressed in our text. He began with asserting -

### **I. The Eyewitness Account of Jesus' Divine Majesty.**

**2 Peter 1:16** 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.

Already when Peter was alive people were suggesting that the apostles were embellishing the truth about Jesus so that people would think of Him as being something more than He actually was. Yes, they were suggesting that much that was taught of Jesus' person, life, preaching, and miracles, sufferings, death, and resurrection was a bunch of cunningly devised fables! That my friends is what is being taught in many liberal seminaries across the United States today. They *suggest* that Jesus didn't actually walk on water but being familiar with the Sea of Galilee was walking out on a long sand bar. They *suggest* that since it would have been a scandal that undermined all the good Jesus taught the virgin birth of our Savior was added to

His life story at a later date. They even *suggest* that Jesus' resurrection was in fact merely a resurrection of Jesus' teaching of love and kindness and not necessarily a physical resurrection from the dead. The gospel accounts of Jesus' life and ministry are characterized as cunningly devised fables. What then would be left of the gospel?

Peter dismisses all of that with his eyewitness account of the Jesus' Transfiguration. It was the account of not one or two, but three witnesses who saw Jesus' glory. Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses of Jesus' divine majesty. They saw His face shine like the sun. They saw the change so that even Jesus' clothing shone as a bright light! There was no mistaking who this was. **Jesus was and is and ever shall be the incarnate Son of God!** *"By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."* (Matthew 18:16)

That is a standard of evidence that stands yet today. This isn't one of those situations where witnesses disagreed, or where there may have been some question as to what they were actually seeing. It was a bold and glorious event that took place right before the eyes of Peter, James and John; one that was etched in their memories for the rest of their lives. They saw the divine majesty of Jesus Christ and yes, they also heard the voice of God coming from that bright cloud. They heard and faithfully reported --

## **II. The Honor and Glory Jesus Received from God the Father.**

Jesus did not confer honor and glory upon Himself. Jesus did not presume to be something more than He was. God the Father conferred honor and glory upon Jesus. God the Father declared that Jesus was His Son.

**2 Peter 1:17-18** "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.”

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who came down to earth and took upon Himself our flesh and blood that He might be our Brother and present Himself before the throne of divine justice in our place. By perfectly fulfilling the law in His sinless life Jesus secured the righteousness that we failed to secure. This righteousness God the Father credits to us **all**, because it was done by the Son of God.

This same Jesus bore our sins in His body when He went to the cross and offered Himself as an offering to God for the sins of the world! Again it was the infinite value of the blood of the Son of God that made this sacrifice sufficient for all! Jesus is the Christ of God and with **Him** God is well pleased!

This is the truth of our salvation authenticated by God the Father, as witnessed by the three disciples, Peter, James and John. They heard the voice of God when they were with Jesus on the holy mountain! When we put our faith in Jesus that faith and trust is not misplaced. Our faith is well grounded in that Rock which is Christ!

More than that Peter went on to assert that by Jesus' Transfiguration --

### **III. The Prophetic Word Is Authenticated.**

**2 Peter 1: 19-21** “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.

Now we get back to the world's attack on the Bible as God's Word. Many today stand by the position that the books of the Bible were merely the ideas of men who

wrote whatever they wanted to write; who wrote according to their own prejudices, their own superstitions, who wrote what **they** wanted other people to believe!

Using the reality of the Transfiguration as evidence of God's sure and certain Word, Peter puts forth the proposition that this event authenticated all the writings of Holy Scripture. It shows that what God said was and is (as Luther would say), "Most Certainly True!"

This covers all of Scripture. Moses did indeed write the first five books of the Bible. What Moses wrote was not what he imagined but Moses was directed in his writing by the Holy Spirit. Adam and Eve were the first people on earth. And they were real living human beings. They were created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of this world's existence, the sixth 24 hour day! Adam and Eve, like the rest of creation, were made "very good!" They fell into sin and so death and corruption entered into the world. And so God promised a Savior in the Seed of the Woman who would crush the serpent's head and destroy the power of the devil. And so the prophetic Word began, and Jesus was born into the world as the promised Seed of the Woman, and the prophetic Word is made sure!

Today we pick up our Bibles and we read with confidence, knowing it is the Word of God! Holy men of God wrote as they were directed by the Holy Spirit. There is no private interpretation, no independent proposition of what some individual thought God ought to say or what his personal truth might be. Whether you are reading in Genesis or Psalms, or Isaiah or Malachi, OR Matthew, or Romans, or 1 Peter or 2 Peter, or the Book of Revelation it is the Word of God, penned by men moved by the Spirit, but God's own truth, the truth of our salvation.

So when people suggest that there are other paths to heaven; that the sacred writing of other religions of the world offer equally legitimate paths to divine wisdom and eternal life, don't buy it.

There is one God and one Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord, and there is one Book of divine revelation proclaiming the truth of God. *“From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. <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. (1 Timothy 3:15-17)*

Attacks against God’s Word will continue until the end of the world. Recognize that every attack against the authority of God’s Word is an attack against Jesus Who is the Word made flesh, and it is an attack against the authority not only of the Bible but of God! Our Christian faith is drawn from the Word of God. If the Scriptures were a collection of cleverly devised fables, what certainty of forgiveness and salvation would we possess? But it is not based on fables or fairy tales or mythology. It is THEOLOGY, the teaching of God and His truth. Jesus’ transfiguration authenticates all that is written. Your faith in Christ is grounded in the sure Word of God, in the sure Word of Christ our Savior!

“I know my faith is founded On Jesus Christ, my God and Lord;

And this my faith confessing, Unmoved I stand upon His Word.

Man’s reason cannot fathom The truth of God profound;  
Who trusts her subtle wisdom Relies on shifting ground  
God’s Word is all sufficient, It makes divinely sure,  
And trusting in its wisdom, My faith shall rest secure.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 381:1)

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)