

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD
Sermon for the Transfiguration, 2026
2 Peter 1:16-21

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 our Second Reading from before, 2 Peter 1:16-21: **¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷For when He received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” ¹⁸we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

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

Dear friends in Christ,

For many people, the Bible is just another book, no different from any other that tells a story. Written many years ago, it really has no relevance today. Actually, some who profess to be Christian think that way too. One reason we find churches ordaining women, for example, is that they say Paul’s words about women remaining silent in the church were meant only for people living at that time; those words no longer apply in our modern world.

We know that to be utter nonsense. Jesus Himself said, “*Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35). The authority of Scripture cannot be questioned. And quoting from the prophet Isaiah, the Apostle Peter once wrote that the “*Word of the Lord remains forever*” (1 Peter 1:25). God’s changeless will and Word are constant in this changing life. It never changes. What was written many years ago is still for our learning and guidance today. For example, the great commission of baptising and teaching is for all times, and isn’t it often the case that so many times, you can be struggling with different issues, and then you read something in the Bible, and it is as though it was planted in the book for just such a time as you may be going through!

Sadly, the fact remains: many today say that Holy Scripture has no or very little relevance, and that the stories it contains are nothing more than myths. They are not true, in the sense that they actually happened.

Now, compare that to Peter’s words, who begins by saying, “**¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.**”

All attacks of Satan on the Church sooner or later come around to this—an attack on the apostles and prophets of the Lord as true and authoritative sources of information about the Lord. That attack is as old as Eden: “*Did God really say ...?*”¹ The new breed of teachers demanding attention in the Asia Minor churches where Peter preached disparaged the reliability of Peter, the other apostles, and the Old Testament prophets’ written message.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Peter recognised the deadly peril of the false teachers of his day. In this Letter, He began by affirming the greatness of the Christian hope and encouraged his readers to make their calling and election sure by giving evidence of their faith through good works. He taught how we

¹ Genesis 3:1

are saved by faith alone, but faith is never alone. And yet, through sin, we often neglect and become blind to the virtues we are to practice as evidence of our faith. Despite our many failures to bear God-pleasing fruit, our Lord strengthens us daily through Holy Baptism. We also heard last Sunday from the Apostle Paul that the foundation for all Christian teaching is the message of the cross of Christ. Like Paul, Peter preached that Word, the same message of the prophets and apostles the Lord had sent. Without that sure bedrock, the whole structure would come crashing down.

The false teachers of Peter's day denied the power and grace of Jesus Christ. They were leading people to doubt that Jesus really does possess and exercise God's power, that He really does enter people's lives and work on their behalf. They were also leading people to think that Jesus would never come back, that they were not accountable to Him for their beliefs and lives. The bitter irony is that the very people who were making up clever myths were accusing Peter of making up clever myths, and if you tell lies long enough and loudly enough, people will start to believe them, no matter how shocking or outrageous they may be.

Peter challenges the unbelief of his day - and of ours - with a clear assertion: *I was there. I was an eyewitness. This stuff is not fiction, but truth.* Peter writes, "**For when (Jesus) received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"**" ¹⁸ *we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain.*"

God intended those words for us, as well. He inspired Peter *to write them* so that we would have his eyewitness testimony today to refute those 'scholars' who today wish to ridicule and deny our religion. Peter was there. He saw it all. It really happened. These are not myths or tales, *but historical accounts of God stepping into human history*, taking on human nature, flesh, and blood, and doing the amazing things the Bible tells us He did.

God has answered all His critics in advance. He has asserted that His Word is true, and theirs is the suspect account. Their unbelief has been trumped by God answering them *before* they could make up their stories and try to sell their brand of doubt and confusion as 'truth.'

There is no doubt that we need the Jesus the Bible portrays. We need Him to be human so that He can take our place, earn life, and die for us. We need Jesus to be the true God so that His death is sufficient for all of us, not just for one. We need the death to be real, the resurrection to be factual history, the events of Scripture to be just as they present themselves, or we are lost in subjective speculation, and the promises of God would be uncertain, if not simply untrue.

God has stepped in by inspiring Peter to record these words for us. Peter was there. He vouches for the truth and historicity of what the Christian Church proclaims. He was there. He saw it. He heard the voice from the cloud. He saw Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration and heard them speaking with Jesus about the death that lay ahead of Him in Jerusalem. He not only claimed that these events were true, as opposed to "**cleverly devised myths**," but he died in confession of these truths and for the sake of the promises that were made in connection with all of the truths he had witnessed.

"**We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed,**" Peter says. Peter's eyewitness experience on the Mount of Transfiguration fulfils, confirms, and, as it were, makes more certain God's Old Testament Word about the coming Messiah. The New Testament witness of the apostles makes the Old Testament more certain, and together they form a solid and unshakable basis for our faith. We also see this verse as drawing a contrast between the many spoken messages and sermons of the apostolic age and the *written message* of sacred Scripture. In this understanding, Peter would be directing confused Christians to the timeless truths and the righteous rock of *written* Scripture. At a time when many people claimed to be *speaking* for God, it was reassuring to know that there was a *written*, unshakable source of spiritual information and authority.

And then Peter tells us that we do well to “**pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.**”

This shining is the light of God’s Word, showing us the way we should go, and the way we must go as His children in this dark world of sin and death and danger. As Psalm 119 reminds us, “*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path,*” (119:105). And of course, when Peter says, “**until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts,**” he is speaking of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is called the *bright Morning Star* in Revelation 22:16. His coming to our world signals that the power of the night of sin, sickness, death, and hell has been broken and will soon be over. His Word reflects His light. His people wait longingly for the full revelation of the Son of God when He returns to take us home.

The Scripture is the Word of God; therefore, we trust it. When it reports to us the love of God, we take that report as truthful by faith. When it tells us of our sins forgiven, paid for by the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross for us, we believe that good news and rejoice in it! When we face trials and pain and sorrow, we have the promise of God that He will work all things together for our good,² and so we find strength and comfort there and keep going and praising God in spite of what our feelings tell us, because we walk by faith, not on the basis of sense or reason alone, but guided by God’s promises and His love, revealed in His Word.

Now, the message of the Transfiguration is significant. We need to know that it happened. It is the testimony of God, as Jesus is about to enter the last days of His life, to be tried and executed for our sins, that Jesus is still qualified for the mission of being our Saviour. It tells us that He is still the beloved Son of God and is as well-pleasing to His heavenly Father as He was at His baptism three years before, as He began His public ministry. That is important to know, and it is refreshing for our spirits to hear of the glory of God shining through the veil of Jesus’ humanity. But even greater than that is the testimony of Peter that the naked Word of God is even more reliable than an eyewitness account.

Why is that important? Because, frankly, that Word of God is all that we have today. We were not eyewitnesses. We have Peter’s testimony, and that of the other eyewitnesses, and of the prophets of old. And we have God, speaking through His apostle, telling us that the *written Word* which we have is more certain and reliable and secure and sure than seeing it for ourselves.

The Bible is the Word of God. Because God has spoken to us and for us, we pay attention! He knows what we need. He knows how we can best live and what is going to be most helpful and healthful. We do well to pay attention to that Word, as “**a lamp shining in a dark place.**” It is God’s Word, spoken to accomplish God’s will for us. And what is the will of God for us? Our salvation.

Peter reminds us that “**no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**”

No prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. Nor are they meant to be twisted, confused, or taken to say things *they do not say*. ***No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation.*** God’s Word means what it says, not what we may want it to say, or try to twist it to say.

That is important for us to remember, because God’s Word tells us that our sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake.

Jesus has taken care of it all. He has done everything that needed doing, because we could not be relied upon to do it—we are simply not capable of performing the holiness that we need, or bearing the price of our own sins, and yet continuing to live. So God sent Jesus to do it for us on the cross. He lived the holiness we need and bore the wrath of God against our sins in our place. He died the death that

² Romans 8:28

God's justice demands for our sins, and now He pours out forgiveness for all, and resurrection from our graves, and eternal life—all of which is received by grace, through faith.

God did not leave it to us to discover or invent those truths. He took care of doing what we needed for our salvation, and He left witnesses, and He made sure that it was exposed in His Word, by inspiring men to write it. "...**men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit,**" so says God through His apostle Peter. He left us witnesses and evidence that these things are not "**cleverly devised myths,**" but rock-solid realities and dependable truths. And after He gave us accounts from those who saw it and know what happened, He left us something even more certain: His Word.

Who would have imagined that God would become one of us, to die for us? Who could conceive of the worthiest Judge Eternal taking on His own shoulders the burden of our sins? Who would have been bold enough to set forth a God who simply gives forgiveness and life and salvation to those who trust Him? Many of those whose responsibility it is to proclaim these glorious truths in our world today have lost the will and the nerve to proclaim them! In the history of man's religions, no other religion has said it, no other god has done it. None of them has come up with any of these elements of God's grace and love—except the one *God Himself established and revealed* through those holy men.

A final thought, one which flows not from the text, but from the pious reasoning of man. Luther taught that either we believe God's Word because it is God's Word, or we make ourselves out to be God. It doesn't even matter whether we believe the other doctrines of the faith, and confess Christ, and live pious and exemplary lives. If we reject any portion of the Word of God and deny anything that it clearly teaches, we set ourselves up as the judges of truth and the source and fountain of what is to be believed. If we deny something clearly taught by God's Word, we stand as masters over God's Word, and anything else we might believe is believed only because we choose to, because it agrees with us, or because it pleases us to believe it—not because it is from God or His Word, or because it is true.

Dear friends, what a blessing for us to have this Word of God freely given to read and see for ourselves the marvellous works our God has done for us! Amen.

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