

Title: The Prophetic Word
Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21
Theme: The certainty and power of God's Word
Series: 2 Peter
Prop Stmt: God's authoritative word demands your full attention

Read Text:

I read the blog of a former Mormon who was doing her missionary service in South America when she got a call from her mom. Even though her mom had been raised in the Mormon bubble, she had done some research of her own and found out the real story of the Mormon faith and could no longer stay in the Mormon church. As the mom told her daughter what she had been discovering the girl realized that everything that she had been taught and was now teaching was a lie. How do we know that what we believe isn't like that? Like some of you, I grew up in the Christian faith, and I cannot remember a time when I did not know about Jesus. And yet, somehow, I also knew that I was sheltered in a way. I grew up in a neighborhood that was full of kids. I distinctly remember a moment standing in my neighbor's front yard one summer evening looking at 25 kids or so who were playing kick the can, and thinking that many of them do not believe like I have been taught. How do I know what I have been taught is true? What if they are right and I am wrong? I knew then that I could not believe this stuff just because my dad and mom believed it and they were nice people. That certainly helps, right? I knew that I had to examine it for myself and believe it on my own. It had to be convictional for me, not convenient or cultural. If you have grown up in this church, I am the only pastor you have had. I certainly want you to believe in, trust in and follow Christ, but not because I do. Not because your parents want you to. You have to be convinced, which means you need to examine the faith. And we need to be honest about it.

There are problems in the Christian faith, but our problems are not foundational problems. Our problems are not with the founder of our faith nor with the essence of the faith, but with the hypocrisy of some of the followers. Because genuine Christianity is so eternally valuable, it is going to attract imposters and frauds who want to use it for their own gain. This is a dominant theme in this letter. Peter hits this head on in chapter 2. He prepares us for that by reminding us in chapter 1 of what genuine Christianity looks like. That is verses 3-11. Then as we looked at last week, he is informing us that since he is about to die, he is going to use every last breath to keep pressing us to follow Christ. That sets us up for this text at the end of chapter 1. Peter is impressing upon us why he is so urgent in using every day and every breath he has to encourage us to follow Christ. Why faithfulness to Christ is worth it!

1. **I know it is true because we were there.** (16-18)

“We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

A. **We (the apostles) told you the truth.** (16a)

It is a complete betrayal to discover that what you were taught was wrong. But, what is devastating is when you realize that you not only believed lies, but you taught them. You lied to others. You convinced others to believe lies. You set up others for betrayal. Some people are attracted to leadership in a church because they like the people who are in leadership and they appreciate the influence in their lives and it is easy to think that leadership is a means to being thought of well. You need to be Judgment Day serious before God before you consider leadership in the church. Do you believe this? The gospel is an inconvenient truth and it is not culturally acceptable. Have you examined it and yourself thoroughly enough that you are willing, like Peter to die for this? Peter is speaking for the other apostles when he says that we didn't follow cleverly designed myths. Oh no. What is Peter talking about that could possibly be considered as cleverly designed myths? The answer to that is found in the phrase, "*the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Are the stories about Christ true or just clever myths?

Peter is writing this letter to a primarily Jewish audience who were chased out of their homeland and are now living in the region known to us as Turkey. His audience is now living in Roman colonies that have been influenced heavily by Greek and now Roman mythology. The Grecian and Roman gods of Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Artemis, Athena, etc. were legends created in an effort to try to explain where things came from and why things happened the way they did. Is that what Christianity is? Wait a minute? Has anyone actually seen Zeus. Did Apollo live on the earth and eat with people and talk with them and then do, in front of them the things that history and legend claims? No. But that is clearly not the case with Christ. Peter is writing this about 30 years after the life of Christ. No one doubted the existence of Jesus. That was and remains way too obvious. They not only had the historical record, but they had the advantage of thousands of eyewitnesses. There was no doubting the existence of Jesus. What was in doubt in the minds of some was what to think about him. Was he the Son of God? Did he do miraculous deeds? Did he really die and rise again? All of those questions hinge on whether or not Jesus was God. So, when Peter calls Jesus Lord and Christ, he is saying that Jesus is God and the Messiah. What Peter is saying is this. When I told you about the power of Jesus and the coming of Jesus I told you how to understand this. This was God in human flesh. I didn't make this stuff up. No one sold me this stuff and I am trying now to sell it to you. I told you the truth because I believe it with my whole being and I believe it because I saw it with my own eyes. I am an eyewitness of the majesty of Christ.

B. We saw it with our own eyes. (16b)

We (James and John), not just me were there on the mountain when we saw Jesus in his glory. This is the event that we call the transfiguration of Christ. This event that we read about earlier in our service marked a new phase in the ministry of Christ. Look at Matthew 16, beginning with verse 21. (read and comment from there to the end of the chapter) Telling his disciples that he was eventually going to go to Jerusalem and would suffer and would be killed and on the third day rise again was a very bold and fantastic claim on the part of Jesus. The disciples did not have a folder in their brain for this. They did not understand the Messiah to be like this. Now, Peter believed (Matthew 16.16) that Jesus was the Messiah and he had come to believe that Jesus was the Son of the living God. But this claim on the part of Christ threw him. Six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a high mountain by themselves and there, they saw Jesus reveal part of his true glory. This was not a vision or a dream. This was in real time. His face shone like

the sun and clothes became so white, they were blinding. Then, appearing with Christ is Moses and Elijah. Now, theologically and therefore, thematically, we can see what is going on. Moses is the representative of the Law and Elijah is representative of the Prophets. The Law and the Prophets summarizes the OT Scriptures. In that moment, the OT is talking to the NT. The OT is shaking hands with and handing things off to the NT because Moses and Elijah know that everything in the OT was pointing to and was fulfilled in Jesus anyway. He is the hero of the story. He is the point of the book.

So, yes, that was all happening in that moment and Peter now understands it. The majestic glory of God was revealed at times in the OT and Peter uses that same phrase as a reference to the Father who spoke on this mountain affirming and extolling His Son. Moses experienced the awesome presence of God and the voice of God on Mt. Sinai in Exodus 19, 20 and 34. Elijah experienced the presence of God and the voice of God on Mt. Sinai (also called Horeb) in 1 Kings 19. Now, both of those men who were with God on that mountain are now with God the Son on this mountain and Peter, James and John are witnesses. Peter knew about the OT stories but he did not experience them. He lived in Israel and he knew the stories that explained how the Jews got there and why they were there and why being a Jew was such a big and controversial deal, but still, even as a Jew growing up in Israel, do you really believe that stuff about the plagues and the Red Sea, the Jordan and Jericho, David and Goliath, 10 commandments and all that stuff that Elijah supposedly did? I mean, really. You do now!! Think of the impact this had! Moses and Elijah are standing there talking with Jesus. There they are standing and talking. They are real. Knowing Peter's propensity for sticking his foot in his mouth, we kind of expect him to say, "Hey Moses, sorry about that whole hitting the rock deal. But, hey, at least you are here now." That means that all of that stuff really happened. Creation, Adam and Eve, fall, Noah, ark, flood, tower of Babel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph...it is all true. Not only that, but now, Jesus! Look at him! Well, that is a problem, you can hardly look at him. He is one of us who is clearly not like one of us. And then, Jesus tells Peter, James and John after this whole thing is over and they are walking down the mountain that they can't tell anyone about this until after his resurrection! Can you imagine experiencing something like that and not being able to say anything about it? But, of course, they wouldn't know what to think about that until after the resurrection, so now Peter realizes what he saw then and it confirms to him the message and the ministry of Christ. We saw it with our own eyes and...

C. **We heard it with our own ears.** (17-18)

Peter saw Jesus and he saw Jesus in his glory as the Son of God at which time he heard a voice that Peter describes as the Majestic Glory that was not the voice of Jesus, but it was a voice that referred to Jesus and said, "*This is my beloved Son.*" This is obviously the Father that Jesus always spoke about, which is why Peter said that at this event on the mountain, that Jesus received honor 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.*" The Father was confirming for Peter, James and John that Jesus was his Son, that Jesus was God, and that Jesus was king. This statement reflects Psalm 2.7 where God affirms the Kingship of the Messiah in David's line. Psalm 2.7 and Isaiah 42.1 are being fulfilled. The Father is establishing his Son as King. Then Peter said in v.18, "*we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.*"

2. **We (you) have something even more certain.** (19-21)

We have something more certain. We have something more sure. What does Peter mean by that? Is he saying that as incredible of an experience as that was (the transfiguration) that we have something that is even better than that? Is that the point? What could be more certain than seeing Jesus in his glory and hearing the voice of the Father authenticate Christ? Is Peter saying that God's Word is more certain than seeing Jesus with his own eyes? I don't think that is Peter's point. He is not pitting the Bible against Jesus in his glory nor contrasting the two. Peter is saying that given the fact that what he saw was the fulfillment of some of the promises of God's Word, that there is a sense in which God's Word is even more certain. If Peter needed any more proof to believe the Scriptures, he had them.

A. **We have the Word.**

The word is the prophetic word that tells us that Jesus is going to establish his kingdom and rule over everything as King. That is the point of the Transfiguration. The Father was installing Jesus as King and telling everyone to pay attention to him and listen to him because that kingdom thing is the real deal. God tells us in his word things that are going to happen ahead of time, so that you will believe everything else. (little prophecies prove the big stuff) If God says that someone is going to try to rob your house tonight what would you do? Or someone is going to try steal your truck tonight or try to steal one of your kids, what would you do? If you believed God, then you would alert the police and take other pre-cautions. God tells you little things so that you will pay attention to the big things! The big thing is the coming kingdom of Christ. In chapter 3, Peter deals with the objection that people raise about it being a long time and that there is no physical return of Christ and that this stuff is all legend. To which I say, look at Israel. Seriously, to those of you who are figuring out whether or not you are going to believe the Bible, take a look at Israel. How do you explain the existence and history Israel without affirming the Bible? And how do you explain the fact that this tiny little country always seems to be in the center of the world stage?

Israel is smaller than every state in our country except four. Israel is even smaller than New Jersey. When something happens in New Jersey, nobody cares, right? But, when something happens in Israel, it seems as if the whole world pays attention. Hamas in the Gaza Strip started launching rockets at Israel and Israel responded and the whole world watches and holds its breath because we all know that this could light the fuse that blows everything up. And what is more, part of the flash point of this latest incident has to do with one of the two mosques that occupy the Temple Mount in Jerusalem where Solomon's temple used to be. Jesus is going to return physically to this earth and he is going to set up his throne in Jerusalem, which is exactly why Jerusalem is and will always be the biggest flashpoint on the earth. Don't take your eyes off Israel. The prophetic Word tells us that that day is coming. Right now, the Word is our lamp shining in a dark place. The Word is telling us about that Day that is coming and that day is coming. That day will dawn and the Morning Star will rise. Therefore,

B. **Pay attention to the Word and take it to heart.**

Clearly, Peter is telling us about this experience because it was one of the things that happened to him that authenticated Jesus to him and it authenticated the Scripture. The effect of this was for Peter to really pay attention to God's Word, because the unveiling of the glory of Jesus and the awe of Peter, James and John to his glory reinforced their belief that Jesus was God. But, there is more to it. Peter says that you will do well to pay attention to it, like your eyes would be drawn to a lamp in a dark place. If we turned off all of the lights in here and one person lit a candle, we would all see that candle. That light would be our sole focus. Pay attention to God's Word as your primary focus. And then he says, "until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." This is referring to the return of Christ and the unveiling of his glory when he returns. That is worth paying attention to, not only because it is promised to happen and we need to live in anticipation of that, but also because of the implications of that. Here is what I mean.

In the transfiguration of Christ, Jesus radiated his glory. The glory and brilliance of Jesus was displayed and it was so intense that Peter, James and John couldn't handle it. But, notice that the Father absolutely delighted in the glory of his Son. Jesus shining in such blazing glory and the Father says, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am pleased", or in whom I delight. Right now, we cannot handle the glory of Jesus any more than we can handle looking directly into the sun. But, according to Jesus in John 17.24, one day we will be able to see and enjoy the glory of God in the face of Jesus. On that day, our weak and fragile eyes will have the God-given capacity to look directly into the face of Jesus in all of his glory and take it in, revel in it, delight in it and reflect that to others. So, pay attention to the Word because God's Word prepares you for that day. But, ultimately, we know that the Word is certain because...

C. **The Word is from God.** (20-21)

Look at verse 20. No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. Prophecy of Scripture refers to what the prophets said when they delivered a message from God and then what they wrote down. No prophet or any writer of Scripture for that matter sat down and gave their own version of events and interpreted them in a way that made sense to them. Oh no! (v.21) NO prophecy was ever produced by the will of man. No human being made this stuff up and decided on their own to write books and letters and call them Scripture. Absolutely not! Here is what happened. "Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Carried along is the verb that is translated from the word, epherometha. That is the word used in Acts 27.15 where it speaks of a ship that is being driven along by a storm. The ship is at the mercy of the storm. The storm has taken over. Peter gives us some great insight in what it was like to be a human instrument in the hands of God for the writing of Scripture. Peter, Paul and the rest were not co-authors of the Bible. They wrote exactly what the Spirit of God directed them to write. God governed the entire process. What you have in your hands is ultimately from God. We have the Word. It is authenticated by Christ, the glorious Son of God and soon returning King. We must pay attention to the Word and be on guard, because there are plenty of imposters who would draw you away if they could.

You'd think that when people get close to dying that they would finally get really serious about God, but most of the time, they don't. Why not? If you respond to unbelief in all of the little things, you will not respond in belief to the big things. Disobedience is unbelief, and unbelief hardens our hearts and blinds our eyes. We need to believe the Lord in all areas; big and small.