

JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

2 Peter 1:16-21

TEXT: *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming 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 the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

In Jesus' name, fellow redeemed:

The Epiphany Season, those several Sunday's in between Christmas and Lent that are meant to focus the eyes of the Church on some of the historical events in Jesus' life that revealed to those around Him that He was no ordinary human being. While He was ordinary in the sense that He is a true human in every respect except that He did not inherit the sinful nature that is inherited by all human souls ever conceived, He also is True God. While His true humanity was evident to all, His miracles revealed His Divine Nature. It is as Paul writes: *...in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form...* Col 2

This is important for the Church to know and believe as we now stand on the threshold of the Lenten Season when we will watch this Christ be crucified for the sins of all humanity.

The last Epiphany Sunday is traditionally called "Transfiguration Sunday" because we read and recall the time when Jesus called Peter, James and John to follow Him up a certain mountain where, as Scripture says: *There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.* Mt 17 Before being required to witness the horror of the Crucifixion, God graciously allowed these three disciples to witness a most spectacular sight. It was so spectacular that these tough fishermen were thrown to the ground. They heard the voice of the Heavenly Father repeat what He said at the beginning of Jesus' ministry: *This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!* Mt 17

Years after Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection, Peter recalls his experience at the Transfiguration that was meant to strengthen him. In the verses just prior to today's text he writes: *I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have.* That could be written to you who also know and are firmly established in the Gospel. *I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.* Until the day he dies, Peter is going to remind them, and us, teach them and us.

So today, let us recall again JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION: What did it mean to Peter? And, what should it mean to us?

Whenever Jesus asked his disciples for a public confession, it seems to have been Peter who would step up and declare: *You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!* The others would concur, and Jesus would gladly accept that confession of their faith. But at the Transfiguration, Peter had that confession made more certain. For there was the Christ, in glorious form, talking about man's redemption with Moses and Elijah who were alive and well! And the voice of the Heavenly Father offering His accreditation with the command: *Listen to Him!*

And yet, years later, Peter writes something VERY SIGNIFICANT: *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming 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 the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain...* What is made MORE CERTAIN is the written *word of the prophets.* More than the Transfiguration itself is the written Word!

It was God's Word and promise, His plan, LAID OUT IN WRITING over a period from 1500 BC to 400 BC. Specified in writing was the family line and the individuals from whom the Christ would come. Specified were the Virgin Birth and its location. Specified in writing was how God would manipulate world history and its nations in order to have it all come together for the appointed time when Jesus would be born, live that perfect life for us and die for our redemption. Preserved in writing were His betrayer, the money paid for his betrayal, the method of execution, the place where He would die, the casting lots for his clothing, etc., etc., etc.

THIS IS WHAT THE TRANSFIGURATION MEANT TO PETER: *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...* This is what Jesus' Transfiguration should mean to us.

Peter then testifies to the verbal inspiration of Scripture: *we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.* Peter, James and John each would be inspired writers of the New Testament, writing down what God would have the New Testament Church know and believe.

Now that the Christ has come, what are we to know? Of course we are to know the Gospel. Next week we will begin that special time of the Church Year when we will recall the history of our Savior's suffering and death for our sins. We will end the Lenten Season with the victorious recollection of His resurrection. All recorded history, and written for our learning.

By these Scriptures, Peter gives us another piece of sacred advice. A few verses prior to our text he writes to us: *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.* He refers to these Last Days in which we are living today. He warns that there are many who will lose their faith and fall away. Only God's Elect will be saved. Again: *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.* And how can I make my election to faith and salvation sure and certain to my conscience while passing through life in this godless world? Hold to what is written! Your Baptism is God's WRITTEN ASSURANCE that you have been washed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Your sins are washed away by the power of God's promise in your Baptism. Hold to what is written about the Lord's Supper. Paul writes: ... *whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.* 1 Co 11 Not only is Jesus giving you His own body and blood to eat and to drink along with the promise that your sins are forgiven, but you are witnessing and confessing and proclaiming the Crucifixion of the Savior! IT IS WRITTEN! Read what God has written and see that He is telling you that you are one of His chosen ones.

And made more certain is the assurance of your own resurrection to eternal life with a body that destined soon to be glorified. Is this not a comfort to us who are dying daily as we draw closer to the end of our personal service here on earth? Take a look at what they saw when Jesus was transfigured before them: *Jesus' face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.* Mt 17 This is a preview of what is going to happen to us when Jesus returns. We will be raised from the dead and, as Paul also writes: *Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.* 1 Co 15 And whom did they see there talking with Jesus? Moses who was at that time over 1,500 years old. And Elijah, who was over 900 years old! They were discussing the Gospel events about to happen to Jesus whose death and resurrection would bring eternal life and to us all!

That's what this event meant to Peter. May it also mean such marvelous things to each of us! Amen.