

Transfiguration Sunday
February 26, 2017

"The Voice of God on the Holy Mountain"

2 PETER 1:16-21

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. ¹⁷ 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." ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ 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.

If you were at the right place at the right time this past month in Yosemite National Park you might have been able to see the Fire Falls. It rarely happens. There has to be snow on top of El Capitan and then a sudden thaw that causes the water to flow over the Horsetail Falls which is normally dry. As the sun is setting in the west, beams from the setting sun light up the falls with brilliant red and orange and yellow colors. It looks like the falls is on fire.

What Peter, James and John saw on the Mountain of Transfiguration was even more spectacular. They saw Jesus transfigured before them His face shone like the sun and his clothes became a dazzling white as bright as flashing lightning. What they saw with their eyes was spectacular. What they heard with their ears was even more spectacular. They heard the voice of God the Father say from heaven, "This is my Son whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

My eyes will probably never see the spectacular sunset on the Horse Tail Falls. My ears will not hear the same voice of God that Peter heard that day on the holy mountain. But there is a way to still hear the voice of God speaking in these last days. I have the privilege of hearing God speak to me here on the pages of the Bible and so do you.

The voice spoke in the past

Peter never forgot that moment when he saw Jesus shine in glory and heard the Father speak from heaven. He writes, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." All through history people have invented myths or stories about their gods. The Greeks and Romans had their stories of gods and goddesses interacting with humans and sometimes even playing tricks on each other. The Chippewa Indians had a myth that the world began when a clump of mud fell off a great turtle. As a child just beginning to read, I was fascinated by the stories or myths about Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox. I knew

they were not true but they made for interesting reading. The Mormon religion is built on the myth that Joseph Smith received the Book of Mormon from the angel Moroni on golden plates. And with special rose colored glasses he was able to translate the ancient hieroglyphics.

Peter said we did not follow such clever devised myths but were eye witness of Jesus and his majestic glory. He saw with his own eyes how Jesus was transfigured before them. He saw with his own eyes how water was turned into wine and 5,000 people fed with five barley loaves and two small fish. Peter even saw the nail marks in the hands of Jesus the night he rose from the dead. The Christian faith is not built on myths and stories but actual historical events in the life of Jesus, God's Son our Savior.

It wasn't just what Peter saw that day that stayed with him the rest of his life. It was what he heard from heaven. He heard Jesus receive honor and glory from words the heavenly Father spoke to him. "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." Peter was privileged to hear first-hand how God the Father was totally pleased with the work his Son was doing. What kind of performance review did Jesus receive from his heavenly Father. It was all fives, all A pluses, all 100%. The voice from heaven did not say, "I am sort of pleased with the work you are doing." The voice from heaven said, "I am well pleased with what my Son is doing."

Jesus was totally focused on carrying out his heavenly Father's will and doing everything perfectly. One thousand years before coming into the world, the Savior spoke through David in Psalm 40, "Here I am, I have come- it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do you will, O my God." One day when Jesus was talking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well in Samaria, the disciples were concerned that he had not eaten any food. Jesus said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then he went on to say, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and finish his work." And the night before he died he prayed so fervently, "Father if it is possible let this cup be taken from me, not my will but yours be done." Jesus was tempted in all parts as we are, yet he was without sin. He carried out his Father's will perfectly. The Father was totally pleased with the life Jesus' lived and totally pleased with the perfect sacrifice he made at the cross.

In this vast sea of humanity in which we live, we can find no one who can measure up to what God expects, including you and this person who is speaking to you this morning. We have the best intentions of pleasing God and doing the right things, but we fail miserably. We vow not to have bad thoughts about other people and we let the bad thoughts come into our minds. We try not to be angry, but we have these angry thoughts develop inside for which we are truly ashamed. Listen to how Romans chapter three grades all of humanity, "There is no one righteous not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have altogether become worthless; there is none who does good, not even one."

Our hope of measuring up is found not in ourselves but in Jesus. That's why the Father's voice from heaven is so important to us. There is one person who has lived the perfect life and died that perfect death for sin. Jesus offers that perfect life and perfect death to us as a free gift. Through him we are justified and that means, "declared not guilty." "Living,

loving, dying, rising, Jesus did it all for me." Through Jesus the Father can now say to me and to you, "I am well pleased with your life." "You are my own dear children just as Jesus is my dear Son." 1 John 3 says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" The voice that spoke from heaven on the holy mountain that Peter heard with his own ears, makes this clear to us.

The Voice still speaks to us

The voice of God that spoke on the Holy Mountain still speaks to us today in Word of God, the Holy Bible we love and cherish. "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 morning star rises in your hearts." The words of the prophets are more certain. They are sure and they are reliable. Just as God spoke from the mountain when Jesus was transfigured, God spoke through the prophets about the Messiah who was to come.

The prophets foretold the place Jesus would be born, not Jerusalem, but Bethlehem. The prophets foretold how Jesus would ride into Jerusalem, not on a war horse or chariot, but on a lowly donkey. The prophets foretold Jesus would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, and that is what the Jewish leaders paid Judas to betray him. The prophet Isaiah described in great detail how Jesus would be wounded for our transgressions and how the punishment for our peace would be upon him. Isaiah and King David predicted that Jesus would see light of life and be praised in the assembly after his resurrection to life again. Every single prophecy about Jesus' life and death and resurrection were fulfilled completely. That is huge reason to believe the Bible is true and to believe what Jesus accomplished is reliable and trustworthy.

When you pay attention to these prophecies and see how they are fulfilled it is like a light shining in a dark place. It is like the morning star rising in the heart to help you believe all these things spoken in the past about Jesus are real and true. There will be dark places in life. There will be challenges to our lives. There will be low moments. In the lowest moments of life the light of God's Word and the light of these Old Testament promises shine the brightest.

Think of how low the two disciples walking on the road to Emmaus the night of Jesus' resurrection. They told the stranger who was talking to them how they had hoped Jesus was the one to redeem Israel. But now their hope was gone. It was in these dark moments that this stranger who was Jesus opened their eyes to see from the Old Testament Scriptures how the Christ had to suffer all these things and then enter into his glory. Later they would say to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us." The voice of God still speaks to us through the prophets who predicted the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a lamp that shines brightly and a morning star that rises to give hope.

What Peter says about the Old Testament prophets is also true of those who wrote the New Testament. "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." When people wrote the books of the Bible they did not come up with their own ideas. Holy men of God spoke

as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Spirit who gave them the very thoughts and words they were to write.

When Peter saw Jesus in his glory and heard the Father speak from heaven, he told Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." Peter wanted that moment to last. He wanted it to linger. He did not want to give it up.

"Lord, it is good for us to be here!" We open the Scriptures and read again this week. We ponder the words and maybe even underline them and make notes alongside the verses just read. We believe every Word is true. We hear the voice of God speaking to us. These are some of the best moments in our lives. I probably will never see the Fire Falls in Yosemite. It is already too late to see it this year. But I know that astounding moments are waiting for you and me on the Holy Mountain of God's Word. We cannot wait to see what the Lord has prepared for us. Lord it is good to be here!