

## Transfiguration / February 23, 2020

### 2 Peter 1:19

**“And we have something more certain, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place.”**

Jesus gave the greatest visual display of His divine glory in the Transfiguration. Matthew says, “His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became white as light.” Later, Jesus appeared to John on the island of Patmos in similar form. John said, “...I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed in a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest. The hairs of His head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire...and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.” This wasn’t the first time Jesus displayed His divine glory. Jesus revealed His glory often and in many ways; healing the sick and disabled, casting out evil spirits and raising the dead.

On the Mount of Transfiguration the Father’s voice said, “This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him.” Whenever Jesus spoke, He revealed His glory as the eternal Word, through whom all things came to be; and in whom all things are held together. Jesus hushed the wind and calmed the waves on the Sea of Galilee, with a word. When Jesus spoke the crowds were amazed at His words, for He taught with authority, not like their teachers. By His word, Jesus opened the hearts of the disciples to believe and to confess that He was the Christ of God and that He had the words of eternal life. Jesus reveals His glory to us through His word! Through the word and by the working of the Holy Spirit, Jesus has worked the miracle of faith in our hearts, so that we would believe in Him as Saviour and confess Him as Lord to the glory of God the Father!

Peter saw some amazing things as a disciple of Jesus. He saw Jesus heal paralyzed men, so they could walk. He saw Him give sight to men blind from birth. He saw Jesus walk on the water and even joined Him. Peter saw some amazing things as a disciple of Jesus, but nothing could top what he saw on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Jesus clothes became white as light and His face shone like the sun! How do you think you would react if you saw such a thing? Jesus’ resurrection was amazing! But, Mark says when the women encountered the angel at the empty tomb that they fled, trembling with fear. When he saw Jesus’ glory on the Island of Patmos, John said, “I fell at His feet as though dead.” Peter, James and John had a similar reaction. Mark says that when they saw Jesus transfigured and heard the divine voice declaring Him His beloved Son and commanding them to listen to Him that “they fell on their faces and were terrified.” Jesus told them to tell no one of the vision, until He had been raised from the dead. Peter only mentions seeing the Transfiguration in our text.

If you saw such a thing, would you be able to keep quiet and keep it to yourself? It’s surprising how often in the bible, people who saw amazing things, were told not to tell anyone. When Jesus healed, He often told people to tell no one. In Corinthians, Paul relates how he was taken up to heaven, where he heard things that he was not permitted to tell. To keep him humble and make sure he didn’t tell, he was given a thorn in his flesh. Peter, James and John saw a vision and heard God say “This is my beloved Son...Listen to Him!” The vision was for them, but the word was for everyone. After recounting his experience on the mountain, Peter leads us to the words of the prophets. He says, “And we have something more certain, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place...” The word leads us to Jesus. He has the words of eternal life. He gives forgiveness, pardon and peace with God

to all who believe in His name. We see Jesus and hear His voice in the words of Holy Scripture. They are written so we would believe!

Three men saw Jesus' glory revealed on the Mount of Transfiguration. Can you imagine what would happen, if something like this were to occur today? First, there would be a book. Then a DVD or some kind of streaming video, with visual effects, so everyone could share the experience. There would be a speaking tour and online seminars. A person could become rich, if they had such an experience today. Maybe that's why Paul was not permitted to tell the things he heard while in heaven. Maybe that's why Jesus told people He healed to tell no one. The focus should be on Jesus and the word. After the Samaritan woman conversed with Jesus at the well, she went into the village and said, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did.

Can this be the Christ?" She could have used her experience to draw attention to herself, but instead she drew attention to Jesus. She led others to Jesus and they too came to believe He was the Saviour of the world. Jesus revealed His glory to Peter, James and John so they would lead us to Jesus, so that we too would believe He is the Saviour!

Peter, James and John weren't the only ones to see Jesus' glory displayed in blinding light. The Apostle Paul also saw the light and heard a voice. On the way to Damascus to persecute Jews who believed Jesus was the Messiah, Paul met the Messiah in blinding light. What he saw and heard changed his life. He went from persecuting the gospel to proclaiming salvation in Jesus' name. A person could become rich relating an experience like that! What's surprising is how seldom Paul mentions that experience. He only mentions it in terms of his call to minister the word of Christ to the Gentiles and to the Jews in dispersion. Like Peter in our text, Paul did not use his experience to promote himself, or even to convince others to believe. He used his experience to lead others to the sacred scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto eternal life through faith in Jesus. Faith comes through hearing the Word of Jesus!

People in our age make a lot of money relating visions and experiences. But, none of the apostles became wealthy because of the revelations given to them. In fact, it seems that the more that was revealed to them, the more they suffered for the sake of Christ. Peter was crucified, Paul was beheaded. In 1 Corinthians Paul wrote, "I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake...To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless...We have become and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things." Those boys could have used some marketing advice. With a good promoter and proper management, they could have owned the world! But they remembered Jesus' words: "What does it profit a man if he gain the world and lose his soul." They proclaimed not themselves, but Christ crucified! Their experiences and special revelations led them to listen at the feet of Jesus and to proclaim Him as Saviour, so others would also believe and have life in His name.

Even though the Apostle Paul was not permitted to tell the things he heard in heaven, people get rich relating revelations given to them. When people profit from their revelations, we should question their motivation and consider where and to whom, they are leading us. We can only imagine what Peter, James and John saw on the Mount of Transfiguration, as they beheld Jesus' clothes become "white as light" and saw His face shine like the sun. What they saw was for them, so they would listen to Jesus and proclaim Him as Saviour of the world. The vision was for them, but the word is for us all. The words of the prophets, apostles and evangelists lead us

to Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man; so that we would see Him as Lord and believe in Him as our Saviour.

We see Jesus' glory as the eternal Son of God in the word. In Colossians St. Paul wrote, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through Him and for Him...For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." The word tells us that Jesus has made atonement for the sin of the world. The word tells us that in Him, we have peace with God in time and for eternity. In the word, we see that Jesus conquered death and took away its power, by atoning for the sin of the world. In the word the Spirit tells us that in Him we have forgiveness and the promise of sharing in His resurrection to life everlasting.

Faith can be strengthened, encouraged and emboldened through signs and visions. But faith does not come through seeing signs and wonders. The pagans at Lystra and Derbe saw Paul heal a man, but they thought Paul was a god and wanted to worship him. Paul spoke the word so they would understand! Faith comes through the word of God. When Jesus visited Martha after her brother's death, He comforted her first with His word. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live even though he die and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." Then He asked her, "Do you believe this?" She replied, "Yes Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." She believed and confessed her faith before she saw Jesus raise her brother to life. She believed through the word which He spoke. We believe through the same word spoken by God, passed down to us by the prophets, evangelists and prophets.

We praise God for the revelations given to Peter and the apostles. We thank God that through those visions and signs they were led to the scriptures, where they came to understand what they saw. We see Jesus best in the scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit. And so after recalling his experience St. Peter said, "We have something more certain, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." The Psalmist said, "Your Word O Lord is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The words of the prophets lead us to Jesus. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus came to the disciples. Luke says He "Opened their minds to understand the scriptures," specifically, what they said about Him, His dying and rising; most importantly that repentance and forgiveness should be proclaimed to all nations in His name.

What John saw on the island of Patmos and described in the book of Revelation is mind boggling. Nevertheless, the angel that was his guide reminded him, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The words of the apostles lead us to Jesus. St. John said, "Jesus did many other signs that are not written in this book, but these things are written that you may believe Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, that believing you may have life in His name." Jesus' glory may not be displayed in as spectacular a manner as on the Mount of Transfiguration, but Jesus' glory is revealed to all of us in the prophetic scriptures. In them we see Jesus our Saviour. Through them the Spirit gives us life through faith in Him! God bless us always to listen, so that we would believe and have life in His Name. In Jesus' Name. Amen