

The Last Sunday after the Epiphany - The Transfiguration of our Lord

March 6, 2011

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

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. 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. (NIV)

Everyone gather around now, "it's story time!" No matter what our age, don't we love a good story? Especially when we have a skillful story teller, stories tend to grab and hold our attention. The best story tellers are often the ones with wild imaginations. George Lucas and J.R.R. Tolkien are a couple who come to mind. We like stories that give us action, adventure, and heroes. Many of us are fascinated by myths and legends. We love stories that draw us into the characters, stories that keep us on the edge of our seats, and stories that leave us wanting more.

So how are the stories of the Bible any different? They too have all the makings of great stories written down by skillful story tellers. What about Jesus as a hero? Certainly, anyone who lived and followed Jesus when He walked on this earth would have numerous, exciting tales to tell. Jesus gives us the stuff of legends. We have another story today on the mountain of transfiguration.

Yet, while many may look at Jesus as just another folk hero, and the Bible as just another tale, another myth, more writers who let their imaginations go wild; I pray we never do! I pray the Holy Spirit works in our hearts and minds to understand: **Jesus' Glory is More than a Story! His Glory is revealed on the Mountain. His Glory is revealed in God's Word.**

As Peter writes, for what was perhaps the last time, there is a sense of urgency in his words. Peter somehow knows his departure from earth is near. So he encourages his fellow Christians not to lose their faith and hope as they wait for the Lord's return. There were no shortage of people in the world to ridicule and persecute them for what they believed. Some scoffed at the idea of Jesus returning to judge the world. Others were stating they had a higher knowledge and claimed to be more enlightened than Bible believing Christians. Some people looked to myths about angels and genealogies. Many rabbis were fond of spinning yarns on names found in the Old Testament. Other people were telling stories and they claimed their writings were on equal, or even advanced, footing with the Scriptures.

So Peter wants to make it clear to all that our faith and hope is based on more than myths or human ideas. ***“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.”***

Ever have a big life changing moment that you have never forgotten? The scene is permanently etched in your mind. Perhaps the moment you said “*I do*” or the first time your child was placed into your arms. Peter had such a moment. He uses this event to remind us we do not follow some tales or fables when we follow Jesus Christ. Jesus is so much more than an interesting story! Peter had seen it with His own eyes. Jesus, before He went to die, took Peter, along with James and John, with Him to a mountain. There Jesus gave to Peter a glimpse of something he would never forget. Jesus revealed His glory and it was awesome. After all, it was the glory of God Himself. Peter was able to see that Jesus, truly human, was also the Son of God - the eternal Holy One. Peter also sees God’s Son talking with two great prophets of old. Not only did He see this brilliant sight, but Peter heard God the Father thunder His approval from heaven making it clear that Jesus is God’s one and only Son who had come into our world.

Do you recall how Peter responded to such sights and sounds? He didn’t want it to end. It was so good to be there at that time and place Peter wanted to build shelters and stay there. Yet, before Peter knew it that glimpse was over and Jesus was picking Peter and the other two companions off the ground to go back down the mountain with Him so He could do the work for which He came. Peter will not get to see such glory again until heaven. Then Jesus told Peter not to tell anyone about this until Jesus had been raised from the dead. That’s what Peter was doing now. Jesus’ glory is more than a story. Peter is an eye witness. Peter could not make this up if he tried. The One nailed to the cross was God. What God revealed to him on that sacred mountain removed all doubts.

But what about for people like you and me who didn’t get to walk up that high mountain with Jesus? In fact, we haven’t seen Jesus do any of His many miracles. What about us who don’t get a glimpse of Jesus’ glory as true God with our own eyes? Not only that but what we see in this world, as God’s people, doesn’t always look so glorious. We, like the disciples in Peter’s day, may face ridicule and persecution for Jesus’ sake. We hear people deny Jesus and use His name to curse and scoff at us when we make any mention of His return. What do we say to them when we, unlike Peter, can’t stand up and say we are eye witnesses of Jesus’ glory?

When we start to think we are somehow at a big disadvantage we need to keep turning back to these words before us. While we might think that if only we could have been on the mountain with Jesus like Peter, or have had God come and personally talk to us like He did to so many prophets in the Old Testament, Peter reminds us that we actually have it so much better. Yes, we have more than the Old Testament believers, we have an advantage even over those who once walked the earth with Jesus. ***“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.” We have the Bible - the Book unlike any other. Here God speaks to us. God has given us His Word - all of it - everything He wants us to know.

We are to pay attention to this Word and treat it as it actually is - not the words of men, but the Word of God. We must understand ***“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.”*** These words stand in stark contrast to all those cleverly invented tales and stories of men. God the Holy Spirit miraculously gave to men the very words that He wanted us to have - all Scripture is God-breathed. This is God's history or His-story. And this word of the prophets made more certain is given to us so that we too may see the glory of Jesus. This Word shines like a light in a dark place and will until ***“the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”*** The purpose of these words are to announce the arrival of the Son of righteousness.

So are we paying careful attention? Do we ever take for granted this tremendous blessing? What is our attitude toward God's Words? Since we have now had the Bible for so long have we lost some of the awe and shock that right here, in these words, God is speaking to us? Do we ever think it is our right to change, even if it is just a little, what this Word tells us? Are we ever more interested or fascinated by other books that are made up of only the words of mere men? Ignoring this Word would be as bad as Peter saying to Jesus *“why don't you go up to that high mountain by yourself, I've got something else I want to do.”* When we neglect the Word we miss out on a chance to see something awesome - the glory of our Savior - the Son of Man and Son of God.

In Lent, starting Wednesday, we once again get to see Jesus in God's Word. We get to see again what makes Jesus so glorious. We see a love that has no limits, a love that is willing to endure indescribable suffering and an incriminating death on a cross for sinners. We watch Jesus pay the awful price for all the times we have neglected and taken for granted God's Holy Word. We witness the Son of God who dies for all sin. When all is said and done we see a Savior who is left standing in glory over an open tomb with our forgiveness bought and our salvation won.

Dear friends, if you enjoy good stories you need to go no further than this Book of all books. But unlike many stories, we need to be clear that this is no fairy tale, myth, or legend. These are not the wild imaginations of some creative story tellers. This is God's Word - true in every part down to the last detail. It is written down and given to us to reveal the most important story of all - the life saving story of the world's Savior Jesus Christ. This story is full of action and the main character has certainly drawn us in. But as for leaving us wanting more - His Word gives us all we need. May we pay attention to it as to a light shining in a dark place. May we see Jesus' Glory as the Son of God and our Savior. May we listen to Peter and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus so that we stand firm in our faith and hope. May God grant this by grace so that one day we will see with our own eyes that Jesus' glory is more than a story. Amen.

