

We have the Word of God

2 Peter 1:16-21

¹⁶ To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance 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 within the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts, ²⁰ since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹ In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, the Apostle Peter stood with his risen Lord. This was the same Lord that Peter denied knowing three times. It was the same Lord who died and rose again to win Peter forgiveness for his sin. There on the shore, Jesus commanded Peter to shepherd his lambs and sheep. Peter would spend the rest of his days on earth doing just that. It began in Jerusalem on Pentecost. There Peter publicly proclaimed the good news of our risen Savior. For the rest of his lifetime, Peter would witness the gospel spread out from Jerusalem, despite its opposition by many. Peter also saw how the same gospel message gave Christians the power to stand up under intense persecution. The gospel kept them faithful to the Lord Jesus. As part of his gospel ministry, the Lord had Peter write two inspired epistles to Christians living in parts of the world that make up the modern day Turkey. In the second of those letters, in verses just before our text, Peter mentions that his days on earth were numbered. He wishes to leave them a constant reminder of what their Savior had done for them. So Peter does what God’s messengers had been doing starting with Moses some 1500 years earlier. Peter writes it down. That way believers could read it again and again. That way generations still to come would learn the good news about our world’s only Savior. That way Peter could continue to share God’s word long after he left this world to spend eternity with his Lord. As you and I read what Peter wrote to Christians more than 1950 years ago, we can be sure that what we’re reading is the word of God. Peter wanted his readers of all times to believe that what they receive from Peter came directly from God himself. Peter urges us to hold tightly to that word. What he urged first century Christians to do with that word, we 21st century Christians would do well to repeat. Coming to us from God himself is something we must hold on tightly to. It is his holy Word.

Peter wanted his readers to know that his message about Christ came from a very reliable source. Peter writes, *“To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Neither Peter nor any other writer of Scripture followed his or anyone else’s concoctions when they told about the greatness of our Lord Jesus. Instead, Peter writes, *“We were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.* We read about it in our Gospel reading. Peter, James, and John were on that mountain to witness Jesus’ brilliant appearance. They saw him conversing with two heavenly figures—Moses and Elijah. And Peter wanted this taste of heaven to last. Who wouldn’t? So Peter volunteers to

construct three shelters for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Next, they heard the voice of their heavenly Father announcing his approval of his Son. Peter, a former fisherman, wasn't telling fish stories. He was testifying to what he had witnessed. He saw Jesus for whom he is. On top of that sacred mountain he witnessed the glory of the Son of God. God's people were not at the mercy of some storytellers when they learned the truth about our Savior. It came from eyewitnesses. So they could be sure they had the word of God.

What was true about Peter's epistles was true of all of Scripture. Peter writes, "*We know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone's own interpretation. In fact, no prophecy ever came by the will of man.*" Moses led God's people through the desert for forty years. During that time, Moses didn't decide he'd better grab some papyri and record the history of our world and of Abraham's family. King David wasn't sitting in his palace strumming his ancient guitar and then decide on his own to compose some new psalms for God's people to sing. No writer of Scripture ever wrote a single word of it completely on their own. Peter tells us, "*Men spoke from God as they were being carried along by the Holy Spirit.*" The Holy Spirit carried every writer of Scripture along and gave them every word of it. Moses may have been educated in the finest schools in Egypt. But it was God the Holy Spirit who gave Moses every word of the Bible's first five books. David may have been a masterful musician. But God the Holy Spirit verbally inspired David and carried him along through every psalm he wrote. God's Spirit had Peter write his first epistle to offer hope to first century Christians who were beginning to suffer severe persecution. In his second letter God had Peter remind the same Christians about our Savior's second coming. It wasn't Peter's idea, nor Paul's, nor John's nor any human author. Yes, it's written by men. But it's God's message, his word, God's Spirit Verbally inspiring every word of it. We can be sure that they have the word of God.

It is only by the grace of God that we have his Word today. Think about it. It's been in the hands of sinful men for centuries. But God made a promise: "*Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away*" (Matthew 24:35). And you know what God does with his promises? He keeps them. For more than 3,400 years God has preserved his saving word. There's one question we must all answer: why don't we treasure it more? According to our last annual report, there are more members of St. Michael's not in worship than those who do attend. Now we have about ten members who are shut-in, so we can excuse them. I pray that all of us set their life up so God's Word remains the treasure that it is. This week we enter the season of the church year when our Savior shows us the extent of his love. Will we honor those mid-week services as we should? Or will we let sinful flesh convince us that we already heard all that and find others things to do on Wednesday nights?

God in his grace has kept his saving word still among us. It is such good news we need to hear daily. It tells us about our Savior. It tells us how he left his glorious throne to join us on earth. He was fully God as his miracles and his appearance on the holy mountain show us. Instead, he chose to suffer. He didn't stay on that mountain as Peter suggested. He descended it so he could suffer for us. He suffered through every temptation that we face while maintaining his holiness. Whenever a Sabbath day came, you'd find Jesus in a synagogue treasuring God's holy Word. When the festivals arrived, you'd find him in full attendance at the

temple. He never despised God's Word. Instead, he proclaimed it faithfully and taught it every chance he had. He did this in a crowded house or in the open country. He used a boat just offshore to preach. And he addressed a crowd on a mountain or hillside. Whether it was with five thousand or just a few, Jesus showed people the only way to the Father came through him. He would supply the holiness they'd need. And for our sin and he'd suffer God's full punishment. He never shied away from telling his followers about his approaching death. And he followed that with good news about his rising from death. But sadly his followers were not always good listeners. Though he spoke plainly, his death came as a shock to them. Even Peter, following that beautiful confession that Jesus is the Christ, refused to listen to Jesus' talk about his death. He scolded Jesus for even mentioning it, earning Jesus' sharp reprimand: "*Get behind me, Satan!*" But after he rose from death, nothing would stand in the way of getting out the news of our Savior's victory. Even the guilt that Peter wallowed in for denying his Lord, our Savior washed clean in his precious blood.

Peter wanted his readers to know that every word of Scripture is worth listening to and reading and studying. Spirit-inspired eyewitnesses recorded it. It all came from God himself. Peter urges his readers to hold tightly to that word. He writes, "*We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts.*" Inspired by God's Spirit and written down by men who witnessed God's glory, Peter's readers would do well to pay attention. God's Word shines like a light. It brings light to our sin-darkened world. His Word exposes every sin as mankind mimics our first parents in trying to hide. As brightly as God's law shines, his gospel luminesces even brighter. It brings sight to eyes blinded by unbelief. It reveals a Savior who came down from that holy mountain. He didn't stop until he ended up in Jerusalem. God's people needed his saving, though they rejected him calling for his death. And Jesus willingly endured death for us all.

Starting this week, we have a wonderful opportunity to join Christians throughout the world in witnessing Christ in his passion. For the next six weeks plan to attend our mid-week Lenten services. Listen intently as area pastors share these eyewitness accounts of Jesus' suffering and death. Before you know it, it will be Holy Week. On Palm Sunday we'll join the crowds in singing his praises. On Thursday we'll gather for a holy meal in which we receive his body and blood for our forgiveness. Each time we receive that meal, like today, we proclaim his death until he comes again. On Good Friday we'll gather for an afternoon service to witness his love as he dies on a cross. But it will only be a short death. For the Sunday following, we'll join those women who got up early to find the stone rolled away and his tomb empty. We get to hear it every year. I pray we never grow tired of it. We know what it all means. Because our Lord suffered, and died, and rose again, you and I have God's forgiveness for every sin. Because Jesus suffered death and rose again, you and I can face each day with fresh confidence right up to our very last hour. We know God will not abandon us to our graves just like he didn't abandon his beloved Son either. When our Lord returns in glory, he will raise us up and body and soul we will enter eternal life. That's why we keep gathering here to listen to every eyewitness account. God has preserved it all for us. He has inspired every word of it. Yes, it is special. So keep it first and foremost in your life. It's the Word of God.