

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 19, 2023

TEXT: 2 PETER 1: 16-21

THEME: A SURE AND CERTAIN WORD

**16** For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. **17** For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," **18** we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. **19** And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20** knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21** For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

In the name of Jesus:

I saw on the news that the movie "The Titanic" is celebrating a 25 year anniversary, so in honor of its release 25 years ago, a remastered version of the movie is going to be released in theaters sometime this month. I read recently of a true story that comes from the sinking of the Titanic.

Major Arthur Peuchen was on the Titanic the night it sank. He was near lifeboat number 6, and just as it was about to be lowered into the waters, he went back into his cabin, not to get his valuables which included large sums of cash and bonds, but to get three oranges. Why the oranges? He thought that the oranges would be more valuable than the valuables left behind. With that, he quickly found his way back to the lifeboat and got in.

Death changes things and one's perspective about life. The priceless things become worthless, and the worthless things become priceless. And in that moment he preferred three small oranges to a bag of cash.

There are events in life, which have the power to transform the way we look at the world. Such is the event called the Transfiguration, of which we celebrate today. The Transfiguration event took place over 2000 years ago. Jesus ascended Mount Tabor with three of His disciples, Peter, James, and John. While on the mountain, Matthew records that: "2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light... and behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

The Apostle Peter tells us that he was an eyewitness to this event. Back in Peter's time, being an eyewitness to an event substantiated the claim that was made. However, during his ministry, others had cast doubt upon what Peter saw with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. There were unbelievers who said that Peter was imagining things, that what he was claiming to be true couldn't possibly be true.

But Peter stuck to his guns. He knew what he saw and he knew what he had heard. Whatsmore, Peter says that he wasn't the only one who saw and heard what took place on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter uses the pronoun we, " For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were

eyewitnesses of his majesty.” There were others who heard and saw what he heard, James and John were with Peter. But Peter goes on to say that even as they were eyewitnesses of what transpired, there is something even more significant, more certain and substantial that bears witness to what happened on that Mount, there is the SURE AND CERTAIN WORD OF GOD.

We live in an age that is unlike any other time in human history. It's called the postmodern age, an age where people think that they know it all. And what is it that they are certain about? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. This certainty of not knowing anything for certain is manifested by the broad skepticism seen in our world today, where everything and everyone is questioned. Truths are subjective, and everything is relative. If you were to say to someone what you believe to be true, a typical response might be, “well, that is what you believe, but I don't believe that.”

So the prevailing thought is what is true for you may not be true for someone else. The thinking goes, truth is that which works for you. You create your own truth, you create your own life story, you create and believe what or who you want to be. So, if you disagree with something that once was true, you simply substitute it with a different truth. So if you disagree with what the Bible says, all you need to do is to change the truths of the Bible, or ignore the truths of the Bible. Live not by the truths of the Bible, but by your own truth. Do what feels good for you, for you don't answer to God, you answer only to yourself and to your own truth and to your own experience.

That is why there is so much confusion in our world today. It is also why you may feel so uncomfortable in watching what is going on in the world today. Yes, this is a different world, things are changing, but one thing hasn't changed, God's SURE AND CERTAIN WORD.

God's Word is always the SURE AND CERTAIN WORD. In a world where people deny that there is any absolute truth, the Bible reveals that there are a couple of absolute truths, truths that are unchangeable and that have been true now and into the future, truths that no one can deny. And there is an experience that everyone will experience sometime in the future.

That experience is death. Everyone will meet death at some time or another unless the Lord returns. What does the Bible say about death? It says that the soul that sins will most certainly die. It also says that the wages of sin is death. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, hence death has spread to everyone everywhere, at every time and place. Death is the punishment for the disobedience of humans, an effect of people living apart from and against the truth that God reveals in His Word. Death isn't relative, it doesn't change with the times or go with the flow. Death is God's judgment upon the sin of humanity. No matter your experience, no matter your "so called truth," you will die because God's Word is unchangeable and it is true.

So Peter points us to the sure and certain truth today in our text. Yes, he and others were eyewitnesses to the Majesty and glory of our Lord Jesus, but Peter directs us to something even more certain when he writes: "we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay

attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The Word of God, Holy Scripture, points to Jesus, the divine human, the God in human flesh One, who came to earth to save sinners, to save a world at odds with God and separated from God. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the One full of grace and truth, He is the Way, Truth, and Life, the One who came from God the Father to bring sinners back to the Father through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection.

The Holy Spirit gave the authors of the Bible the very words to write, and in the Bible the Spirit points sinners to God’s answer to sin and death, in that He would send His Son Jesus to be the Messiah, God’s chosen One to defeat sin, Satan, and death. This is why Jesus shines as bright as lightning on the Mount of Transfiguration, because the Father sent His only begotten Son to become a human, to live, die, and rise again for the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of all who trust in Jesus. This is why the Father proclaims: “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to Him.”

The Father in love sent His Son into the world to redeem the world, to buy it back from the clutches of sin and death. The Jesus who was born in the manger is the same Jesus who would eventually go to the cross, to shed His blood for your sins, my sins, and the sins of the whole world. The blood of Christ cleanses each and everyone from all sin.

Today, God calls you His beloved child, for in Baptism your sins have been washed away and God says to you that your sins are forgiven for the sake of Jesus. In and through Jesus you are God's child, in whom He is well pleased. In this Meal called the Lord's Supper Jesus comes to forgive you your sins and to strengthen your faith. Jesus says so in His Word, which is His SURE AND CERTAIN WORD. And that SURE AND CERTAIN WORD promises that even as Jesus was glorified in the Transfiguration, that same Jesus will come again in glory, to not only judge the living and the dead, but also to give eternal life and the joys of the new heaven and new earth that awaits all who believe in Him.

This is God's promise, His promise that can be trusted and believed, for in love He sent His Son Jesus, to live, die and rise again in glory. Jesus has done this for you, just as was promised in God's SURE AND CERTAIN WORD. And you can continue to trust in that Word, for God does not lie. For God's SURE AND CERTAIN WORD will always accomplish what He wants in your life and in the world. To His glory and honor and in Jesus' name.

Amen