

## 2 Peter 1:16-21

<sup>16</sup>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.

<sup>17</sup>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.”

<sup>18</sup>We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

<sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>since we know this above all else: No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>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.

## Eyewitnesses of His Majesty

### I.

It must have been a pretty depressing existence at times. To be sure, people often flocked to hear him. So well-known had his abilities become that once some admirers of his skill and message even dug a hole through the roof to let a paralytic down right in front of him, hoping that Jesus would take pity on their friend and heal him. The batch of close disciples of Jesus had the privilege of seeing a picnic lunch multiply into enough food to feed thousands. They witnessed when huge jugs full of water became filled with wine, instead. They were there when a night of frustratingly awful fishing became the largest catch they had ever seen when Jesus directed them to let down their nets one more time where he directed them.

Those highlights were phenomenal. They were uplifting. At such moments, the disciples had become convinced that Jesus was the Messiah everyone thought would be coming. Of course, their society had fantasized and sensationalized what that Messiah would look like and what he would do. As products of their generation they, too, were looking for a Messiah who would satisfy their own political agendas.

The sensationalized concept of Messiah perhaps contributed to the depressing moments of the disciples’ existence. It must have been depressing to witness the moments when Jesus said things that made them doubt he was going to lead their country to freedom from oppression. It would have been uncomfortable, at best, to witness the Pharisees and teachers of the law trying to trap Jesus and get him to make a mistake. Those who quickly followed Jesus in the beginning began to drift away—a trickle at first, but the floodgates opened between Palm Sunday and Good Friday, when the masses began screaming for his execution.

It was so depressing that sometimes they *themselves* thought it had all been a sad mistake. As things went from bad to worse, a little black rain cloud seemed to follow them everywhere.

### II.

As a modern follower of Jesus, do you have some degree of empathy for them? There are depressing moments as we look out at the world in which we live. Dishonesty runs rampant. There is a drug abuse epidemic, heroin and its relatives at the top of the list that destroys lives across the social spectrum. Though the younger generations have disavowed materialism to some extent, money and the experiences it can buy are still at or near the top of priorities.

But it isn’t just the sin of the outside world that brings us up short, is it? Some of it affects us more directly. In the past, racial discrimination reared its ugly head. Most of that has improved, but there are still lingering traces. More recently modern culture began rapidly embracing lifestyles that are completely at odds with what Scripture says is moral and right

for God's people. Christians have to live in this world and deal with the cultural rot that has accelerated.

The problems get even closer to home. Whole swaths of Christianity drift away from the absolute truth God lays down in his Word. Church bodies lose their way. Sometimes they begin to teach Christians that the social rot so pervasive in our culture is permissible by God's Word.

Living as a Christian gets to be complicated and challenging. Your faith is attacked. People openly mock you for being such a simpleton that you could believe the things God tells you.

It's easy to start walking around like Eeyore—hanging your head, all down in the dumps and self-pitying about your lot as a Christian.

### III.

Just like it is for modern disciples of Jesus, the twelve closest disciples and others who accompanied him on a regular basis experienced a roller coaster ride of faith.

The miracles had been spectacular to see—some of them, anyway. While Jesus just stood in a field breaking off pieces of bread and fish and handing them out to the disciples to distribute, there was clearly a discernable miracle going on. They kept coming back and he kept breaking off pieces. Sometimes when Jesus performed miracles of healing there was a theatrical element—the application of mud to the eyes, for example. But other times he just spoke a word: “get up and walk,” and the person was healed.

Other miracles had been less spectacular in nature. Water changing to wine was indeed a miracle, but there were no theatrics—not even any building music, like in some movie, to signal that something important was happening as the plot moved forward in this epic tale.

Peter writes: “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.<sup>17</sup> 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.’<sup>18</sup> We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:16-18, EHV).

The words and works of Jesus were all magnificent. Peter has no desire to take anything away from them. But there was one event that stood head and shoulders above all the others in the memory of three disciples. Peter, James, and John had gone up the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus. Every other miracle they had witnessed to that point had given a mere glimpse of the glory Jesus had as the very Son of God. Soon Jesus would begin the journey to the cross. Soon every worldly appearance would indicate that he was defeated. But that particular moment was a moment in which they got to see not just a *little* of Jesus' glory—they got to see him shining with so much glory that, as today's Gospel said: “There he was transfigured in front of them. His face was shining like the sun. His clothing became as white as the light” (Matthew 17:2, EHV).

The mockers who want us to mope around like Eeyore, or who inject doubt into our faith in what God has told us, contradict themselves. One the one hand, the Bible is nothing more than a religious myth; it is mere fantasy that the historical Jesus performed many miracles, or that he died and rose again from the dead. On the other hand, it isn't logical that God would at once be a righteous God that demands punishment for sin, and at the same time be the God who dies *himself* in order to provide the payment he, himself, demands for the sins of the people.

“To be sure, we were not following cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the powerful appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:16, EHV). What Peter and his companions saw was not what they expected. It was not logical. Their minds couldn't dream up such a plan. Only the mind of God could come up with a way to make his glory *our* glory.

#### IV.

“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” (2 Peter 1:19, EHV).

God’s Words have shown themselves to be reliable again and again. You do well to pay attention to his all-sufficient Word. That’s why Holy Trinity has maintained a school for the Christian education of young minds throughout the history of our congregation.

We teach all kinds of subjects at Holy Trinity Lutheran School, it is true. Statistics even *show* that we do a great job of that. Our students do well compared to other students in math and history and language arts and reading and all kinds of other subjects. These students you heard from in song today excel in these subjects. Their test scores are often above those of their peer group in other schools.

But we don’t run a Christian school only to give excellent instruction in worldly subjects to prepare our students for life. It is important—of *utmost* importance—for everyone to hear the great news of what Jesus has done for all people. We exist to also prepare our students for *eternal* life. We exist to show them what God has done for all people.

“No prophecy of Scripture comes about from someone’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>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” (2 Peter 1:20-21, EHV).

The most important thing any student who walks through the doors of Holy Trinity can ever know is that he or she is loved by the Lord Jesus. Jesus came for them. Jesus gave baptism as the rite by which even little children are adopted into his family of believers.

Only Peter, James, and John got to see Jesus with Moses and Elijah. Only the three of them witnessed the fact that Jesus *is* truly God and got to see all his glory on Transfiguration Day. Only a few handfuls of people saw him on Easter Sunday after he rose from the dead. Only a few hundred were privileged to see and speak with the risen Lord Jesus before he ascended into heaven again to prepare our place.

“But we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16, EHV). Peter and those who *did* see these things passed them down to us as eyewitnesses of the majesty of our Lord Jesus.

“Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31, EHV).

All that we need is in God’s book, the Bible. This is why we exist as a Christian church—to speak the message of salvation to people. This is why we operate a Christian school, that young people have the opportunity to see and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing they may have life in his name. We, like Peter, are Eyewitnesses of His Majesty.

That is certainly not depressing. That invigorates everything we do as a Christian church and school. We have the privilege of sharing the love of Jesus with precious little lambs. Amen.