

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“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” (2 Peter 1:16).

The attacks of Satan and the fallen world come upon the flock of Christ’s Church sooner or later. And this attack is as old as Eden: ***“Did God really say?”*** (Genesis 3:1) asked Satan in the form of a serpent.

False teachers under the control of Satan were disparaging the reliability of Peter. And not just Peter, but the other apostles, and even the message of the Old Testament prophets.

Thanks be to God that Peter came to realize the deadly peril of these false teachers, since they were denying the power and coming of Jesus the Christ. You see, these false teachers, these heretics, were leading people to doubt that Jesus is fully and completely God, and that Jesus works on the behalf of all people’s lives. These false teachers, these heretics, were leading people to think that Jesus was never coming back and that they were not accountable to Jesus for their beliefs and their own lives. Does this sound familiar? Remember those words of the serpent: ***“You will not surely die”*** (Genesis 3:4). But as we know, ***“the wages of sin is death”*** (Romans 6:23a).

These heretics were making up ***“cleverly devised myths”*** (2 Peter 1:16) and they believed that if they would tell these lies long enough and loudly enough, then more and more people would start to believe the lie, no matter how shocking and no matter how outrageous.

So, like the Apostle Paul, Peter knew that the foundation of all Christian doctrine was the message of the prophets and the apostles. And without that sure bedrock, the Christian faith would come crashing down.

And so, with this in mind, Peter tells of a moment in time that changed his life. Peter tells of the Transfiguration of Our Lord upon that mountaintop. After Jesus went on a retreat by Himself, six days later He ***“took with Him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a mountain by themselves”*** (Matthew 17:1). There, Jesus was transfigured before them. Jesus was glowing with the brightness of the presence of God Himself. Jesus’ face shone like the sun. And His clothes shone white; whiter than today’s Clorox could ever bleach them!

There, upon that mountaintop, surrounding the shining Messiah was a bright cloud that Peter calls the ***“Majestic Glory”*** (2 Peter 1:17).

In the Old Testament times, *“the glory of the LORD”* referred to an appearance of God in cloud and fire to mark a significant moment in His plan of salvation. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. God appeared to the people of Israel and to the Egyptian army as a pillar of cloud and fire. God appeared in a cloud at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem. Through this *“glory,”* God signaled His approval and His presence among His people.

There, upon that mountaintop, surrounding Jesus was ***“a bright cloud”*** (Matthew 17:5) and from that bright cloud, God the Father demonstrated His approval of His only-begotten Son saying: ***“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him”*** (Matthew 17:5).

Like a lawyer making his case, Peter declares: ***“We ourselves heard this very voice from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain”*** (2 Peter 1:18). In the Greek, Peter is even more forceful than the ESV. Literally, Peter is saying, ***“We, we heard the voice!”*** This *“hemeis ekousamen”* is a double-second-person plural showing further credibility as Peter emphasizes that this voice was not just heard by him, but by also James and John!

We, too, also have a problem with our old Adam, our old sinful nature, because, so often, we are not convinced by the Word of God. And Peter, too, fell into this temptation. For after hearing Jesus say that He must be crucified and rise from death, Peter rebuked Him saying, ***“Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you”*** (Matthew 16:22). And after Jesus said Peter would deny that he ever knew Him, what did Peter say? ***“Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death”*** (Matthew 22:33). But what did Peter end up doing? He denied that he ever knew Jesus and at once a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered Jesus saying to him: ***“Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times”*** (Matthew 22:61).

We, too, are prone to such temptations and such failings. Satan whispers to you: “Can you really trust the testimony of men who lived two-thousand years ago?” Others may say, “Jesus didn’t do enough for you, you must do good works to please God.” Even, others may say, “You know, God is still speaking but only through your feelings and your desires, so don’t trust those old words of the Bible.”

We each face so many temptations. And the Old Adam in all of us is often all too willing to listen and deny the eternal truth of which the Bible speaks. We do like to get credit for being a “good Christian” by doing “good works.” We would rather enjoy following those who preach “cleverly devised myths” rather than following the Word of the prophets and the apostles. And when those moments come: repent! Repent and ask Jesus for your forgiveness.

Now, Peter was not just an eyewitness. He was also an earwitness. He saw the “*Majestic Glory,*” but he also heard the voice of God the Father.

There were three times in Christ’s earthly ministry where God the Father boomed His voice over His only-begotten Son. First, at His Baptism in the Jordan, where John the Baptist anointed Jesus for His work of salvation. Second, upon the Mount of Transfiguration to the delight of three terrified men and two great prophets: Moses and Elijah. And third, during Holy Week, when God the Father confirmed that Christ’s work was indeed bringing Him glory.

Each time God the Father’s voice was boomed, He forcefully proclaimed His love, His approval, and His pleasure in His only-begotten Son for His determination to go to the cross for sinful mankind.

This plan of salvation was not a “*cleverly devised myth*” of man, but this plan was the will of God from eternity. This plan called for sacrificial blood to be spilled. This plan called for a perfect sacrifice: a sacrifice without sin, stain, or blemish. This blood of the Son of God would become a light to the world, glowing from the very face of Jesus upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

This plan of salvation is the will of God the Father and Jesus carries out the plan until it is finished.

For Peter, James and John who witnessed the glory of God's Son and heard the voice of God the Father, their faith would often become shaky, to put it mildly. They often heard from their Lord, "***O you of little faith.***" Yours and my faith can also get shaky at times. For we often get disappointed by the subtle, hidden way in which Christ comes: the manger, the cross, in Scripture, the absolution, and the Lord's Supper. Sometimes, we ask for more. But there He is. Jesus came in lowly form. He died a sinner's death, yet without sin. We hear His voice in His Word, in the absolution, in the Lord's Supper. And not only that, we receive Christ's very body and blood under bread and wine for the forgiveness of our sins and for the strength of our faith.

Yes, Peter was blessed to have witnessed and heard what happened that day upon that holy mountain. And He certainly never forgot that moment. And He doesn't want us to forget either. As soon as Christ, the Son of Man, was raised from the dead, Peter and the other apostles and disciples told of what Christ has done for them, for us, and for our salvation.

For us, let us never take for granted the "***Majestic Glory***" that we witness and hear at each Divine Service as we receive the fruits of Christ's cross: forgiveness of our sins, life and salvation! God's plan of salvation is finished! So let us give thanks for what the Lord has done! For His Word is sure and certain. With Peter, we too, are eyewitnesses to His Majesty! Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +