

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

The portion of Scripture before us today is found in Saint Peter's second epistle the first chapter beginning at the sixteenth verse:

***For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. <sup>17</sup> For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." <sup>18</sup> And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. <sup>19</sup> And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; <sup>20</sup> knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for prophecy never came by the will of man, but***

***holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.***

Heavenly Father, sanctify us by the truth; Your word is truth. Amen.

Dear Redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb,

Your word is truth; such a stunning concept in our modern society. Nowadays most things claiming to be the truth are shunned and treated with scorn and ridicule. You say that the Bible is the truth and people stare at you as if you had a third eye. You proclaim a truth about society and people are just waiting to jump all over you about the exceptions to that truth. You proclaim something, anything really, to be true and you get the response, "well that may be true for you, but..."

I know this is something that we have all dealt with. And it is most certainly true in our larger society. To claim a truth for all people of all time, well that is near heresy in the eyes of the world. Thus we have new ways of thinking, such as postmodernism which tells us that there

can be no truth... however, that claim itself is a truth which they don't like to talk about.

And still, in these verses that we have before us today, Peter is convinced that they are the truth and that they need to be shared with people around him... and with those who are battling against him.

Dear friends in Christ, we have a sure prophetic word, we have the truth, we have the word of God, and it is this word that we ought to share with the world. Just as Peter says, so it rings true for us, this word is a "light that shines in a dark place." This word of God is indeed a ***light that shines in darkness***.

I was once taught, that if we could get rid of all light pollution one person could light a candle and that candle could be seen from nearly 20 miles away if it were high enough in the air. And while I am still undecided as to if I completely believe it or not, I wonder if there is not a broader application to that point.

Let's consider ourselves... we are sinners. There is nothing good within us as we are in our natural state. In fact, of ourselves we are convinced and assured that there is nothing wrong with us. As Luther notes, "So great is the corruption and blindness of human nature that it does not see or sense the greatness of sin. To be sure, all men naturally have a certain knowledge of the Law; but it is very weak and obscured. Therefore it was and is always necessary to hand down to men the knowledge of Law, that they may know the greatness of their sin, the wrath of God, etc."

And this thought comes across in the world today, the notion that "I am not that bad." We have become a society that teaches, instead of sin, that each person has foibles and mishaps... but it is not inborn sin. Your addiction to alcohol is not sin, it is a disease. Your constant cheating on your spouse is not sin, it is because monogamy is unrealistic. Your stealing is not sin, it is because you didn't have a lot growing up and now you want retribution for that. Instead of calling a sin a sin, we now try to turn

the attention to something else... something outside of us.

So we take the darkness, the sin, that exists in us and we turn it into something that is not our fault. It's not my fault that I cheat; it's not my fault that I drink to excess; it's not my fault that I steal... But it is. It is indeed your fault when things like this happen. It happened to Noah, who got drunk and was rebuked for it. It happened to David who cheated on his spouses and lost a child for it. It happened to Ahab who stole a vineyard and it was further reason for him to spend his eternity in hell. Sin is sin... sin is darkness. And so often we like to cloud darkness with pollution.

But if we were to examine ourselves and take away everything else but what the Bible tells us, we see that we are sinners, we see that we are not perfect, we see that we have faults. We see that there is indeed darkness inside of each and every one of us, and it is not a pretty thing.

But our hope lies in the fact that there is light. There is a light that can shine in the darkness

that is our sinful human nature and that light is Jesus Christ.

Our verses today tell us about the time that Peter, James, and John went with Jesus up a mountain and experienced something that could only be described as "awesome." They experienced Jesus Christ in His glory. As the gospel writer says (Matthew 17:2), "His *clothes shone like the sun, and His clothes* became as white as the light." When Jesus was transfigured, when He was changed before their very eyes all they could do was look away. Their Lord, whom they had followed for months was now changed and they had to look away because they could not behold Him in His glorified state, because He shone so brightly.

And this same Jesus shines for us too. He shone in the world when He was born and the angels came and sang about His birth on Christmas day. During the season of Epiphany, we celebrate the season of lights... the season of the miracles of Jesus. He shone in the world when He lived a perfect life and on two separate occasions God allowed the people to

hear His voice when He commanded the people to listen to Jesus. He shone in the world when He was beaten and mocked, and would not return even an insult. He shone in the world when He was hung on the cross, for all the world to see the result of their sin. He shone when He rose three days later to proclaim that He had won the victory and that satan, hell, and death were now defeated. Jesus shone in the world... and through faith, He shines inside of each and every one of us. And this is why the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany finish with the transfiguration... the ultimate showing of Christ to those around Him... the showing of who He truly is.

Through faith in all that Jesus Christ has done, Jesus will shine in us... He will be a light that shines in the darkness. And along with Jesus, so too will God's word shine in our hearts, until the morning star rises... God's word will shine in our hearts until the morning star rises and we are finally in heaven. Then, instead of Him being in our hearts, we will be in His presence for all of eternity... and this will happen when we have faith in all that Jesus Christ has done

for us, when we believe that God's Word is true.

As Peter is telling us and his readers in his letter, the word of God is true and sure. It is not some story that Peter heard and is now telling again for the fiftieth time, Peter was there and he wants to assure people of this fact. He tells them that He has experienced the transfiguration and he wants them to know that he is not like the other teachers who did not.

And this is very fitting for us today also, instead of some random person who does not believe in God's Word... it is only right that you have before you two people who have put their trust and faith in every word that God has written, every word that provides us with the truth as to who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us. We believe God's Word because it is God's Word... it is not some fairytale, it is not made-up, it is not a myth or fable... this is God's Word and within its pages are found the truth that will provide you with everlasting life, the truth that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for you to redeem you from all of your sins.

Just as Saint John wrote in his gospel (20:31), “these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Dear friends in Christ, today on this Transfiguration Sunday we come together not only to celebrate the Transfiguration of Christ, but also to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our little group known as Messiah Evangelical Lutheran Church. Twenty years is a long time that God has continued to bless us, but He did not do so because we are perfect, nor did He do so because we deserved it, nor did He do so because He owed us something... God has blessed us because we have remained faithful to Him.

Just like faithful Job, we have had many trials and hardships over the twenty years, and yet God has seen us through them all. God has been with His faithful children for these twenty years and He will continue to be us so long as we rely on Him and His word to guide us, His Son as our only redeemer, and His Holy Spirit

to continue to enliven our hearts to love of Him and of our neighbors.

Twenty years... and yet, in talking with members, it seems like yesterday... And I bet that is how Peter felt. This letter being written after the event of the transfiguration and after Jesus’ death, Peter had time to look back and recall the event, and to him it must have seemed like yesterday.

May God continue to bless all of us as we continue to rely on His Word, His sure prophetic word, which proclaims His Son Jesus Christ crucified for all of our sins and raised to life for our justification.

Thank God that He has given us twenty years of fellowship and love with one another. Thank God that He has given us His word which was here before us and will be here after us. And thank God that His Son, the Word, is the light that shines in the darkness.

Thanks be to God. Amen.