

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:16-21)

See Him. Hear Him.

It had been a rough couple of days, I’m sure. Jesus dropped the bomb on them that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things, to be killed, and then be raised to life on the third day. It seems that Peter must have only heard the first couple of things, the suffering and dying. Which, to a point, you can understand. If someone you care about tells you they are going to suffer and die, what they say after tends to be lost. But when Peter valiantly determines that he must stop such a travesty, Jesus tells him: “Get behind me, Satan!” Like the devil himself, Peter was trying to stop Jesus from saving you. Jesus knew what must be done. Before the glory must come the cross. Before victory, there would be suffering and death.

But before that Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. Up and up they go when all of a sudden Jesus is transfigured before them. His face shines like the bright radiant sun. His clothes become white as light. It must have been next to impossible to peer through and see! But see Jesus and a glimpse of his glory they did. Then they see Moses, the great leader of Israel and giver of God’s Law. He’s alive talking with Jesus! With him is Elijah, the great prophet, mouthpiece of God bringing God’s message to God’s people. He too is alive! Peter doesn’t know what to do or say; still, he says something. The fact was he knew he didn’t want to leave this place. It was good for them to be there. Of course, he would want to stay with Jesus where his bright light pushes out the darkness of the world and dark future away.

Then a bright cloud surrounds them and he hears it—the voice, the words. It finally dawns on them what they are seeing, who they are hearing, and whose presence they are standing. They fall to the ground terrified in the glory of God.

Peter remembers it. He was an eyewitness. He saw him. He heard him. And now he writes to this group of Christians again so that they might remember these things too. Peter realizes that his time on this earth is ending. He also knows the attacks these Christians face. There already had been and would continue to be many who would come with their own voices, calling into question Peter's teaching, claiming they had higher/better knowledge, laughing at the idea that Christ was coming again soon—or ever, for that matter. Because where was Jesus? Not back, that's for sure. This group of Christians already facing persecution and suffering from the outside would endure battles from false teachers coming from the inside. They would hear a lot of different voices, utterances, claims thrown out there of who is right and who is not. Who are you supposed to believe?

So little has really changed, hasn't it? Who are you supposed to listen to? Who are we supposed to believe? Who can you trust? Who has it right? Who's your source? Are they credible? How can you be sure? One side says one thing. Another says the exact opposite. Both sides have experts who back up what they say and how the other is terribly wrong!

We hear so many voices and utterances attack what you believe. Where is this God and glorious Jesus we speak of? Earthquakes that take so many lives while destroying so many more. Another shooting on another college campus with more questions of why not being answered. Miscarriages of babies. Babies diagnosed with cancer. For many they feel they have enough reasons to refuse to believe any words coming from God.

Then there are more utterances and other voices. These ones tend to be more subtle and, therefore, more dangerous than outright attacking your faith. It's the voice that simply doesn't care. It's the voice that says these words of God are important to you, but so are all of these things too. So, God's Word is placed on the same level or slightly lower than your life experiences, your personal comforts, and your relationships too. That's what we hear and see when study of God's Word is for when nothing else is planned or it's not the "right day." That's what we see when we talk about these things only with certain people. That's what we hear when we let petty grudges, grievances, and personal frustrations get in the way of being with it.

And if we aren't caught up with those, we hear the voices and utterances coming from ourselves. We put more trust in what I see rather than one who sees all things. I love to listen to myself, what I think, and how I feel. And if you want, you can find someone who is going to back you up and tell you that you are right.

Do we forget whose Word the Bible is? Of course, you know the right answer. This is God's Word. So, think about that for a moment. The same voice that spoke

and created the universe, spoke to have his words on a page for you. The same voice that spoke and brought back to life a dead girl and dead friend, speaks from the pages of the Bible. This is not my opinion or another human's personal ideas. These are words from the lips of the Almighty God! These aren't just some neat stories to teach some good truths as if this was just another run-of-the-mill self-help book. These are eyewitness accounts, stories of real events. As Peter said, he was there! He saw the glory. He heard the voice. And what happens? They fall in fear. They can't stand in the presence of the glory of God!

How easily I ignore it and quickly we can forget that as we pass through those doors and sit in these pews. You are sitting in the presence of God as he speaks to you! How quickly I forget this or ignore it as I let my mind wander while I study it or convince myself I can skip it today because I need to get to the other important stuff on my to-do list. How shameful that I hear his Word and so easily ignore how he calls me to live simply because I don't want to. How shameful that it can be a personal struggle to sit in God's house, set aside the work of last week and the stuff that needs your attention today, to be with God's people where God comes to us. Don't take God's lack of action against you as a sign that you have fooled him or he doesn't care. You can fool others. You can lie to yourself. God will not be mocked.

At the same time, Jesus does not bring us up on to this holy mountain to frighten us into submission. Instead, he reaches out as he did with his disciples, touches you and says, do not fear. Yes, he would come down from that mountain. He would once again set aside that glory for a while because this is why he came into this world: to suffer and to die and on the third day be raised to life again. Here, on this mountain, he gives us a glimpse: this is what waits. Yes, there would be brutal suffering. Yes, there would be terrible darkness and terror. Yes, there would be blood and death. But do not be afraid. This is all for you to bring you into Jesus' glory. The end is already written. Words spoken in the Garden and passed along from one generation to the next. Words recorded not by man's own ideas or personal reasoning. As the disciples heard the utterances and voice of God speak, so the Holy Spirit gave these utterances and spoke into and through the writers God's Word. And from these written words we see the one who comes to crush Satan's head and destroy his hold over you. We hear one who is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, including yours. We see one who would be lifted up to die for your sins and mine and all who looked on him in faith will be saved. As he hangs between heaven and earth bearing God's wrath and hatred for sin, he protects you and brings you peace with God. He brings you out into God's glorious presence without stain of sin or blemish of failures. We see God's Holy One who would not rot in the grave but is raised to life again. For he is God of the

Living, not the dead! In his glory on that mountain, he gives us a glimpse of what waits after his death. In his glory he gives us a glimpse of what waits for us too. On the Last Day when Jesus who is the Morning Star appears, he will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body, the perishable clothed with the imperishable, the mortal with immortality. The last enemy death will be defeated and we will be with the Lord forever never having to leave his glory.

Ah, but how can you be sure? We have eye witness accounts from people who saw it with their eyes and heard it with their ears. And if that is not enough, we have this sure, reliable prophetic word. These aren't cleverly made-up stories. This came from God as he spoke through his mouthpieces for his people. It is sure and reliable because your God is faithful. He does not lie or deceive. It is your light in this dark world. What grace it is that he does not thunder at us from the heavens. It would drive us running and scared. Instead, he speaks through the gentle whispers of the bible, through preaching and teaching. He reaches out and physically touches you in water and word. Do not be afraid, you are God's baptized child. Do not be afraid, touch, taste, smell and see this body and blood is given and poured out for you. Do not be afraid, your sins are forgiven. For Jesus' sake who lived, died, and rose for you, the Father is pleased with you.

It would have been so cool to see Jesus' glory on that mountain. But we weren't. But one day we will not with eyes of faith but clearly. We haven't heard the voice speak from the cloud of glory as it surrounds us. One day you will hear his voice with your own ears say, "Come and enjoy your father's happiness and the kingdom prepared for you." Right now, in this dark world it is so hard to see his glory. One day we will not need the light of the sun because we will have the light of Jesus. Until then, he gives us a taste, a hint. We see it there in baptismal waters that bring us into God's presence. We taste it there in the Lord's Supper and see Jesus' glory as he gives us his body and blood in the bread and wine. We hear it here as Jesus assures you, "Do not be afraid. Your sins are forgiven. I am with you always." Listen to him. Amen.