

Sunday Sermon February 26, 2017

Sermon Text: 2 Peter 1: 16-21

Sermon Theme: **This is the truth that leads to heaven.**

<sup>16</sup> *We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming 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 the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* <sup>18</sup> *We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.*

<sup>19</sup> *And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, 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.* <sup>20</sup> *Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation.* <sup>21</sup> *For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

When I follow-up with a visitor or a guest, I will usually ask them what they noticed about our congregation or our worship. One of the things that I often hear is, "You have a lot of Scripture in your service." When people say this, I don't always know if they mean that in a good way or a bad way.

If people walk into church and are looking for the Scriptures, a Bible-based, Law/Gospel message which is included in the liturgy, hymns and service, this can be a great thing to notice. If they are looking for a church that not only says it focuses on God's Word but actually does that in worship and Bible Study, it's a great thing to say.

On the other hand, some people aren't looking for Scripture in when they come to worship. They are looking for something else: a style, a sound, a hook that will draw them into worship and keep them there. If they are looking for these things and they don't find them here, having a service that focuses so much on Scripture may not be a good thing to them.

Don't get me wrong, every church has a style and a sound of its own. Every pastor would love to have a church that is blessed with tremendous talent and the resources to have all types and varieties of worship to bring God's Word to people. Every Pastor wants people to find excellent music and worship that draws them in and engages them in the Word. But if we are building our worship on these things and not on the Word, we have lost the main focus of worship. When we strip worship down to its core, worship of our God is not about music, style, production value, or special hooks, worship is about our Savior, Jesus and that worship must be centered on the truth of Scripture.

When worship centers on the Law/Gospel message of Scripture, we may not hear the messages that we always want to hear, we may always have the style and the music we prefer, but we will hear the truth which we need which leads us to heaven. This morning we hear Peter point out that Jesus is the truth which leads to heaven. He points out that this truth is witnessed to by God the Father, the apostles and the prophets and it is the truth that we witness to as well.

We know the basics of a courtroom and what happens there with the defense and the prosecution, the lawyers, the judge and the jury. We also know that it is the evidence that the witnesses provide that will lead to an acquittal or prosecution.

Things were set up a bit differently in a Jewish court. There was a judge, but there weren't lawyers, or forensic experts. The Jewish courts relied on two things, the accused and the accuser. The accuser would come with a charge against someone, but that charge was only valid if the truth of the charge was corroborated or established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he did not have witnesses, the charge would be thrown out.

If the accused wanted to defend himself, he too, would have to do so based upon the word of his witnesses.

The truth of the charge and the defense lay in the testimony of the witnesses.

In our reading, Peter is painting this picture of that courtroom and the people he is preaching to are the judges. He has taught the people the truth of Jesus, the Savior. But, now he is asking them to listen to the witnesses to see if what he is saying is the truth about Jesus. **We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming 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 the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

The greatest witness Peter brings to establish and defend the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, is God the Father. God the Father spoke from heaven twice in the New Testament. He spoke once at Jesus’ baptism, the beginning of his earthly ministry and the second time, at the Mt. of Transfiguration, marking Jesus’ ministry coming to a close. Both time when he spoke, God the Father spoke about the mission and ministry of Jesus and the importance of what he was here to do. He said, “**This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well-pleased.**”

God the Father gave witness that Jesus was his Son and the Messiah, just as he said he was. God the Father gave witness that the work that Jesus was doing to save us was good and pleasing to him because **[God] wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.**” That truth of salvation which lay in Jesus.

The next witness Peter calls is the other apostles and disciples. <sup>18</sup> **We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.** Imagine all the things that the disciples and the apostles saw and heard. A mere fraction of all the things that Jesus said and did are recorded for us in the Scriptures. But they were witnesses of all of the things that Jesus did. They could testify that Jesus could do things that only God could do. They could speak of his miracles. They heard him teach and explain the Scriptures as no one else could do and witness to his knowledge which went beyond that of a man. They could witness to the cross and his suffering and death which was prophesied of old. They could witness to his resurrection. They saw him not just once or twice after his resurrection, but many times. All that they saw pointed out the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and the Savior. They could witness to that truth.

Peter also points out that very special blessing that he, James and John were able to see and then witness to. They saw and heard Jesus, Moses and Elijah speaking about the plan of salvation and what must happen to fulfill that plan to save all people. After Jesus resurrection, imagine the powerful witness these three men had, in explaining first to their own friends and fellow followers of Jesus, but then to many people, that all these things took place to fulfill God’s plan to take away our sins.

Peter calls another witness, the prophets who prophesied long before Jesus came to earth. Their testimony, through the Holy Spirit, establishes and defends the truth that Jesus is the Savior. <sup>19</sup> **And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, 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.** <sup>20</sup> **Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.** <sup>21</sup> **For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.**

It’s one thing when someone makes a bunch of vague predictions come true over the course of a year, or even a few years. It doesn’t take a crystal ball to see when a person is making good or bad choices in their life. It doesn’t take a mystic to see when a country is headed for a recession or an economic boom. But to list the actual specifics of what will happen in a person’s life or what specific things will make the country rise or fall 500 or 1000 years from now, that doesn’t happen.

Yet, as we look at the pages of Scripture we see that even the Old Testament bears witness to the life of Jesus, the miracles of Jesus, his suffering and death, his resurrection and the Word going out into all the world. Matthew lists approximately 70 specific prophecies, written years before Jesus ever walked the earth which he fulfilled. How can that be?

Peter explains that these Old Testament witnesses were not men who were good at making predictions. These men bore witness as the Holy Spirit gave them the words and the thoughts to write on the page. On the pages of the Old Testament we see God the Holy Spirit, witnessing of Jesus, the Messiah and Savior.

The Scriptures are the center of our worship because God has provided them for us to show us the way to heaven. As Peter says, these are not cleverly invented stories. The Scriptures are given to us directly from God. The Holy Spirit guided the men as they wrote, so that we would be sure that what we find in the Bible is God’s absolute truth. And this truth shows us Jesus is the only way to heaven.

Peter is speaking to the people as if they are judges, he is establishing for them the truth of Christ, even defending it to them that they might hear and believe. Does Peter need to defend the truth of Christ to us? Yes,

he does. Maybe we don't really want the Scriptures to be our truth. Maybe we want something else from worship and don't think that the truth of Scripture needs to be so important.

Our sinful nature does not always believe in the truth that Scripture offers. It doesn't always want to follow what it says. Our sinful nature wants there to be many different truths and many different paths to heaven. Our sinful nature can and does get in the way of true worship which focuses on God's truth. We want something else in worship, we are too busy, too tired, too bored with worshipping the way we worship. Our sinful nature wants worship to be more about what I like and what I want to hear, than about the truth of our sins and need for a Savior.

Yet, as we hear the Word, as our worship focuses on the Law and Gospel, as it should, the Holy Spirit works faith inside of us and through the eyes of faith we too are witnesses of all that Jesus has done for us. We are witnesses of the forgiveness that Jesus gives to us. We are witnesses of the salvation that is ours even now. The Holy Spirit convinces us that this message of Christ is the truth of God that leads to heaven.

What do you notice about our congregation or our worship? You will not offend me, if you say that our service has lots of Scripture in it. This is the truth of Jesus which leads to heaven. What else should our worship be focused on?