
¹⁶For 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. ¹⁷He received honour 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.” ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with Him on the sacred mountain. ¹⁹We 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. 2 Peter 1:16-19 (NIV)

Have you ever been ‘sacred of the dark’? You may know someone who is like, or you may indeed be like this yourself?

The theme of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ is a common theme for us in life. Sometimes we may say we feel like we are being ‘kept in the dark’. At other times we may speak of a feeling of ‘darkness’ over our lives (be it from something like having to deal with difficult circumstances, or how we feel about terrible events that occur, or maybe something like depression or anxiety, or having to deal with a difficult relationship or the like – and not being sure exactly what to do)....

‘Light’ and ‘darkness’... these are important to us... Even for people who experience issues in relation to ‘sight’, ‘light’ is still important... Without the ‘heat’ and ‘light’ that we draw from the sun, there would be no life on this earth.. This light sustains us in our life on this earth...

There are times in our lives when terrible things can happen, and these have a profound effect on a person’s life. And sometimes they may do radical things to ‘try to forget’ (alcohol; alternative lifestyles, etc). At other times memories are ‘repressed’, but there is an ‘edge’ (or even some sort of ‘borderline personality disorder’). One person has done terrible things and it seems hard to ‘let go’. And this may lead to feeling like you are ‘disfigured on the inside’.

Today we are celebrating the ‘transfiguration’ of Jesus’. Not every Christian Church remembers the transfiguration on the last Sunday in Epiphany. Some remember this on the Second Weekend in Lent. The Transfiguration is important in the Gospels, because after this Jesus has a greater focus on the cross.

What Jesus did on the cross is important to us. And in our Reading for today (2 Peter 1:16-23) we are reminded of the shining light of what Jesus has done for us. The Apostle Peter says, “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.” In response to other religions with fantastic stories of ‘gods’ who walked the earth (Zeus, Apollo, etc), or the

Gnostic teachers who taught that it was what one 'felt' or 'knew' in their mind and heart that made for 'real religion', Peter speaks of Jesus whom he and others had seen. They had seen Jesus. Jesus is a real person.

Peter also attests to Jesus' 'divine nature' when he says, "He received honour 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'."

Peter and James and John had seen this great light. Now the thing to remember is that, at the time, they did not understand what this meant. Peter said something about building tents (Matt.17:4). And Jesus had to tell them to "Get up and don't be afraid" (Matt.17.7). Jesus then said, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead" (Matt.17:9).

One can imagine Peter, James, and John wanting to tell the other disciples about what they had seen. But one can also imagine that these disciples may feel like they had 'missed out' on this 'glorious experience' (like we sometimes can feel more envious of other people's experiences). Or others may have thought them mad. Only after Jesus' rising from the dead does this 'transfiguration' make sense.

And then Peter says, "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". In Jesus' time the 'morning star' could well have been Venus (or Mercury, or the star 'Sirius') which appear in the east before sunrise (as though heralding the coming of the morning). And Peter says, "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it." To people who had experienced persecution for their faith, as well as false teachers who promoted living according to one's sexual desires, Peter urged people to return to God's Word of Jesus.

Sometime ago I read of the golfer Jack Nicklaus, one of the greatest golfers of all time. When asked he kept on top for so long he said that at the end of every season he would go back to his first coach who taught him the basics of the game all over again. It is easy to become distracted in this life by many other things: work; family; sport; hobbies; and so many other things. All these things, in and of themselves, are good (and are gifts from God). But none of these things say, "Your sins are forgiven". None of these things say, "I give you eternal life." None of these things.... really... will give us true 'peace' for 'life'. Jesus is the 'living Word'. At His transfiguration our heavenly Father said, "This is My Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased: **listen to Him.**" Life is transformed when we rely on God's Word, and the 'things of this earth' grow strangely dim 'in the light of His glory and grace. God's Word changes us... Jesus changes us... And this is incredibly 'good news'.

Very often when we think of a 'transformed life' we think of God dealing with our hurts and the pains of life. We think of 'glory' and 'noting going wrong'. But the 'deeper healing' that we need is the transformation of our 'human nature'. Very often we like to think of ourselves as 'good people' (and, by contrast, that there other people who are 'bad people'). On the whole, humanly speaking, most people are 'good people'. Most people want to 'do the right thing'. But the real 'test' for us comes not when 'things are going good', but when 'things are going bad'.

How do you respond when 'things go wrong'? Do you get upset and angry? Or do you 'take time out' and 'ascend the mountain' (that is, seek God's presence) to pray? God's Word speaks of our 'nature' as humans as 'sinful'. But God has brought about an incredible 'transformation' through Jesus. And we don't need to 'transform' our lives to get to know Jesus... As you know Jesus life is 'transformed'. God can transform the most sin-stained soul into a masterpiece of grace...

As we rejoice, then, in the light Jesus brings us to life, we are called to walk in the light that the world may know. This, however, doesn't mean we have to go around shouting 'Hallelujah' and "Praise the Lord" wherever we go. Peter spoke of his wonderful mountaintop experience, but he then encouraged people to focus on God's Word.

Sometimes we may feel frustrated when people we know and love do not seem to be responding to God's Word, and so we say things like, "You must go to church... you should pray...": and so on... We intend to encourage in the faith, but often our words can come across as 'criticism' and "You should change the way you live". However, instead of using words like 'must' or 'should', maybe it is better to speak of how Jesus has changed you. Eg: "Jesus has said 'Come to Me all you who are weary, and I will give you rest', and in my battles with.... (whatever) I have found Jesus gives rest to my soul." Or, "Jesus has said through John 'Perfect love casts out all fear.' I've had some difficult circumstances to deal with, but Jesus has given me true peace within."

Know the Word. Acknowledge your sin. And speak of the transformation that Jesus has brought into your life...

And so, as we step into this most solemn season of Lent (as we contemplate Christ's journey to the cross, where He joyfully suffered for us [Heb.12:2]), we reflect on the incredible transformation Jesus has brought to life.

Sometimes we can feel a 'darkness' over our lives, or a 'shadow on our souls'. However, I like what one person has said: "Never fear the shadows. They simply mean there's a light shining nearby".

Sometimes people can feel a great 'shadow' over their life. And deep within there is the light of the knowledge of God's Word. We may fight this light because God calls us to change our ways (and, God-forbid!, we may even extinguish it). But even the smallest light candle can bring light to the darkest

room. The Apostle Peter says, “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”. Living by faith in Jesus is not ‘taking a leap into the dark’ but a ‘step into the light’.

What an incredible transformation of life we have in Jesus! Jesus said, immediately after His Transfiguration, “Don’t tell anyone about this until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” Jesus wasn’t thinking about ‘glory’ in terms of displaying ‘power’ as we often think of it; He was thinking about going the way of the cross for you and me. As we rejoice in this life – as also we deal with our sin, failure, sufferings, and fears – let us ‘Listen to Him’ and rejoice in His transforming love.