



Do you remember where you were when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor? When WWII ended? When President Kennedy was assassinated? When 9/11 happened? Each one of us have had experiences that *anchor* our lives, *shape* our values, and *define* our commitments. However, it's frustrating when the telling of these experiences does not seem to influence the behavior of others, as if our stories could have the same impact as the experiences themselves.

Are they just stories? Have we made them bigger than they really are? Some people say the Bible is just myth and story. **I believe it's the truth! And it's that belief that anchors my life, shapes my values and defines my commitments.**

### **Read 2 Peter 1:16-21**

The historical truth of Jesus Christ is widely evident throughout Scripture. There were prophetic 'Old Testament' voices who *spoke from God* about a Messiah coming. There were 'New Testament' eyewitnesses who saw and heard Jesus' ministry on earth.

The story of the Transfiguration is in the Gospel texts of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Matthew's gospel, in telling this story says, "There he was transfigured

before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light...”

The transfiguration of Jesus *anchors* Peter’s life. This experience *frames his understanding* of the “prophetic message.” Peter gets personal here. The truth, which he knows – he shares – to help us grow spiritually. This is how, we, as pastors, come before you and proclaim God’s word. It’s personal for us, too. We desire to share the truth for your well-being and spiritual growth.

Something spectacular happened up on the sacred mountain; something so extraordinary that it hardly seems true. God *spoke* to them directly on the mountain, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” Could it be true? People have questioned and doubted that Jesus was transfigured.

**Our faith rests upon this belief. Peter, who once denied Jesus three times, this time, tells us, “Don’t doubt. This is the truth. I saw it! I heard it!”**

What have you seen or heard in your life that was so wondrously glorious, so spectacular, and so unbelievable that it gave you a glimpse of the glory of God?

I have looked up at the sky and clouds all my life. I wondered what does heaven look like. How would I feel in heaven? We’ve looked up into the dark, nighttime sky, full of luminous stars, constellations and galaxies so, so far away. We look and we wonder about our creation, the creator -- how this all came about.

## **What's the truth? What do we believe?**

The first time you hold a newborn child in your own hands you can't speak. Tears roll down your cheeks -- you feel in awe -- you see a new creation and wonder about miracles.

Perhaps you have experienced a time when you were alone or with others, that something different was happening to you, speaking to you, nudging you and the words to describe it exactly are hard for others to believe. You're absolutely sure this is what happened but it's inexplicable to others. No one believes you!

I have heard choral music that so moved me I closed my eyes and envisioned that I was in heaven and this is how it must sound when the choir of angels receives us.

How do we come back to reality from these types of experiences? The Israelites spent 40 years in the wilderness, complaining against the same God who had liberated them from slavery. Did their complaining keep them from seeing God's glory? Jesus' disciples end up facing the reality of his crucifixion with "little faith." Were the disciples unaware God was in their midst? Oh they of little faith, who did not see or hear God's glory in Jesus.

The reality of our world is busy and chaotic, harsh and unloving, voices clamoring for understanding -- **Hear me! See me!** These words today from Peter bring hope into a dark place. Christ is transfigured in God's glory, in the midst of

human history in a fragile and chaotic world. Peter's faith is grounded in the truth of Jesus' transfiguration. Peter wants the Christian faithful to have the same authentic and secure faith knowing that the superficial world swirls around us.

Peter knew the reality of the world surrounding Jesus. He was an eyewitness! He saw the glory of Christ -- he heard the voice of God proclaim Jesus as his beloved Son. Nothing could be truer than what he saw and heard.

For us to behold the glory of God in Jesus Christ, requires, above all, the kind of understanding that we call **faith; a faith** made possible only through Christ's death and resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. **In faith,** Christians see that the human being Jesus is not merely human. Jesus is God incarnate.

Peter reminds us that the prophets were *speaking from God*. They were not empty words to get our attention. Peter defends the prophets, "We did not follow cleverly devised stories...the prophetic message is completely reliable...and we should pay attention to it."

Someone, long ago, spoke to you and you learned. Someone showed you how to do something and you learned to do it that way. Someone was instrumental in your life; how you live, move and have your being. We're more likely to call that person a teacher, a mother or father, or someone else, but not a prophet.

The prophets kept *speaking* to the people of Israel, teaching about God, and they still *speak* to us. Their prophecy reflected God's purposes, not human cleverness. Peter states that it wasn't the prophet's own interpretation of things. "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."

When we get that glimpse of Jesus' glory, we see or hear what it will be like when Christ returns. This is the divine nature of the one who will come and save the world. The Christian faith is not simply faith in Christ who lived, died, and rose for us at one time, but faith in that same Christ who is still to come.

What does that mean for us? It means we're not done growing spiritually or morally. As Christians, we are constantly being transformed into Christ's future glory. The divine nature and glory is always future driven, as it were, and the vision of God is a vision of God's future for us in Christ. Our faith is inherently unfinished.

None of us gets to go up the sacred mountain like Peter, James and John. **But, what if, somewhere, somehow, you and I witnessed the glory of God in our lives, even if for only a moment.** Yes, reality pulls us back to the worldly. Unfortunately, we don't dwell with the divine long enough to experience its power and glory. I believe God has been in all our life experiences. Sometimes we catch the Spirit. Most times, we miss it.

I was a hospital chaplain in St. Louis. I had graduated from seminary and this was my first few days in ministry. I was called to a patient's room to pray over a man who was dying. This was my very first call to a patient's room. They had just removed his life support. He looked uncomfortable. When I arrived, the family was in two factions fighting about something. They had separated into different sides of the room. I was in the middle. The nurse said to me, "We don't know how long he will live."

I asked the family members to gather around the bed with me. They were hesitant to do so, but finally they came around me. I stood at the foot of the bed and began to pray for this man. I have no idea what I said that day. Whatever was said was surely the work of God. All I know is that when the prayer ended, we looked up at the man and he had died.

**His face was in total peace.** I was stunned. The family was shocked. I backed out of the room and thanked God for showing me his glory and his grace.

Family members slowly came out of the man's room and thanked me. I kept saying, "It was God who was here." However, I was there that morning too. I saw what happened and I can attribute it to none other than God's glory and grace shone like a light in a darkened room.

**I was an eyewitness to God's glory! I glimpsed God at work!**

**I glimpse God at work all the time. God is here – working with us – encouraging, guiding, and loving us with his strength and power and grace.**

We live in a world where eyewitness accounts are still important. Let's be eyewitnesses to God's glory right here! Let's "be attentive...as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until...the morning star rises in our hearts."

In the transfiguration of Jesus, God shows us that his Beloved Son, holds the future for us. Jesus is the answer to our future life as a community of faith. Amen.