

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

The Epiphany Season is coming to a close this week.

Five weeks ago we celebrated the Epiphany of our Lord as the child Jesus was revealed to the Magi as the long-expected Savior, their God in human flesh.

Throughout these last few weeks, again and again, the man Jesus has been revealed as true God through His perfect obedience and miracles.

On this day that we meditate on the Transfiguration of our Lord, that same reality is revealed.

As Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah, His divine nature shown through His human nature.

There Jesus stood with those prophets and **spoke of His exodus**<sup>(Luke9:31)</sup>, His departure, His death.

As one who frequently reacted quickly with words, Peter asked if they should build 3 tents

so that the world could come and see Jesus in this divine glory along with Moses and Elijah.

But God the Father revealed something even more to Peter as He interrupted Peter's suggestion.

The Father didn't say, "Behold Him. Look at Him," He said, "**Listen to Him.**"

As intense and exhilarating as this whole experience was for Peter, he struggled with those words.

Jesus told Peter along with James and John, not to tell others about what they saw

**until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.**<sup>Matthew17:9</sup>

There Jesus revealed to Peter that He would not only die, but would also rise from the dead.

But that revelation only confused Peter. He didn't understand it.

It didn't match what he thought the Scriptures meant.

Even through the whole of Jesus suffering and death and on into His resurrection,

Peter did not understand. Though it had been revealed to him, he still had to learn.

Our text for meditation today was not written by the young non-understanding Peter.

It was written by the mature Apostle Peter who now more fully appreciated the revelation that he had been privileged to see that morning on the mountain.

He now understood the value of not just the vision, but also the sacred Scriptures.

While he and only two others saw the transfiguration,

all Christians have had the revelation of what the scene revealed.

And just as the Father spoke to St. Peter saying, **Listen to Him,**

so St. Peter speaks to all Christendom saying,

**You do well to pay attention to [the prophetic word.]**

So let us know listen to that prophetic word from St. Peter's pen...*We read as follows in Jesus' name:*

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For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with Him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.<sup>(ESV)</sup>

St. Peter had a great experience, one that you can tell he still remembered very clearly, and fondly...

But did you notice why he was speaking of it?

It wasn't to boast that he was one of three people on earth who saw this.

Not to brag that he must be someone special in God's eyes to have seen it.

But simply to stand as a witness about Jesus

that Peter and the other apostles spoke of what they knew about Jesus,

not some fantastic stories they had heard about Him and wanted to repeat.

He spoke of it to give evidence that Jesus was truly God as well as man.

This was revealed not only in what he saw, but also what the Father said.

And to give the Christians confidence that what they read in Scripture is truly God's Word,  
not the fictional meanderings and stories of a few men.

Did you also notice that St. Peter didn't put this experience above Scripture?

In fact, when he said, **And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed,**

he was pointing out that his experience served to confirm what Scripture already said about Jesus.

This is the voice of an experienced apostle, an experienced Christian.

This is not what we are used to getting from the world around us.

We are so used to hearing about "fake news", stories that are told that have no source in facts.

We read newspaper articles or blog posts from supposedly reputable sources

that are billed as factual news, but are really opinion pieces mustering a few "facts" together.

Even in the sciences, where facts are supposed to be king,

we hear of people changing or removing data so that it suits their desired outcomes,

What are they hoping to accomplish? To speak their thoughts into reality?

There are certainly false teachers and hypocrites who call themselves Christians in the visible church,  
who would use and twist Scripture to manipulate people into doing their own will.

They interpret Scriptures to suit their own agenda or the itching ears of their hearers.

But this is not just a "them" problem. These issues well up in us also, just as they did for Peter.

The idea of Jesus' dying and rising didn't make sense to St. Peter,

so when Jesus spoke of it, Peter tried to rebuke Him, saying "this should never be,"

and acted on it when Jesus was being arrested, cutting off the ear of a servant to defend Jesus.

Even today, we struggle to bow completely to the truth of Scripture and treat it

as the sole source of all revealed knowledge about God and what He did/does for our salvation,  
over and sometimes even against our own feelings and experiences.

And if we are relying on our own feelings or experiences rather than on Scripture,

we can find our need to gather with fellow Christians and support the work of the Church  
mean less and less over time.

If we rely on our feelings and less on "**listen[ing] to Him,**" then when we are bored or tired  
or distracted or angry or hurt or feel unworthy or depressed...

or when we are feeling good or confident or strong... or even when we feel nothing...

then we can easily ignore our tremendous need to grow in the knowledge and grace of our Lord,  
as well as in holiness of living.

Then what has happened is that we have let what is truly holy and all-together uncommon, become common, even profane, in our own eyes.

Instead of *holding Scripture* sacred and treating it as it truly is, God's Word written by men **who were carried along by the Holy Spirit**, and *gladly hearing and learning it*, we, by our actions and feelings, *despise preaching and God's Word*.

Even as we have opportunities to speak to others about the wonder and joy of our eternal salvation in hopes that they too can share in it, we can put the emphasis on our feelings or our experiences, rather than on the factual evidences that Scriptures gives us.

We emphasize our feelings about coming to church, hoping that they can relate to such feelings, but we miss the opportunity to speak about meeting Jesus there, the same Jesus who was born in Bethlehem, *suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried* 2,000 years ago.

Who has *risen from the dead, ascended into heaven and is sitting at the right hand of God*.

How often do you try to avoid speaking about your need for forgiveness... and theirs, while still trying to explain the relief and comfort you get... which comes from having your sins forgiven.

Consider how weak a testimony it is to say something like: "I feel Jesus' presence with me..." rather than saying, Jesus promised He would be with me always. <sup>Matthew 28:20</sup>

Consider how hollow that sounds to one who feels that God hates her

because of the sad/difficult things going on in her life, that she might even be bring upon herself. Her guilt weighs heavily. She has no sense of worth or worthiness. How could God love her?

She does not need to hear about how you feel. That means little to her. She doesn't feel the same. Instead, she needs to have Christ revealed to her as her Savior.

She needs to hear of how the Son of God thought of her as worth His leaving His heavenly throne to come to earth in human flesh to suffer and die for her.

She needs to hear how He makes her worthy by giving to her His perfection, His righteousness so that she can come before the Father's throne with confidence as His adopted child.

And this comes, not from our feelings or experiences, but from Scripture alone.

She and you, both, need the Jesus of the Bible.

You both need a Savior to save you from the tyranny of your feelings, so that you may grow in godly wisdom and knowledge regardless of today's emotions.

So Jesus' perfect emotional stability and the experiences of His life, suffering and death, resurrection and ascension are the one thing you trust for your eternal salvation.

Now, do not misunderstand me? Feelings and experiences have their proper place.

What a blessing they can be when they are a true reflection of spiritual truths.

But still living in this human flesh, they can also be misleading, making you feel self-confident when we should be repentant, or low when in reality, you have everything going for you because Jesus is ruling all things for your eternal good.

The proper place for your experiences and feelings is as St. Peter uses them, something to confirm what is already known from Scripture. They bow to Christ.

Then whether high or low, feeling indifferent for a time or passionate,

you live in complete confidence that the Father's beloved Son speaks to you in His Word so that you may live in peace and unity with God all the days of your life, now and forever.

Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria*