



## Transfiguration of Our Lord (A) – 2 Peter 1:16-21

Focus: *Eyewitness News*

### word of life

**“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 had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.”** 2 Peter 1:16 (NRSV)

Read 2 Peter 1:16-21

This Sunday is the celebration of the Transfiguration of our Lord. The celebration falls in the church calendar as the final Sunday in the season of the Epiphany—a season where the church reflects on the many ways God is revealed to the world. The transfiguration is the culmination of the season—a “mountaintop” experience of God’s revelation in Jesus, God’s Son, the Beloved.

1. *What are some ways God is revealed to the world? (Think of some stories you’ve heard the past few Sundays in Epiphany.)*
2. *Have you had a “mountaintop” experience in your faith life? Describe it.*

The author of Peter tells the story of the Transfiguration from the point of view of an eyewitness. The writer was present at the transfiguration and heard the heavenly voice of God. This experience is lifted up as evidence that Jesus will come again; and it speaks against those in the community of faith who deny the second coming of Christ and follow “cleverly devised myths.” (vs. 16)

Being present as an eyewitness at the transfiguration of Jesus gives the writer authority and credibility. The experience confirms and validates the prophetic message.

3. *Describe in your own words the story of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain-top.*
4. *What would that have been like to have been an eyewitness to that event?*
5. *Give some examples where the testimony of an eyewitness to an event gives credibility and validity.*

The theme of light—so prevalent in the season of Epiphany—is seen again: “You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (2 Peter 1:19b NRSV) Just as Jesus shined on the mountain of the transfiguration, so the message of the coming of Jesus shines in the darkness of those who would follow myths rather than the testimony of an eyewitness to the transfiguration. Jesus is the “morning star”—the bearer of the light (in Greek, *phosphoros*)—evidence in the Old Testament of the coming Messiah. The glory and majesty of Christ’s transfiguration—seen, experienced, and heard by eyewitnesses present at the event—confirm the prophetic message and validate the teaching of the apostles.

The issues of authority, credibility, and validity arise in the interpretation of scripture. How is the faith community to approach and understand the sacred writings? Apparently there were some who were following “cleverly devised myths” and based their faith in their own interpretation. The author of 2 Peter argues against individual interpretation in isolation; rather, the true, valid understanding of scripture arises in community inspired by God. “...no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:20b-21 NRSV)

6. *Can you give some examples of individual interpretation of scripture?*
7. *Can you give some examples of men and women moved by the Holy Spirit speaking from God?*
8. *How do you discern the difference?*

## **word among us**

“I can’t believe what you are saying. That’s not what he would have wanted!” The students of a beloved professor who had died were meeting to develop a plan to carry on the professor’s research. Many of the students were personally recruited by the teacher. Emotions were running high as the conversation went on. There was disagreement among the students about the direction the project should go.

Mark sat quietly in the back of the room. He had been the first graduate student accepted and invited to participate in the project. He had been with the professor even before the research had been proposed. Mark had witnessed and participated in the initial work necessary for the project to be approved. He knew the professor better than any other student. Mark was silent at first as the others spoke; then he began, “I’ve been here since the beginning of this project. I was an eyewitness who saw and heard the challenges faced to get this research going. My opinion, for what it’s worth, is based on my experience of working with our mentor and professor.” The other students listened quietly as Mark shared his insights on the project and the direction it should go.

1. *Do you think Mark’s words were heard differently than others’? Why or why not?*

Mark’s word carried authority because of his eyewitness experience with the professor. His experience gave direction to the others in their discussion to interpret the desired will of the professor. Together, the students discerned the direction they were to go.

The author of 2 Peter lifts up the significance of eyewitnesses in discerning the mission and direction of the community of faith. The testimony of eyewitnesses gives credibility and veracity to what is discerned. “We had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (2 Peter 1:16b NRSV) All discernment and interpretation, however, is not to be based on one’s own interpretation, but rather on the Holy Spirit’s moving among God’s people. “... no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” (2 Peter 1:20b-21 NRSV)

2. *Discuss the importance of hearing testimonies from eyewitnesses of God’s mighty daily acts.*
3. *How do we discern the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

### **Live among God’s faithful people**

Many congregations spend time in study and prayer to discern their mission. The discernment should involve the whole community of faith. We need one another as we consider our corporate and individual calling. We need the voices of those who are often not heard; we need the voices of those who have been eyewitnesses to the seminal events in the congregation’s history. We need to hear the testimony of the Holy Spirit’s movement in the lives of the faithful.

4. *What is the mission of your congregation? Do you have a mission statement?*
5. *How do you personally give testimony of the work God is doing through your congregation?*

Gracious God, we thank you for faithful eyewitnesses to your work in our lives. Grant us vision to know and do your will; through Christ our Lord. Amen

## **last word**

Reflect on your calling and mission as an individual and a congregation.