

My dad can tell you the story of the Ice Bowl. If you've not heard of the Ice Bowl, it was the 1967 NFL Championship game before they were called Super Bowls. Game time temperature in Green Bay Wisconsin was -15 degrees with a wind chill of -36. The band's instruments froze. The players' cars wouldn't start to even get to the game. And my dad can tell you all of it. He can recount the players, the score, and how it felt to win. And so can 50,861 other people. The only difference, my dad wasn't one of the 50,861 who actually was at the game. He watched it from home on TV.

There's a difference between being an eyewitness and just knowing about it. Someone could be the expert on all things football with all kinds of statistics from individual games. But if they weren't there, they don't know what it truly felt like. You and I have front row seats for our lives. We know every bump and bruise. We know every tear and smile. We know it because we're eyewitnesses to our lives. And yet we have no way of getting ourselves out of the endless loop of being a human being. The disappointments and the depression all have us losing our desire for the future. Why do we want more of the same?

The second lesson is Peter's second letter. He was one of the inner three disciples of Jesus with a front row seat on a couple of events that the other disciples didn't get to see. Years later Peter remembered all of it and one of those moments came in the event we remember today. He shares it with his readers and with us. Peter wants us to be with him...

**Eyewitnesses of the majesty
Conveyed on a holy mountain
Conveyed in a holy Word**

We decided we didn't want to do the whole not seeing each other before the wedding thing. So I stood in the church office at Grace Lutheran Church in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin. My palms were so sweaty. I couldn't not smile. My stomach was turning from the nerves. Then the door opened and she was standing there. My heart started racing. Right there in the doorway I hugged her and held her. Oh, and I cried too. I can remember the details of how her hair was up. How she smiled at me. It's there and I won't ever forget it.

Peter didn't forget the details of that moment when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain. Face shining like the sun, clothes white as light, bright cloud surrounding them. Details so amazing they sound untrue. Peter wasn't making one bit of it up. **"We did not follow cleverly invented stores when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."** Peter was a spectator that day on the mountain, an eyewitness to the glory of Christ. It was easy for Peter to remember the vivid details of that moment because it wasn't what Jesus let others see regularly. Quite the opposite. Mostly Peter saw a humble, weak looking, regular guy. So when Jesus conveyed the message of power and glory, a message normally hidden but that was always there, Peter remembered.

The disciples were in the middle of a tough stretch. Jesus had done some miracles, was popular among some groups, but hated by others. The religious leaders were looking to get rid of him anyway they could. Attacks seemed to come daily from them. Peter himself brilliantly confessed Jesus as the Savior only to purposefully stand in the way of Jesus dying minutes later. For that he was called Satan by Jesus himself. So this moment on the holy mountain was important for him, them. It made God's message important. They'd heard it before at Jesus' baptism conveyed from heaven. **"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."** God the Father lifted Jesus, Peter, and the other two disciples with a powerful assurance that things would be okay. Jesus had glory, hidden behind suffering.

You might wish you could have a moment like Peter. A moment where the heavens peel back and Jesus conveys to you his glory in gleaming bright white light. It would be a holy mountain experience of your own to counterbalance the sinful dangerous world you really live in. Information comes at you on a daily basis that says watch out for yourself. We spend countless hours protecting property and ourselves from people out to get us. It all gives us uncertainty. How do I have any idea that I'll be okay today? Where can I get confidence that I'll live and work and survive tomorrow? Like the disciples you might look each day for a miracle from heaven that doesn't come. You expect a savior to walk alongside you literally and carry you across the finish line of work and school. You want something more than a baby born in a manger and a humble man baptized in a river. There's no power there.

No one alive today is an eyewitness to your specific suffering. No one alive today can describe for you with accuracy the glory Jesus has to attack your sin and win. Peter can. He saw the glory and power of Christ firsthand. And as much as it meant to him it means to you. Remember always the moment you see the glory of Christ. It's life altering to know firsthand that Jesus wasn't weak. He would suffer, but not forever. Jesus wasn't hopeless and fatalistic but was in control of everything. Any more suffering he faced, and he knew exactly what it would be, was for a reason. The persecution to come, the trial, the abuse, the cross. Christ Jesus would use all the power and all the glory he showed to win. It would forgive sin. It would crush Satan. It would defeat death. We've had a holy mountain experience through the eyewitness reports of Peter.

I mentioned there were a lot of tears on my wedding day. All happy tears I assure you, but a lot...from me mostly. And if I wanted to try and forget or pretend it didn't happen, pretend I was more manly and didn't blubber I wouldn't be able to forget. The photographers were very good about capturing great shots of happy moments where I have tears streaming down my face. Even if my memory fades, purposefully or otherwise, the photos tell the story. Peter's memory could be accused of fading. It had been almost thirty years. How much detail could he remember? Peter's eyewitness testimony of what happened on the holy mountain should be enough. But even if his memory faded a little at all, the majesty of Christ was conveyed to us in another manner, an even more certain manner. It's conveyed in a holy Word.

Peter describes that Word as unshifting. **"And we have the word of the prophets, something more sure; 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."** That Word will be with you until the day when you no longer need the Word because you'll have the real thing. A day is coming when like the morning star appears right before the sunrise, Jesus will return. On that day faith will be sight. Earth will be a memory. Heaven will be present reality with its perfection. Until that day you have something more sure, like an anchor holding you firm right where you need to be. You have the glory of Christ conveyed to you in a holy Word.

Vitally important is how you treat this Word. Peter said you can't ignore it. That can happen subtly over time. It can start with we've heard it all before. There's danger to avoiding hearing even familiar stories regularly. Making it back is hard, yet we can't make ourselves stronger. The Bible begins to feel like any other book, a mere human story of something to help people. We believe people who put their own spin on it. We don't speak against them as much because maybe we're starting to forget ourselves what's real and what's not. We pick and choose doctrines to believe. Then we search for God elsewhere. We've given up looking for God where he means to convey himself to us.

Peter speaks clearly and with authority about the origin of the Word of God, the Bible. This isn't just a familiar book with stories of human achievement. It's not fairy tales and myths. This holy Word conveys a message, not a human message from human authors. **"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 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."** Something more that revolves around one central character, Christ Jesus. Every prophet, every sacrifice, every promise. Every bit of his life told the tale of suffering, humiliation, and death. Jesus' incredible suffering was all for something. Revealed in the holy Word is glory through suffering. Praise and honor belong to Christ Jesus because of the victory his suffering achieved. He earned his position as Savior of you and me. He went through the suffering to glory, and promises you will do the same.

Through suffering to glory in Christ. The message doesn't change by generation, it doesn't get old, and it never gets weak. The holy message is conveyed through the Holy Spirit to you. Christ has the glory now and lets it loose in your life. Troubles are less troubling when viewed against the backdrop of the Bible's good news message. We grow into patience because we know something better is coming in heaven. We're given strength through regular contact with the Word to make it through each day, face our sufferings, and obey God's commands. Jesus showed his glory, Peter was an eyewitness on a holy mountain and we're most sure because we have a holy Word that comes from God.