

Men Spoke from God

Transfiguration

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2 Peter 1:16-21

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the song “Breathe (2 AM)” by Anna Nalick, she wrote the lyric “Cause these words are my diary screaming out loud And I know that you’ll use them, however you want to.” How often is that true? How often do you or I quote lyrics of songs out of context? Or that you or I try to relate a song to the events you or I are going through, no matter how far apart the situations may be?

That’s just what we do. We want to figure out this thing called life, and so we listen to so many sources and bits of popular media to try to make our lives make sense. Granted, some wisdom may be found outside of the Bible. In the ESV Study Bible, there is a document on The Books of Wisdom and Poetry. In it, the “early Christian apologist (that is, one who explains, not one who says sorry about things—this early Christian apologist) Justin Martyr...(is quoted as having) reflected on the universal presence of God’s wisdom...(He wrote:) Whatever things were rightly said among all men, are the property of us Christians...(ANF 1:193)’ Justin’s attitudes reflect a long-standing approach to wisdom in ancient Israel, in Judaism, and among the first Christians. (That approach is that) Since truth comes from God, whatever is true belongs to God’s people (ESV Study Bible, pp.776-777).”

So wisdom can be found outside the Scriptures, and it may be that some of it may need to be amended to be true—but amended to fit what? We believe and confess that there is only one wisdom and one truth, and that it is found in God’s Word. As the article continues: “biblical wisdom is different from that of other cultures and religions because it emphasizes one God as the source of all knowledge and understanding; it focuses on right and wrong and is fulfilled in Christ, our righteousness (ESV Study Bible, p.777).”

While we may be able to rightly adapt song lyrics to fit the Truth found in our Savior Jesus Christ, we do not adapt the Scriptures, the Word of God, to other things because the Scriptures are the one and only Truth. We don’t come up with our own truth because we don’t have it. Only God has wisdom. As it says in Proverbs, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7a).”

Keep this in mind as we explore our Epistle text from 1 Peter, where Peter will discuss how we don’t follow myths from other human beings but the very Word of God, that Truth which is about our Savior Jesus Christ.

Verse 1

Peter begins this section writing “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.”

Peter reminded the brothers and sisters to whom he was writing that the Word being passed by the other apostles, Paul, and him was not made up by them or others but was from God. He referred his hearers back to the events of the Transfiguration—our Gospel text—how he was there when God spoke from heaven about His Son, Jesus Christ. Peter and James and John heard God honor Jesus by publicly acknowledging Him as His Son, and then saw the glory of Jesus’ transfiguration, His demonstration of His divine power and nature.

Today many still call the events of the Scriptures myths or made up stories. In some cases, they forget that Peter and James and John, and many others, were present to see the events God did firsthand. Others do not forget, but just do not fully grasp that these men were speaking from what they had seen and heard, not just making things up.

Yet it is not enough for salvation to simply believe that these men were telling the truth. They were most certainly telling the truth, just as preachers today speak the truth when they preach that these events actually happened. But again, it takes more than speaking the truth to have salvation. Many events have happened in the course of human history that people can tell you about honestly and sincerely, but the telling of those accounts will not save you.

Anyone could tell the truth about how the United States was formed, or how George Washington was the first President. But these honest accounts would not save your soul. It takes something more, as Peter indicates with his next words.

Verse 2

“(W)e have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you would 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.”

Peter and the apostles and Paul were proclaiming the truth in their ministries, but if they were like any other account of history, they would be nothing more than museum guides telling you what took place at a previous time. No, the Word that Peter and the others were spreading had meaning because of the prophetic word, that is, the Old Testament. It was in the Old Testament that God had promised to send a Savior for all of humanity. Those Scriptures gave meaning to everything Jesus had done, and they still do.

Even today, the Church would be nothing more than a museum if it were not for the prophecies of the Old Testament validating and giving meaning to everything Jesus did in His earthly ministry. His life affects us today because God had promised to send someone to save us from our sins, and Jesus fulfilled those promises—every one of them.

Jesus would go on from the Mount of Transfiguration to enter into Holy Week, that time just before His death and including His death, which we’ll begin hearing about on Ash Wednesday—this Wednesday night. Jesus continued to fulfill prophecies all the way up to and during His own death on the cross. In the Old Testament, God had promised to send a Savior and in His death, Jesus saved you from your sins.

If we were to begin picking and choosing which parts of God’s Word we like and which we don’t, we would miss out on the fullness of just what Jesus did for you and for me. But what is more, as Peter points out, we would be picking and choosing from God’s Word, not from the words of mere men.

Verse 3

Peter records the conclusion of God’s thought writing: “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.”

In contrast to what the false prophets of the time were saying, Peter and the others were not speaking and writing their own interpretations of their times but were inspired by the Holy Spirit, God Himself. They wrote Law and Gospel—not “peace, peace” in times of danger, but also not condemnation when Jesus had paid

the price. In the next chapter, Peter would refer to how this had been taking place since previous times, writing about “false prophets (who had arisen) among the people, just as there (would) be false teachers among you (that is, those to whom he was writing, as well as to us).”

In Moses’ times, there had been false prophets. God has him warn His people in Deuteronomy chapter eighteen that ““the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.”” Later, there were more false prophets in Isaiah and Jeremiah’s times, who were claiming “‘Peace, peace,’ when there (was) no peace,” as we find recorded in the second half of Jeremiah 6, verse 14.

In Peter’s day, there were those who were claiming to have a secret knowledge from God who were called the Gnostics. And not long ago in our lectionary, we heard about the quote-unquote “super-apostles” who were claiming to be better apostles than Paul, Peter, and the others.

Today, God’s warnings through his apostles and Peter still apply: the Word of God doesn’t come from the will of man, and there are still false teachers today. Be on guard against those who claim peace when there is no peace. And at the same time, know that the Scriptures were written by “men (who) spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” It was and is those men who carry God’s Word who bring you the proclamation of Jesus—the Son of God who was transfigured, who went to the cross, and who paid for your sins—in both Law and Gospel. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.