

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

“And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’”

The Transfiguration of Jesus reveals him in glorious splendor as the Beloved Son of God much in the same way we heard at his baptism. The Father, however, adds something at this event in the life of Jesus in addition to that pronouncement of who Jesus is. The Father says, “listen to him.” Really, he does this emphatically as these words interrupt Peter speaking and suggesting he and his fellow disciples should build tents. Peter needs to stop talking and listen to Jesus, the Beloved Son of God. Really that is an indictment on us as well and so much of what we see as Christians living in this world. The Christian faith is a faith that listens before it speaks. When it does speak, it says back what God has revealed, that is it confesses the word of God. It listens to Jesus and his word because his word is truth, and he has the words of eternal life.

The interesting thing, then, when you consider the Epistle reading. Here’s Peter, the same guy in the Gospel reading, writes those words of the reading and teaches you what the Lord taught him. God corrects you, teaches you, and comforts you in this all as you sit here today listening to your Lord. You are taught to listen to God’s word as St. Peter wrote, “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 something more sure, the prophetic word, 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.”

Think about what Peter wrote and in turn, what you heard. He, along with James and John, witnessed with their own two eyes the Transfiguration of Jesus. Yet God is teaching you through these words he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write that you have something more sure, more certain, more fully confirmed, you have the prophetic word. You have the Holy Scriptures. These are a light which shines in a dark place and illumines it as only God’s word can do.

This matters today because you see many other words which don’t lighten the darkness and lead to death. By way of contrast, in Ephesians 4, God writes through St. Paul, “Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. But that is not the way you learned Christ!— assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” He lists various sins in this context which show this darkened lifestyle which does not listen to God’s word.

It’s a battle you face, and God calls you to crucify your old man and not walk in the darkness. As a Christian you have been transformed, called out of darkness and into the light of life. The old man though doesn’t like to listen. He likes to follow his eyes and follow his heart. He lights to think the path of this world is lived by what he may desire and believe in himself. The world will encourage you in this and even urge you to go further and further away from God’s word. It will have its slogans and creeds which you can rally behind. Most of these may sound virtuous but are far from it. “You be you. Follow your heart. Love is love. Live your own life. What’s true for you might not be true for me. Times have

changed.” The list goes on, you know them, you’ve heard them. But you see, our sinful flesh likes a theology by slogan.

It’s tough and it’s only going to get tougher for you as the church. As a Christian even if everything and every single person around you in your life is telling you something different than what God teaches in his word there is no question to whom you are to listen. A quote which is often attributed to C.S. Lewis, but it’s unclear if he wrote it, is applicable for this whole discussion. The quote is, “When the whole world is running towards a cliff, he who is running in the opposite direction appears to have lost his mind.” Even you can deceive yourself. St. Augustine famously said, “If you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don’t like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.”

So too the devil is tricky and knows how to wordsmith ideas so that to disagree with them is to sound hateful or unreasonable. He likes to try and make you think there’s a higher moral, intellectual, or nicer ground than what the Scriptures teach. The devil is liar.

But the thing is we are sitting ducks when we stop hearing the word of God. When you stop listening to the voice of the Lord himself it is going to get drowned out by the noise around you to the point that you start believing what you hear in those other words. The pulpit of the world is a loud one and fierce one. Listen to Jesus just as the Father tells you and how you listen to Jesus is you listen to his word.

God’s word enlightens you to this reality of your state in this world and where from whom and where you are being tempted. God’s word is no myth. Myths are just that, they are myths, they’re not true but are entertaining, engaging and resonate with people’s desires and fallen reason. God’s word however kills, it calls to repentance, and calls you to look outside of yourself.

Listen to what God says, “And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, 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.” Listen, pay attention to God’s word. Following the sinful desires of your heart leads to death. Following the path of the world which teaches you things contrary to God’s word leads to death.

The other side of this too is God teaches you as Christians don’t go searching for God apart from his word. That’s another temptation that’s just as deadly. This happens when we look for those “mountain experiences” and jump from one to another rather than finding our foundation and confidence in God’s word alone. This is something very common in a lot of “non-denominational” churches. Experiences are cultivated and need to be fed and once certain needs or wants are not met then it is very common to jump to another church to fill that void of experience. This reading today warns you against that and corrects you to seek God and know God through his word. You don’t need to see with your eyes what Peter, James, and John saw, you have something more sure, you have the Scriptures.

Dear people of God, the glory of Jesus was revealed to these men, but his glory was yet to be seen in a saving way. They bowed down in fear as sinners do in the presence of God, but Jesus didn’t stay on the mountain. Luke’s Gospel account of the Transfiguration tells us what Jesus was talking with Moses and Elijah about. They “spoke of his departure, which he was going to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Moses and this prophet were speaking of the death of Jesus which would accomplish something, your salvation.

Today as the church, you celebrate the Transfiguration know the dangers which are all around you and listen to the Son. Because the thing in all of this and the confidence you have is what you Lord has done for you. You lift up your eyes and what do you see? You see Jesus not transfigured but crucified for you. He calls out, “Rise, and have no fear” as he has touched you by pouring water over your head combined with God’s word. You have been born from above in those waters, transformed into his beloved son and daughter and as such, heirs of eternal life. You see, dear people of

The Transfiguration of Our Lord—January 25, 2026

God, that's what this is all about, Jesus and him alone. He is the Light of the world, and the darkness has not, nor can it overcome him. You are sons of Light walking in the Light as you go through this world. And this world with all its myths and slogans which are full of empty promises Jesus has overcome and gives you the victory. His glory is your salvation, and it is a glorious thing you have.

Take heart, then, and find comfort in the wounds of Jesus for you. Listen to him and be of good courage for your sin is forgiven. Your Lord speaks to you today and feeds you with his own body and blood. Fear not and take heart dear people of God. Jesus upholds you and strengthens you as you walk through this world. Clinging to him you will not be put to shame. And know too you are not alone. Although the church may be seeming to fall and dwindle in number your eyes are not what you trust. You have the promise of Jesus which he spoke to Peter in the chapter, chapter 16 right before this Transfiguration on the mountain, Jesus said, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Listen to the Beloved Son, he says not even the gates of hell shall prevail against his church. Believe those words for they are true.

Rejoice too this day in your glorious Lord and go from this place in peace knowing what you have all in him. He has done this all for you and gives you his word when shines as a light in the darkness even as he is the Light are you are sons of light now in this world and will be forever in that place where there is no darkness at all. On that glorious day you will see Jesus in all his glory and will not be afraid. You will see him as he is and as he has fully made you to be and together with all the saints you will praise him and live with him in that Light which will not fade away. That's a transfiguration that is the new creation no longer marred and dimmed but bright, beaming, and glorious forever.

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