

02-19-2023 Sermon
“Though This Prophetic Word”
2 Peter 2:16-21

Two weeks ago, we talked about the clever speakers on the streets of Corinth that attracted the attention of the soldier buying groceries with his meager pension check, the woman shopping for purple dyed cloth, and the slave collecting his master’s debts...all being drawn to these clever speakers of eloquent and entertaining nonsense. The tic toc and Instagram of their day as it were.

This week Peter addresses the Gentiles that are now considered equal to the Jews for Jesus from Jerusalem and encourages them likewise to not be drawn away by these cleverly devised myths, that seem good, but when held up to the truth of the Gospel, fail, on every conceivable level.

So, Peter writes this for our spiritual edification today, and really seems like a total hypocrite doing so.

After all, he was the very one who in Galatians 2:11-19 was rebuked by the apostle Paul for “submitting to the prejudice of the Jews who said that people from all ethnic backgrounds had to fulfill the Jewish ritual law before they could become proper Christians.”

<https://bibleask.org/paul-oppose-peter-one-occasion/#:~:text=The%20account%20of%20the%20confrontation%20between%20Paul%20and,ritual%20law%20before%20they%20could%20become%20proper%20Christians.>

This guy!

Well, like all of us, Peter seems to have evolved, by the power of the Holy Spirit, now convicted that the gospel is truly for everyone.

That is one of the great struggles today in the church. We do such a great job of making the church a place we like to be; we tend to make who has two thumbs? Just for me!

What I mean is, sometimes church becomes more about the culture of our friends rather than about Christ.
Sometimes church is the politics of the possible rather than the preeminence of the Gospel.

And sometimes church just gets a little too comfortable and no longer strives to stretch out of that comfort zone to bring in those who need comforting the most.

My favorite example of this comes from the land of my birth.

The Lutheran churches in the Dakotas were very interesting in the 40's and 50's. As I heard told, most of them were started by Norwegians who apparently got there first and felt they had the rightful claim to the churches because they started them, built them, and even called pastors from Scandinavia to shepherd them.

Well sometime after that, the Swedes began to emigrate to the area, along with my people, the Danes. And Because Minnesota and the Dakotas were settled by the Norwegians, they were certain they would be able to comfortably immigrate there.

The story goes that one old Norwegian came into the church to complain to his pastor that he was worried about the future of the church.

“Why ever would you be concerned?” his pastor inquired. “Well,” the little ol’ Norwegian continued, “It’s those Swedes and Danes that are moving into town, I’m worried that they might start coming to church.”

Now he had the pastor’s attention who continued, “Why on earth would that be a problem?”

The little Norwegian stammered incredulously, “Because, THEY’RE ALL IDIOTS!”

Man, if Scandinavians can’t get along, clearly all hope is lost!

Today that is an obviously ancient memory, but some here today still remember what it was like to be the last immigrant to get to the community and not always be welcomed by those who came just a generation or two before them.

I believe this text reveals that while Peter used to be that way, he isn't anymore.

Now I will allow that some have suggested that Peter didn't even write Second Peter, and that is why he has changed so much. And it's true this is some high-level Greek that a common fisherman is unlikely to master.

But we also know that in 1 Peter 5:12 Peter used Silvanus to write, which makes sense for his second letter because he was so intent on describing his eye witness account, Silvanus could record it whilst he was inspired to say it.

Which brings us to the most shocking point of this text.

Peter indicates that the scriptures are more certain than experience! Wow!!! Who talks like that?

I mean, which one of us would choose the person with no experience, and nothing but book knowledge to operate on our brain?

Which one of us would choose the pilot to fly a mission to the moon, with us on it, that only read about it in books and trained in simulators?

Which one of us looks to a pastor to care for our souls that spent an extra 4-6 years, immediately after Seminary, studying Hebrew Targums, Greek Philosophy, or Aramaic grammar and syntax, but never visited a loved one when they were dying in the hospital or preached a sermon for a funeral or a wedding?

The answer is; NO ONE!!! Not one of us, including me, want the Parchment Paper Pastor to minister to us in our time of spiritual crisis.

No, we want the grizzled, white haired, been there done that and can speak those words of peace that says, "Don't worry, I have been in this situation hundreds of times, and we're gonna get through it together."

One of my favorite pastors growing up, Bob Tasler, was once proctoring a wedding I happened to attend long before I was a pastor.

You could tell the young couple and their parents were a little stressed about what to do, so Pastor Tasler gathered them all around, and with the wisdom of man who knew exactly how they felt asked the group, “How many weddings have you been to?” Someone said “one”, another said “two”, I think another had been to a few more than that.

So, he looked them over and then continued. “I have presided over 300 weddings, so were gonna get through this together and have a good time doing it!”

I can tell you that a peace settled over that wedding party, and everyone relaxed and had a wonderful time because they knew; an experienced pastor was gonna make sure it all went great. And it did!

So, we know experience trumps knowledge every time, BUT NOT THIS TIME, according to Peter.

This time, we know that the word is more certain *than the experience*. And Peter had the experience! He walked with his Lord and saw him perform miracles. He sat at His feet as His disciple and learned everything He had to say. He was on the Holy Mountain when Jesus flashed white like a blast of lightning and Moses and Elijah were brought down from Heaven to be there with our Savior.

He was there when they took Him to be scourged and abused and whipped by the Roman Soldiers.

But then, Peter abandoned Jesus the second a few people associated him with Jesus, The Man Peter said he would die for.

How Ironic.

But none of that mattered to Peter now. What mattered to Peter now, more than ever, was that Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus forgave his sins, and even trusted him with starting His church in Jerusalem.

Peter didn't deserve it. He certainly did not earn it, and even though he experienced it, Peter knew experience had nothing to do with it.

He, by the grace of God, was given it.
He was given a light to lighten this dark world with the very Word of God.

The prophecies from of old. The wisdom of the ages, the very instructions of God Himself, which could be found in any temple in any Judean or Jewish community was all better than what Peter experienced.

Then the preservation of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus, the letters written by Peter, Paul, James and others that speak the words of encouragement to the infant churches throughout the Mediterranean, all these carefully codexed into a canon of 66 books that we have in our hands to this day.

All of this is better than seeing it in person!

The lunacy of this statement cannot be ignored, and yet we should! For what we have today, is exactly what Peter experienced, saw, and proclaimed to the gentiles newly grafted into the church along side their Jews and Judeans for Jesus brothers and sisters in Christ.

Carried though out the early church until the fall of Constantinople. Guided to the Reformers who took the Latin vulgate and put it in the language of the people, spirited from there to the scribes of King James, and then accompanying the pilgrims, the quakers, and eventually the Saxons with these precious prophetic words to America, not just better than the experience but now *the experience* in and of itself.

This Word, the people of God surround themselves with, as we devote ourselves to the Word of God manifest in us as a community of people sounding the gospel proclamation once again just like Peter experienced.

This is our experience; the forgiveness and love of Christ for the sinner, saved by His death on the cross for us, resurrecting His body, which gives us the resurrection from the dead for eternal life with Him *through This Prophetic Word*.

AMEN

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