

**Rev Shawn Arndt**  
**Sunday, February 19, 2023**  
**Transfiguration**

*Praise be to Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Amen.*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

It's often around this time of year. Just when it seems like the long nights of winter darkness or the latest round of snowstorms make you wonder if spring will ever come again, it happens.

You're outside where there's no wind and the sun shines on your skin for a moment and it's amazing! Not that faint, barely there sunshine of early January, but sunshine that's real and warm and full of life and for a moment it transports you to an ideal summer's day.

If we could multiply that – say by about a million—maybe could begin to have an idea of what Peter, James and John must have experienced when Jesus let them glimpse his glory at His transfiguration! For a moment they stood in that pure, radiant, heavenly light – light brighter than the sun and **white(r)** than light! More than thirty years later, shortly before his death, the Apostle Peter called it nothing less than **majestic!**

He wrote: **we were eyewitnesses of (Jesus') majesty. For he (Jesus) received honor and glory from God the Father, when the voice came to him from within the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We heard this voice, which came out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.**

There's a reason when it happened, Peter exclaimed: **Lord, it is good for us to be here!** And no wonder! This was a little glimpse of Jesus' glory He has always had as true God and at the same time a little foretaste of the heavenly glory He will give to His believing people!

There's a reason Peter wrote about that light years later, for this is a light to encourage God's people, for it shows us the **Light to Scatter the Darkness.**

Of course we're not talking about the darkness of a dreary winter's night, but rather the metaphor, the picture of darkness the Bible often uses to describe things like sin, evil, sorrow, death and finally the eternal night of hell's separation from the One True God who "is Light" and who "dwells in approachable light."

In our lesson, Peter talks about **a dark place.** The Greek word he uses for **dark** is not just the absence of light, but a word that means **dark** as in dingy, foul and filthy. This is a most unpleasant darkness where at any moment you might fall to your doom.

Such a **dark place** describes our sin ruined world – where the devil's lies and temptations surround us, trying to draw us away from faith in our Savior God. A **dark place** where sorrow, pain and tragedy are on every side. This world is indeed is a **dark place** where sins that ought to make us all blush aren't just permitted, but are applauded on TV, in music and media of every kind.

But the problem isn't only with the **dark** world out there, but within us, within the **dark place** of our naturally sin darkened hearts. In Acts 26, God's Word describes our natural spiritual condition when we come

into this world as being in **darkness... and** (under) **the power of Satan**. The book of Ephesians (5) says the same thing when it says we **'were once darkness'** and in his first letter, Peter says God had to call us out of **darkness**.

Even, now as believers in Christ, the darkness of sin lurks within our sinful nature, making us want to do what God forbids and getting in the way of doing what God in love commands. Indeed, what is it but darkness that would make us tire to hear God's Word or dare to argue with whatever God has told us in the bright light of His Word?

Like it or not, our sin darkened hearts have earned us all a place in the crushing and inescapable, outer darkness of hell.

And that's why we need this **bright majestic Light** Peter saw in Jesus on that Mountain!

This Divinely bright **Light** shining from Jesus proves He is indeed the one who is able to rescue from the gloom of sin and all it deserves! This **majestic**, radiant glory, brighter and more beautiful than anything in all creation is glowing proof that Jesus is the Holy God-Man, the One who has the power to conquer sin and death.

As we've heard throughout the Epiphany season, Jesus has "the right stuff" to fight and win to save us!" Jesus is **the Light to Scatter the darkness**, as seen by His glory and affirmed by the voice of God the Father: **This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased**.

In astonishing love, Jesus will again hide this bright light and go to suffer in the utter darkness of the cross because He chooses to endure the punishment that will take away all the dark sin and evil of the world along with the every shadow of your guilt and mine. Jesus lets the darkness of God's judgment that our sin darkened hearts and live deserve fall on Himself, instead of you and me.

And then on Easter morning, this Jesus who clearly is **light from light, True God from true God** will burst free from the power of the grave and win the ultimate victory, crushing the **'darkness of the shadow of death'** with His **powerful** rising from the dead! This is the **Light** of Jesus **to scatter the darkness** of your sin and mine and give us the bright and eternal life He earned!

This means you are forgiven. All this Jesus did so that you will live in heavenly glory with Him. It is true, for it is no **fable** or made up story, but it is fact. It is real history that happened and was seen by **eyewitnesses** like Peter, James and John who not only saw Jesus glory on the mountain, but saw Him risen from the dead, along with so many others.

There weren't two or three people who saw Jesus risen from the grave, but hundreds: the other disciples, including skeptical Thomas who put his fingers in the glorified nail wounds of Jesus, plus the women on Easter morning, and Mary Magdalene, and Jesus' half-brother James, along with 500 other people who all saw him alive, and then also the Apostle Paul, a murderer of Christians made the greatest of missionaries by the power of the Risen Christ!

They weren't making these up. Many of these **eyewitnesses** were willing to die horrible deaths rather than deny Jesus, because they *knew* He was alive and gives them the victory over death. Our faith in Jesus has a rock solid foundation: the **eyewitness** testimony of the Apostles who saw Jesus as **the Light to scatter the darkness!**

Ok, yeah, I know, but still I wish I could have seen what they saw. If only I could see that bright **majestic** light like they did, then I wouldn't have any doubt. If only I saw such a glorious **light** like they, then I could be certain the Lord will help me through every dark trouble I face...

*If only... IF... ?* There is no *if only*, Dear Christian! For you do indeed see such a brilliant, amazing, perfect **light** just like Peter saw! Listen to what Peter goes on to say:

**We also have the completely reliable prophetic word. You do well to pay attention to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in your hearts...**

You do have a **Light to scatter the darkness**: the bright **lamp** of the Bible that is a **light for our path**. Yes, human hands wrote the pages of the Bible, but those who wrote were **carried along by the Holy Spirit**, so that every word they **spoke** and wrote came **from God** and is word-for-word, God's Word!

The greatest proof of this truth is simply the Bible itself! First, consider the how there were more than 40 individual writers of the Bible, who lived on three different continents, spoke two main languages, and wrote across a period of 1600 years with different backgrounds and culture.

Yet, the message of the Bible is not some garbled mess like you'd expect for all that, but it is consistent, clear, fitting together perfectly with amazing harmony, depth and intricacies that you could easily spend a lifetime studying and never be finished. It all points to one amazing Divine author **who carried along** those who wrote it and spoke through them.

Second, just consider how the message of the Bible, is the opposite of every man-made religion. Man-made religion loves to flatter its human authors by saying there is something we can do to work our way back to God. But the Bible tells us we are so lost, dead, corrupt, dark with sin, we can only be saved by an act of Divine Charity, but God giving His Son to save His enemies, a pure grace that comes not from human hearts, but from God alone.

But finally, if you want the greatest proof the Bible is God's Word – just read it... read it... and read it... and the Holy Spirit who alone has the power to overcome doubt of sin darkened hearts—the Holy Spirit will convince you of this truth with the gift of faith He works through the Word.

Peter especially emphasizes how the Bible is God's brilliant, beautiful **light to scatter the darkness** when he says : **We also have the completely reliable prophetic word...** This is a fine translation, but if we were to more literally translate what he said in Greek, the Holy Spirit has him use a comparative, which means more literally what Peter says is: **We have the more completely reliable prophetic word.**

**More reliable...** more than what? More than Peter's own **eyewitness!** The flow of what Peter is saying is this: I saw and heard Jesus' glory with my own eyes and ears, but what I trust as even **more reliable** than my own eyes and ears are the words of the Bible, the Spirit guided prophets who foretold centuries in advance all that Jesus would do and then how Jesus came fulfilling every promise God has made.

You see that means this book, this **word** of God that we get to hear and read and listen to and remember **is indeed** a light just as amazing, pure, radiant, and majestic as what Peter saw on the **holy mountain**, for through it God has spoken and still comes to speak to us with the life and light giving message of sins forgiven and giving to us all the Bible promises.

Dear friends in Jesus, hold onto this bright **Light, of the Bible** – until Jesus ends the long cold night of pain, trouble, sin and death and ushers in the bright morning of the resurrection. Then with Peter, James, John,

Moses and Elijah, you will stand with all believers, and most importantly, Jesus your Savior in the bright and majestic light and life that will never end! Amen.

*Your Words, (O Lord), are a lamp for my feet and a light for my path. Amen.*