

Good News Worth Repeating

2Peter 1:12-21

One of the last classes I ended up taking in Seminary was a class called 'homiletics'.

That is the class where they teach you how to preach sermons.

I had delayed taking the class in my undergrad degree because I didn't really agree with the professor's doctrine or demeanor towards preaching.

I delayed taking it in seminary because living three hours away from the school I took as many online courses as I could to keep me from having to make the drive twice a week for several months.

I am still grateful for God's timing on that because by the time I took the course there was a new professor who I deeply appreciated and who, I believe, helped me become better at communicating God's Word.

One of things that stuck out to me in that class was a story the teacher told about a guest lecturer at a Bible College.

I don't recall the name of the teacher or the college but I remember the story.

The guest lecturer ask two simple questions to the students.

The first question was, "What message to unbelievers most need to hear?"

The vast majority of the students all came back with the same answer. Anyone want to take a guess as to what their answer was?

The students said, "The Gospel!"

That is absolutely the right answer. What could be more important than hearing how a person can be forgiven by God for everything they have done wrong in their life? How they can have a new life in Christ? How they can have the hope of living forever with God in a new heavens and new earth completely free from evil and full of joy?

What could be more important than that?

The second question was, "What message to believers most need to hear?"

This question produced much more diversity among the students.

Some said, "Missions!" Others said, "Holiness!" Then there was "discipleship, spiritual gifts, suffering, doctrine, and more.

The guest lecturer gave the answer, "The Gospel"

My professor used that story to impress upon my class the importance of keeping the Person and Work of Jesus Christ central to our preaching.

It was something that I already believed, but I found very refreshing to hear from someone training others to preach.

It is what the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians.

Remember he said,

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1 Cor. 2:1-2 ESV)

That does not mean the extent of Paul's preaching was "You need to ask Jesus into your heart!"

It means that every subject, every doctrine and every verse of Scripture finds its fulfillment in God the Son, to the glory of God the Father, and we come to believe and enjoy it by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

That is news worth repeating.

[Of course Paul is not alone in thinking so. All of the apostles held the same view and we see another example of that in our text this morning **2Peter 1:12-21**. These verses are linked to the verses that come before, particularly verses 5-11. In those verses he tells believers about how the gospel of Christ changes the one who believes it and then he goes on to say in verse 12 that they already know what he just said. That raises a question, "Why say it if they already know it?" It is a good question and Peter gives us some good answers in these verses. First he starts off by showing us this in verses 12-15, that...]

Point #1 – The life changing gospel of Jesus Christ is worthy of constant reminder. (12-15)

The work of almighty God in the person and work of God the Son to save people from what we deserve on account of our evil is so great and glorious that through the work of God the Spirit it will keep and captivate God's people to the glory of God the Father forever; therefore, the Christian be happy to say, "Let's hear it again!"

In verses 10-11 Peter tells us that if we are pursuing holiness according to faith then it will keep us from falling away from Jesus and so lead us into eternal life.

Then he comes to **verse 12** and writes this...

It is his intention to "always" remind the believers of "these qualities" referring to verses 5-7 which describe the life change that takes place from believing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The word "always" suggests that this is an ongoing and frequent action.

He is doing this even though they already know these things.

Not only do they know them, he says they are established in this truth.

It is unclear how long they have been Christians or how mature in the faith they might be, or when the last time they were reminded of these things was but no matter the answer Peter is ready to remind them/us again.

His passion for this becomes all the more clear in **verses 13-14**.

What the ESV translates as 'body' in these verses is most literally translated as 'tent' which is a metaphor used a few times in the scriptures.

It is a good one for the physical body because it suggests a temporary structure.

It is a way of highlighting the brevity of our time upon the earth as it exists now.

It will not always be this way. There will come a day when everyone who believes upon Jesus will receive a new body which will not wear out and die, but as it stands now our time is short.

I think commentators who argue that Peter is in his sixties when he writes this are most likely correct.

It was rare in the ancient Roman world for someone to live that long, so Peter knows his days are few.

There is more than that here though, he says Jesus Himself has made it clear that the time of his death is right around the corner.

He might be thinking about what Jesus told him in John 21 or something more recent but either way the day of his martyrdom is close at hand.

Staring death in the face has a way of bringing the things we think are most important to the surface.

What is it for Peter? It is to tell them stuff they already know. It is to remind them of the gospel.

Even after he is dead he wants to ensure that they will be able to recall these things at any time.

That is the great gift of writing it down and giving it to the church and the Holy Spirit has also graciously preserved it for us.

His passion for this message says something of its value.

Why is this good news able to keep the believer?

Why does it hold the promise of eternal life?

Because of Who this message is about!

It is about the Glorious Son of God Who in His humanity overcame every temptation pleasing God the Father in every way, and then offered Himself to the Father to bear His wrath for us upon the cross, and Who on account of His perfect obedience and sacrifice was raised from the dead conquering sin and death and hell forever for those who believe.

A message so wonderful that those who truly believe in it are happy to repeat it and happy to hear it again and again.

[Every single one of us understands this principle. How many people here this morning like ice cream? Now, how many of you who say you like ice cream have only ever had it once in your life? Or think of your favourite movie. Have you ever seen it more than once? What about a

favourite hobby or pastime? We keep coming back time and again don't we? Why? Because we like it!]

Peter is clearly concerned about the wellbeing of believers. He knows that reminding them of the gospel is a good safeguard for their lives, but there is more here than simply what the gospel does it is also about what the gospel is and who it is about.

Though the gospel is something a two year old can understand and believe it is also so incomprehensibly amazing that it will captivate our attention forever.

Just read the scenes of heaven in the book of revelation!

Even in eternity the people of God will be singing the praises of the Lamb who was slain and we will never get bored of it.

Instead it will be our great delight to say it again and to hear it again.

[When everything in your world seems right, you need to hear the gospel. When everything seems wrong and you feel like garbage you don't need people telling you how wonderful you are you need to hear about how wonderful Jesus is. That is what the apostle Peter is all about as he is staring death in the face. He seems to be unconcerned about dying and greatly concerned that we remember. Why is he so focused on this? How does he know the gospel is so good? He knows because he saw it happen which teaches us something really important. It teaches us that...]

Point #2 – The life changing gospel of Jesus Christ has trustworthy witnesses. (16-18)

The writers of the Bible saw for themselves the work of God on behalf of the people of God and we have very good reason to believe their accounts of what happened.

Verse 16 begins with the word 'for' which tells us that he is going to give us some reasons as to why he is committed to this message and why it is worthy of constant reminder (Verse 16a).

Most of us are likely familiar enough with Greco-Roman history to know that the world in which Peter is writing was full of myth and legend.

Stories about characters who lived long ago with fantastic tales of faraway places and gods of various power and position.

When some people heard the preaching of the Gospel about the Son of God who died and rose again they simply added it to their list of myths.

That sort of thinking is still quite common today.

Peter challenges that thinking here. **(Verse 16b-18)**

The scriptures do not read like myth or legend.

They were not written about events that happened long before the time they were written, they happened within the lifetime of the writers.

That means that the events could be investigated.

Many of the witnesses were still alive and could be questioned.

The names of the people and places were real people and real places. In fact you can still go and visit many of the places mentioned in the Bible and a significant amount of archeological evidence confirms that places that no longer exist once did.

Peter is not talking about things that happened long before his lifetime, he is talking about things that he saw with his own eyes.

He speaks specifically here about being on a 'holy mountain' and seeing Jesus 'receive honour and glory from God the Father'.

It seems fairly clear, and all the commentaries I read on this text agree, that Peter is talking about the Mount of transfiguration.

You can read the account in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9.

Jesus takes Peter, James and John with Him up a mountain and there they experience what I can only describe as heaven invading earth for a few moments.

There is brilliant light, Jesus radiates with glory, and His clothes became a 'dazzling white' according to Matthew.

On top of that they hear the voice of God the Father speak to them about Jesus saying, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased."

How many of you know that an experience like that will change your life?

That is just one of many things that Peter is saying he saw with his own eyes.

Here is the question for us, "Do we trust his testimony and that of the other eye witnesses we have in the Bible?"

[When I was thinking about this, I was reminded of two women who came to Solomon to settle a dispute about which one of them was the mother of a baby boy. After listening to the case Solomon says, "Bring a sword and cut the boy in half and give a half to each woman." One of the women immediately speaks up and says, "Don't do it, give the child to the other woman so he won't die." The other woman says, "He shall be neither mine nor yours, divide him." Solomon immediately knows the woman who wants the child to live is his real mother and he gives the living child to her. He tested her testimony and she demonstrated that she was the credible witness.]

We can do that with Peter and the other apostles.

You see the quality of their testimony only leaves us with two options.

Either they are telling the truth or they are liars.

Some will say that they invented the whole thing so that they could benefit themselves and gain power and control over people.

That may be a fair charge to lay at the feet of many modern day charlatans who use a false Christianity to get people to give money so they can wear expensive clothes and buy private jets, but that is not the Apostles.

They gained no wealth, land, title, or influence.

The sacrificed and served others.

They suffered and died (as Peter was about to do) for the sake of the gospel.

How many people would do that for something they knew was a lie?

[Why did they do that? They did it because they were looking to an eternal reward rather than temporary gain. They did it because they knew it was true because they were there and saw it with their own eyes. They had every earthly reason to turn their backs on Jesus, but don't and that makes them trustworthy witnesses. If that was all we had to go on it would be a very good case, but Peter points us to some more evidence regarding this message. He does this in the last few verses of chapter one and teaches us that...]

Point #3 – The life changing gospel of Jesus Christ shows the truth of God's Word. (19-21)

The fulfillment of prophecy is one of the Divine fingerprints the LORD has left on the Bible and Jesus' life and work is the pinnacle of that reality.

Look with me at the **first part of verse 19.**

Commentators are a bit divided on what exactly is intended by 'the prophetic' word here, but it seems like the best answer is the whole Old Testament.

When he says that we have this 'word more fully confirmed' what he means is that on account of the life and ministry of Jesus we have the clearest picture of what the Old Testament means and the best evidence that it is true.

Because it is true, Peter says, we should 'pay attention' to it.

The Word of God lights the way for the people of God to live a godly life in a corrupt and dark world.

We need that today as much as any time in the history of the world.

He says we should pay attention to it until the 'day dawns' meaning until Jesus comes and our hope in the gospel is fully realized.

He explains why we should pay attention in **verses 20-21.**

Neither the production nor the right understanding of God's word is the result of human beings.

It is true the Bible was physically written by people. It is also true that the authors of the Bible wrote at different times, in different cultures, and on different occasions.

Some heard the audible voice of the LORD telling them exactly what to write and others had their own thoughts directed by the work of the Holy Spirit.

What Peter is telling us here is that no matter the means or the circumstances God directed it all so that what was written down was exactly what He intended.

Peter says these men were ‘carried along by the Holy Spirit’. The picture the original language is giving us is like travelling in a hot air balloon. The balloon goes wherever the wind is blowing.

In the same way the writers of the Bible went wherever the LORD was directing them.

This is God’s Word and it cannot be changed no matter how many godless people try to warp and distort its meaning.

One of the phrases I hate the most when it comes to the Bible is, “Well, that is just your interpretation!”

It is said as though all interpretations are of equal value or as if any interpretation is a valid one.

That is a great lie. The only interpretation that matters is God’s.

It is our rebellious hearts that lead us away from the truth and thankfully by the Grace of God the Spirit of God changes our hearts so that we have a desire to understand and submit to the truth of the Scriptures.

That brings us to a question. What is the Bible all about? Jesus tells in John 5 and Luke 24 that the Scriptures are about Him.

One of the clearest ways God demonstrates that the Bible is His word is He says things about the future and the things He says come to be.

Nothing highlights this better than the life of Jesus.

Remember when the Magi from the East come looking for Jesus? Herod gathered the scholars and asked, “Where is the Christ to be born?”

They knew it was Bethlehem because of the prophet Micah.

Being born of virgin would be miracle enough to show Jesus’ divine origins, but God also foretold it centuries before through the prophet Isaiah.

Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt is foretold in Hosea.

His dying on a cross in Deuteronomy 21.

His suffering in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

And the list goes on and on.

Christian scholars say there are more than three hundred prophecies about the saviour God promised to His people and Jesus fulfilled them all.

I've seen the calculation of the odds of that happening by a man named Peter Stoner and he calculates the odds at 1×10^{17} .

I don't have the foggiest idea what that number even is. I know a trillion is 1×10^{12} and this is way past that.

With odds like that it seems beyond any sense of reason to think this was just random chance.

Far from it. The things written in the Old Testament about our Lord and Saviour and all that He would accomplish for God's glory and our good are fulfilled by the Sovereign hand of God showing that His Word is true.

It's amazing and Peter even after years of preaching is happy to say it again.

Why? Because what do unbelievers most need to hear? The Gospel!

Nothing could change your life more than hearing and believing the truth that will take you off the road to eternal destruction and set your feet upon the path of eternal life.

What do believers most need to hear? The Gospel!

If we are truly born again then our hearts and minds will be so captivated by the life changing gospel of Jesus Christ that we will want/need to hear it again.

We will desire to go deeper into its truth and want to apply it to the whole of life.

There is nothing else like the life changing gospel of Jesus Christ.

This gospel brothers and sisters is Good New Worth Repeating.

Let's pray.