

Sermon Brief

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September 25, 2022

Text: 2 Peter 1:16-21

Title: “Two Lights in the Dark”

Subject: Peter’s teaching about the coming kingdom of Jesus is true.

Complement: The Transfiguration and the Scriptures are evidence.

Textual Idea: The Transfiguration assures us that the prophecies of the future kingdom come are true.

Sermon Idea: Follow God’s two sacred lights to walk in God’s truth.

Interrogative: What light am I following?

Key Points:

Light 1: Jesus. Peter’s teaching about Jesus’ coming is reliable since it is based on what he personally saw and heard with Jesus. (vv.16-18)

Light 2: Scripture. Peter’s teaching about Jesus’ coming is confirmed by fulfilled Scripture. (vv.19-21)

What do I want people to know? I want people to know that the Scriptures are reliable. That we can trust the gospel message about Jesus and His future coming in power.

What do I want people to do? I want people to (1) have a regular Bible reading plan, (2) be careful to interpret in context with others, (3) attend WNL classes.

What need am I addressing? I am addressing the need for maintaining solid teaching in an age of compromise.

“Two Lights in the Dark”

2 Peter 1:16-21

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A few weeks back, I shared about my religious upbringing in the Catholic church. I'm grateful for the basic knowledge that I picked up about Jesus during that time. But I did not know Jesus personally yet. It wasn't until later when **(LCD) my mom** became a born-again Christian that I began to learn about a personal relationship with God. My mom came to faith, right around the time that this Olin Mills family portrait was taken in the late '70s. She had started studying the Bible and, as she did, she encountered Jesus. She also started questioning much that she'd been taught in the Catholic church. As she found things in the Bible that supported her questions, she sought out the local parish priest. He struggled to answer her questions, so he referred her to the regional bishop. After they met, he sent her a card that had a very crucial note written in it that directly applies to our passage this morning. I'll tell you what he wrote at the end of my sermon!

Please turn in your Bibles to 2 Peter 1:16-21. We've begun a new study in this short letter, and I mentioned that Peter has two great concerns, **(LCD) beware false teaching and pursue godly living**. Last week, in verses 12-15, Peter told them why he was writing. Knowing he was about to die, he wanted to remind them of what he'd been teaching about Jesus all along. He did this because false teachers were making terrible accusations about Peter and the other disciples. We get a glimpse into these claims starting with our passage this morning, 2 Peter 1:16, *“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

It appears that the false teachers were accusing Peter and the other apostles, those who had lived and walked with Jesus, of fabricating, making up stories about Jesus. Now in the rest of the letter, we'll see that the main teaching in question is that of the future, second coming of Jesus. If you briefly turn over to chapter 3, verse 4, you'll find Peter quoting the false teachers saying, *“Where is this ‘coming’ he promised? Ever since our ancestors died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.”* In other words, “Peter, you made this whole ‘second coming’ thing up! It's been over 30 years and Jesus hasn't come back. It's all made up!” Why did they care? Because if Jesus doesn't come back, then there's no future judgment and everyone can do as they'd like. But if he's coming back, then how we live now matters.

So Peter is needing to verify his teaching. His credibility is being called into question. Like a lawyer, he's going to submit two pieces of evidence that verify his reliability. These two pieces of evidence are like **(LCD) lights in the darkness** of confusion. Lights that cut through the fog of confusion about God, about life, about what's true. Lights that can lead us safely home to God. We're all following some light, some view of life. Let me ask you, **(LCD) what light are you following?** When you aren't sure what to do in a situation. What light, what wisdom, what beliefs do you follow? Any darkness in your life right now? Troubled relationship? Financial woes? Health issues? Depression? What light, whose voice are you following through this darkness?

Peter is going to point out two lights and the first one is his own experience with Jesus, verse 16, *"For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."* Contrary to what the false teachers said, Peter and the other disciples of Jesus didn't make it all up! I hear people say all the time, "The Bible is just a book of made-up stories." Peter says, "No." The Greek for "cleverly invented stories" here is "muthos," the word from which we get "myths." In Greco-Roman culture, myths were huge! Think of Greek mythology – Zeus and all the gods on Mount Olympus. They were stories made up to explain how the world worked. We have our **(LCD) own myths in our day and age: Star Wars, Lord of the Rings, the Marvel Universe.** I hate to break it to you all, but these are MADE UP STORIES! They aren't real!! But the stories of Jesus are real. That's what Peter's saying. We didn't make these up.

We were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty, His powerful coming. Now many think that Peter's talking about when Jesus came to earth as a human being. But the word he uses for "coming" here is **(LCD) Parousia** and it always, every time, as we saw in chapter 3, refers in the New Testament to the future, Second Coming of Christ. The word itself was, *"Used as a technical term, and so refers to the 'coming of a hidden divinity, who makes his presence felt by a revelation of his power' or 'a visit of a person of high rank, especially of kings and emperors visiting a province.'"* Peter says that he and others were eyewitnesses of Jesus' Second Coming, when He will be enthroned as King over all! This is the very thing the false teachers deny will happen. But wait a minute? How could they have seen His Second Coming if it hasn't happened yet?

Verse 17, *"He received honor and glory, we saw his kingly power and majesty, from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'"* 18 *We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.* What is Peter referring to here? **(LCD) The Transfiguration.** This was the scene recorded in the gospels where Jesus had gone up on a high mountain with Peter, James, and John. While there, Jesus was transfigured, he physically changed appearance. His face shone like the Sun and his clothes became dazzlingly white as snow. The two great Old Testament prophets, Moses and Elijah, appeared with him too. The three apostles fell to the ground in fear and then a cloud came down and engulfed them with a voice, God's voice, saying, *"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* It was an awesome sight and sound experience that overwhelmed the disciples!

Peter is referring to this crazy episode when he says we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. Peter's saying that the three of them did not make this up. They saw and heard Jesus in His majesty. So why bring this up? Take a look at this note, **(LCD) "The Transfiguration...is a transformation that reveals (Jesus') true nature...hidden during his earthly life, that will be revealed to all the world at the time of his return. Put simply, the Transfiguration reveals Jesus as the glorious King, and Peter was there to see it. He therefore has utter confidence that Jesus will return as the glorious King..."** What they saw was a preview of coming attractions. You know how previews show us clips from a movie that's already been made and is just waiting to be shown? That's what the Transfiguration was. It was a preview of what's guaranteed to come: the Second Coming of Jesus in divine majesty!

It makes me think of **(LCD) King Charles III**. He's already been pronounced the king, but he's not been crowned yet. Did you know that? There's no date set either. Most likely, it'll be sometime in the next six months. What we know is that it's already decided, it's just a formality for it to formally be displayed. The same with Jesus. I love how the author of Hebrews describes this current state of Jesus, **(LCD) "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven."** Jesus is already seated in glory. He's the king of the universe now! But the full unveiling of that reality won't be put on formal display until He returns in power as He Himself predicted, **(LCD) "And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."** This is Jesus talking about Himself. Why are people going to mourn when He returns? Because the Bible says He'll be coming to judge the living and the dead. This is the very thing the false teachers want to deny. This is what the eyewitnessed Transfiguration guarantees is going to happen. Our first point this morning, **(LCD) Light 1: Jesus. Peter's teaching about Jesus' coming is reliable since it is based on what he personally saw and heard with Jesus.**

I said there are two lights that Peter is going to encourage us to follow in this dark world and the first one is Jesus Himself. Jesus was not some made-up superhero. He lived a human life on earth. He lived and worked for many years in an obscure Jewish village until He began teaching and doing miracles. These were attested by thousands of witnesses and preserved writings. Jesus truly lived. And when He did, He said this about Himself, **(LCD) "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."** Jesus claimed to be the light of the world. He claimed that whoever followed Him would have the light of life – would find true life as God meant it to be lived. Do you know Jesus? Have you believed in Him? I hope so.

Let me ask you our key question this morning again, **(LCD) what light are you following?** Where do you go for wisdom when you're in the dark on something? Whose voice do you listen to? Oprah? Google? Science? Your friends? Yourself? That's probably the most popular one today. We hear people say all the time that they're

following, “My truth.” But Jesus says that He’s the truth. We would be wise to follow Jesus’ light as our truth and it starts with accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

But that raises another issue – how do we know that the Bible has the words of Jesus? Peter says that he believes in the Second Coming because of what he saw and heard personally, but there’s another reason he believes it. Verse 19, “*We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.*” In addition to Jesus’ human existence, Peter says we have the “*prophetic message as something completely reliable.*” A second light in the dark. Now for Peter, the “prophetic message” would refer to the Old Testament which would have been the Scriptures for him as a Jew.

He says that we should pay attention to it, give it very careful consideration, as a light shining in a dark place – there you go! The Scripture is like a light in the dark which reminds me of what David said, **(LCD) “Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.”** Is it your light? Do you determine how to deal with life through God’s wisdom in His Word or your own? Peter says that the Scripture is to be our light UNTIL the day dawns. What day? That day prophesied in the Old Testament called the Day of the Lord. The day when the Messiah would come to earth to establish His eternal kingdom and make all things right. And on that day, “*the morning star will rise in your hearts.*” This is likely another reference to an Old Testament prophecy from Numbers 24, **(LCD) “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel.”** Again, this refers to Messiah.

Peter calls this one the “morning star.” The word he used here is “phosphorus,” literally, “star-bringer.” In Greek and Roman times the term was applied to **(LCD) Venus** as the bright star that appeared at the dawn of the day. It also was used to refer to royal and divine persons. The prophets foretold a day when a new age would dawn with the emergence of a great king. All this Peter applies to Jesus’ second coming. He’s the bright morning star. In a song called “Emmanuel,” Trent Smith describes Jesus like this: **(LCD) “Sun of glory, Fount of light, Emmanuel. Portrait of the Father’s heart. Emmanuel. How deep is this violent love, that would lead you to a cross. How wide is your mercy Lord, that you made a way for all of us. Jesus Morning Star, You are, Emmanuel. Holy Lamb of God, You are Emmanuel.”**

Emmanuel is Hebrew for “God with us.” In Jesus, God was with us as predicted by the prophets. Peter says we can and should trust them because of how God spoke through them, verse 20, “*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*” Simply stated, Peter says that prophets, spoke from God, they didn’t invent stories. They didn’t speak out of their own interpretation, their own minds. Instead, they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. The word for “carried along” is used in the book of Acts to describe **(LCD) boats driven by the wind in their sails.**

The idea is not that the prophets were robots just dictating what God said. No, you can tell the personalities of the prophets by their writings! Yet God superintended the whole process. The apostle Paul describes it as “God breathing” into the authors to make sure that what they wrote was exactly what he intended – yet in their distinctive voices. This is exactly what we believe here at Wintonbury per our Statement of Faith, **(LCD) We believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God, verbally inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.** The Bible is our light. Is it yours?

Some of you might remember that I talked about the growing trend among churches to disavow the divine inspiration of the Bible like with **(LCD) this church in Nashville, “Nashville Church says Bible isn’t the Word of God.”** In this article, the pastor says this, *“As Progressive Christians, we’re open to the tensions and inconsistencies in the Bible. We know that it can’t live up to impossible, modern standards. We strive to more clearly articulate what Scripture is and isn’t.”* Now, actually, I agree with some of that, so I decided to give this guy the benefit of the doubt. I listened to two of his sermons and, sure enough, he thinks the Bible is NOT the Word of God, but just human authors trying to understand God like us. In other words, he’s following the light of human wisdom. Let me ask you again, **(LCD) what light are you following?** We all fall back on some kind of wisdom when we’re in the dark. Where do you go? Who are you listening to?

As I said, for us, we follow two lights: **(LCD) Jesus as the light of the world, and the Scripture as a lamp onto our feet.** They both confirm that Jesus is the King and that He is coming back to judge the living and the dead. Are you ready for that? One way to get ready is to be dousing yourself in God’s Word. Unfortunately, few are. This past May, pollster George Barna released a survey of pastors and found that only 37% hold to a biblical worldview. He said this, **(LCD) “While studying the spiritual behavioral patterns of pastors...there was a correlation between possessing biblical beliefs and a consistent regimen of Bible reading, prayer, worship and confession...among the pastors who have the most consistently biblical beliefs, there is also a daily routine that incorporates all of those disciplines.”** How are you doing with these disciplines? As I stated last week, I have some **(LCD) Bible Reading Plans** if you’d like to begin a regular diet of reading the Bible. Also, our **(LCD) Wednesday Night Live** classes are designed to help you grow in learning God’s truth. Consider joining us this Wednesday.

Remember that story about my mom and the Catholic bishop? After debating her questions about the Bible, he sent her a note that said this, *“Rollande, just remember, when Jesus came to earth, he didn’t found a book, he founded a church.”* What he meant by that was that she should be following the church’s teaching without question. For Catholics, authority rests in church leaders – human church leaders. For us, it is in God’s Word because it shines like a light in the dark, pointing us to Jesus, the morning star, as we read in Revelation 22, **(LCD) “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.”** Amen.