

SERMON FOR TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY 2-23-20

2 Peter 1:16-21 "Connecting to the Invisible God"

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Not too many years ago the big thing in the news was that the people of Iraq voted. What gave them the confidence to vote? Up until that day, they were told by some of their fellow country men that if they voted they would be blown up. They were being threatened by the terrorists that live in their country. And they had seen some of the different attacks that were being carried out. What gave them the confidence they needed to walk to a polling place and vote?

It was all the security. They had armed soldiers at every polling place; the polling places were surrounded by barbed wire fences; there were concrete barriers. When the Iraqis saw all that visible security - that gave them the confidence they needed to cast their votes.

Sometimes we need to see things too, to bolster our confidence. If you find yourself walking down a dark street and there are some shady looking characters standing off to the side, watching you, it's nice to see a police car patrolling the area. We need to see things. I'm sure if I'd been living in Iraq back then I probably wouldn't have voted unless I could see with my own eyes all the security that was being put into place. You know what they say: 'seeing is believing'.

And that is why, sometimes, it's hard to be a Christian. God wants us to be confident Christians, but He never lets us see him. Have you ever noticed that about God? Our God is a God who likes to hide himself, who likes to remain invisible.

- **"I will take care of you,"** God says, but as you drive down the road, as you go to work, as you spend time at home, or as you go about your day, you never, ever see God.
- **"I'm in control of the world,"** God says, but then we see things on the news – natural disasters, or crimes taking place, and we ask sometimes, "Where is God? Is He really in control?"

God describes himself in the Bible as a powerful and wise and loving and glorious God. But here on earth, we can't see those things. And when we're struggling with a problem, we might find ourselves looking up to heaven and saying, "God, I wish just once that you'd let me see you. Let me see that you

are here. Let me see your glory. Let me see your power and your mercy. I want to see that you are really here.” When we say these things or think these things, do you realize that God is standing an inch away from your face, looking you right in the eye? You might not be able to see him, but God is here, right here, with all of his power and wisdom and grace and glory. He’s right here. But God is not going to turn the lights on so that we can see him. Instead—if you want to connect to the invisible God, you’re going to have to do it a different way.

Just think of all the invisible things that are out there, all around you and you can’t see them

- As we sit here in church, there are radio waves all around, even though we can’t hear the music or the talking.
- There are television signals in this room, and satellite signals, but we can’t see the pictures they are producing.
- The air is filled with cell phone signals, but you can’t hear anything. As you sit here with all five senses, you can’t see these things. But they are all here. The only way you can is by connecting yourself to one of those signals with a special device—a phone, a radio, a television, a computer.

And so, as we sit here with our five senses, we can’t perceive God’s presence. His glory is here. His wisdom and power are here. But we can’t perceive those things. **And yet, there is a way that you can connect yourself to the invisible God.** And that is here, through the Word. This is how you can connect to God and to all of his glory. And once you make this connection, and keep that connection going, you become more and more of a confident Christian. You become someone who doesn’t need to see God, because you know, by faith that he is here.

The Apostle Peter speaks to us this morning from one of his letters, and encourages us to pay close attention to this special book we call the Bible.

- Instead of God walking next to you in a visible way, God stays invisible, but walks next to you here, in his Word.
- Instead of God speaking to you face to face, God remains invisible. But he speaks to you here, through His Word.

Here is where God comforts you, encourages you, and gives you confidence to face all the ups and downs that life can bring your way. This is where you can get connected to the invisible God.

Listen to how the apostle Peter describes the Bible: **“We do not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”** This isn’t a bunch of made-up stories, Peter says. Isn’t that a common way people look at the Bible today—a bunch of cleverly invented stories. And so, many will ignore the Bible and look to all sorts of religious books or self-help books to get closer to God. How sad that they do not see the Bible for what it is. Peter says, **“We do not follow cleverly invented stories...but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”** If you want to get connected to the invisible God, then what better place to go than here, where you can read eyewitness accounts of the majesty and glory of God. Peter is referring back to that moment when Jesus at the top of the mountain, revealed his glory. Most of the time Jesus hid his glory, and appeared as an ordinary man. But for a moment, on that mountain top, Jesus gave his disciples a glimpse of his majesty, of who He truly is.

And not only did they see the majesty of Christ with their eyes. They heard it with their ears: **“For 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.’”** It must have been shocking for Peter to hear the voice of God, booming from the cloud. And what that voice of God emphasized was that Jesus, even though he looks lowly most of the time, really is the almighty and majestic God. **“We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”**

That’s what makes the Bible unique. It was written by people who witnessed the glory of God.

- If you want to connect yourself to the Invisible God,
- if you want to get closer to him, get to know him better;
- if you want God to speak to you and guide you and encourage you and strengthen you,
this is where you go.

Do you know why we as Christians have such a hard time getting ourselves to read this book? Even though we are Christians, sometimes we lack interest in God’s Word. Have you ever noticed that about yourself?

- How is it that you can read the sports section so intently, and memorize all the different stats and trivia about the sports world, but you can’t get yourself to read God’s Word?

- How is it that you can intently study the sales ads for clothing stores, or the catalogs, or spend hours surfing the internet for the best deals on things, but you won't put half the energy into studying this catalog (the Bible)?

We are sinful people this way. That sinful nature that we're born with, that's what makes us shy away from this book. But there is good news in this book for sinners like you and me. Of all the glorious things that there are about God, the most glorious thing is the fact that this Jesus, who revealed his glory on that mountain, went to a different mountain, and hid his glory. **And he did that to take away our sins.** Of all the majestic things that there are about God – his power over nature, his unbelievable intelligence – of all the majestic things – the greatest of them, was when God became nothing. When he hung on that cross. When Jesus, instead of bright, and shining, hung there in the dark, and took away the sins of the world. The greatest of all the teachings in this book is the fact that because of his sacrifice, you are a forgiven child of God right now, and that because of Jesus, God loves you right now.

If you want to connect yourself to the invisible God, then first connect yourself to Jesus Christ.

- Here in his Word, here is where he reveals himself to you. As Peter says, **“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place.”**
- Here is where you can connect yourself to the invisible God.
- Here is where God gives you a glimpse of his glory.
- Here is where God can make your good days even better.
- Here is where God can make your bad days, not seem so bad.
- Here is where God makes your laughter more enjoyable, your pain more bearable, and your confidence stronger every day.

And so, if you want to see God's glory, my suggestion to you is to be patient. Eventually you will see God's glory, when he comes again on the last day. Until then, spend your time looking here, where God gets you ready for that day when you will experience the same thing the apostle Peter experienced on that holy mountain, Until that day, may God continue to nurture your faith, and may that come to you as you spend time here, in his Word. **Amen.**