

The Transfiguration of Our Lord, Epistle, Year A

SEEING "NO ONE EXCEPT JESUS HIMSELF ALONE" (a la Matthew 17:8)

2 Peter 1:16-21

The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Analysis by Marcus Felde

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." 18We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

19So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

DIAGNOSIS: Seeing Somebody Else

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Losing the Plot
Lamentably, Peter's old friends whom he had once introduced to the Christ were now all over the map. (Only this and one bit from chapter 3 make it into the lectionary; it's so negative!) This had led to a perilous state of affairs, as you can see by reading the entire letter. Their new allegiances allowed them all sorts of liberties which, once taken, had a way of leading them away from Christ. Their lives were a mess.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Wandering Around
Peter characterizes as “darkness” the alternative messages they have turned to. They are “cleverly devised myths,” alternative readings of scripture which were leading them to destruction. People who at some point might have said, loyally, “I am of Cephas” (ref 1 Corinthians 1:12) are looking for something new and better.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Devoured
Peter says elsewhere that the fate of those who have abandoned the promise of Christ and no longer believe in his coming will be to be devoured by the devil (1 Peter 5:8):: “Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour.”

PROGNOSIS: Seeing “No One Except Jesus Himself Alone” (from Matthew 17:8, the Gospel Reading for this day)

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Jesus, His Majesty
Peter testifies as an “eyewitness” to Jesus, one who was told on the Mount of Transfiguration to “listen to him.” He did. After the theophany, when Peter and James and John scraped themselves off the ground and stood up, “they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.” Irrefutable proof, to him, that the voice of testimony was telling them to forsake all other interpretations of the Scripture, all cleverly devised myths, and adhere to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. This testimony comes from one who knew what it was like to betray his Lord. The lion almost got him. But Jesus died, and Jesus rose, and Jesus took him back!

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Confirmed
We listen then to the prophetic message, but the prophetic message confirmed (v. 19). We heed. We trust. We have waited patiently in the dark, until the Morning Star has risen in our

hearts. God has given us this light.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Gaining It Back—and More

Everything necessary for life comes out of knowing this Jesus as Lord. May I quote 2 Peter 1:3-8?

His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the divine nature. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.