

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
The Transfiguration of Our Lord  
February 23, 2020  
Sermon by Pastor Justin Gran  
**Theme: Pay attention**

—2 Peter 1:16-21

“Pay attention!” There are different times when someone might tell you to pay attention. If you’re driving and something on the side of the road catches your attention, your passenger might get a little nervous especially when you start swerving so she’ll say, “Pay attention!” A teacher might want to drive home a key point in the lesson so he says, “Now pay attention.” A parent sometimes has to tell a child and help a child to pay attention so that they can learn an important lesson. If something is really important, it calls for special attention. Pay attention.

Peter uses that phrase in today’s lesson. He tells his hearers to “pay attention.” Peter draws our attention back to the Mount of Transfiguration where he learned some very important truths that day. Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on a high mountain, and all of a sudden Jesus’ appeared bright and his clothes became as white as lightening. Then all of a sudden, there were Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus. But then it got even more glorious. A bright cloud appeared and the voice of God the Father spoke and they were terrified because God was talking directly to them. He said, **“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”** God grabbed their attention, pointed to Jesus Christ who is true God, and said, “Listen to him!” “Pay attention to him.” Literally, “hear him!”

Peter and the others needed to hear that powerful reminder, because so often they had listening problems. Later they would see Jesus suffer and die, and how quickly they would forget the words of hope and promise Jesus spoke. Jesus said, to Peter and the others, “I must suffer and die and on the third day be raised to life,” but it was like they weren’t listening or paying attention to the point that Jesus was driving home. Even on the night Jesus was betrayed, Peter took out his sword and chops someone’s ear off because he just couldn’t get his head around what Jesus had said. He listened to his gut. He listened to Jesus’ enemies jeering and persecuting Jesus, but for a time he failed to listen to Jesus’ words, and even to the words of Moses and the prophets that testified about the suffering Messiah. Peter and the others’ attention were so easily shifted away from Jesus’ words of promise.

What grabs your attention? What distracts you? What do you see in the world around you that casts doubt on Jesus’ promises? We struggle with similar attention and listening problems. Maybe it’s our own ambitions plans for our lives that distract us from God’s will in our lives. Other times, we pay more attention to what people say. Their opinions of us carries more weight than what God declares of us. We might listen to our own gut over what God commands or declares. Maybe it’s suffering here and now that pulls our attention away from sure promise of salvation. It’s easy to look at the world around us and the hopelessness that sin causes and wonder if what God promises is really true: Is he really in all things working for the good of those who love him? What distracts you and pulls your attention away from Jesus and his Word?

That command, “Listen to him” or “Pay attention” is way more important than a warning to keep your eyes on the road. If you’re driving and you take your eyes off the road, you could swerve to your physical death. Failure to listen to Jesus, failure to pay attention to his word, could potentially veer even the most seasoned believer off the path to eternal life. Pay attention!

Many years later, The voice of God speaking from the cloud still grabbed Peter’s attention as he wrote, **“We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 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.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.”**

The message of Jesus’ power and coming to save the world from sin was not some cleverly invented story. If Peter told his own story he would have had in mind an earthly Messiah with a literal sword. Instead the glorious gospel about Jesus had to be revealed over and over again. Peter and the others were eyewitness of Jesus divine glory, and ear-witnesses of the Father’s voice, the voice that directed their attention to Jesus and his words. And that’s what Peter does for us.

He goes on, **“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, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your**

**hearts.**” What does Peter mean, by the way. Is he saying that because he saw Jesus’ true glory, the word of the Prophets is even more certain? You could understand it that way. After Jesus performed his first miracle we are told, “He thus revealed his glory and his disciples put their faith in him.” But a more literal translation of Peter’s words is “And we have the more certain prophetic word.”

Do you think your faith would be stronger today if you had been on top of that mountain with Peter, James, and John? If you only could have seen Jesus give little glimpses of glory with every miracle he performed do you think you would have such unshakable faith? Once Jesus told a story about a rich man and beggar named Lazarus. Both men died. The rich man went to hell where he was in agony. Lazarus was ushered up to heaven where his suffering came to an abrupt end and he was brought to Abraham’s side. The rich man called out from hell and asked if Lazarus could be sent to the rich man’s family to warn. And Abraham said, **“They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them... If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”**

**“And we have the [more] certain word of the prophets, 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.”** Even more certain than a glimpse of glory on top of a mountain is the entire testimony of Scripture. The true glory of Jesus Christ was revealed on top of the sacred mountain. The same glory and power of Jesus Christ shines brilliantly through Scripture. We have the words of ancient prophets that pointed ahead to Jesus. We have the eyewitness accounts of those who did see his glory and power and heard his words. But you must understand that these are not the words of men, but the words of God. This calls for special attention. Pay attention, because the words that the Son speaks are far more certain than anything else you might experience in this world.

The promises that God has made and has kept in the Bible are far more certain than what meets our eyes. You may not see physical evidence in the world that tells you that God is in control. You may not see a light at the end of a tunnel that shows you the specific good that God is working for you. But you can be certain, because the Scriptures cannot be broken. Not a single one of God’s promises can be broken. Pay attention to the voice of Jesus echoing throughout Scripture. It is far more certain than what the world says. His word is truth. Listen to what your heavenly Father declares about you. It carries far more weight than what other people think about you. Just as God said on the Mount of Transfiguration, **“This is my Son whom I love. With him I am well pleased!”** In Jesus Christ, God makes the same declaration of you—you are his own dear child. He loves you. Because of the perfect life and innocent death Jesus, he is well pleased with you! You have his most certain Word on that. What Jesus declares to you personally in the gospel is way more certain than what your gut tells you. Your gut won’t tell you that you are forgiven and at peace with God, But Jesus does, so listen to him.

It would have been amazing to be there on the sacred mountain with Peter, James, and John; to see Jesus shine with splendor. It was unforgettable for Peter. But don’t think you’ve been shortchanged in any way. Peter wasn’t trying to one-up anyone when he said that he saw Christ’s majesty and glory and heard the voice of the Father at the transfiguration. In fact in his first letter, Peter said this, **“Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”** He lays out his credentials as an apostle who actually witnessed the Lord in his glory. But then he points our attention to the witness of all Scripture, which unequivocally testifies to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God who has come in power and has triumphed over sin. Don’t think that your faith is any less than Peter’s. Remember **“...we have the [more] certain word of the prophets, 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.”**

Amen.