

Vicar Lincoln Albrecht—Easter 2 (April 11th)—2nd Peter 1.16-21

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Amen. [1st

Peter 1.2]

We've all heard fantastic storytellers before. Sometimes they captivate us during a full moon as the campfire embers glow softly. Other times they know how to take a everyday event and make it riveting. Painting the background with broad but colorful strokes, injecting humor, whetting our appetite with foreshadowing, dropping action-filled surprise after surprise, until, finally revealing the climax you were waiting for, but could never anticipate.

With a good-story teller, maybe you get lost in the moment. Maybe they get you to scream in fright, cheer with delight, or laugh in spite of your surroundings. They can leave you hanging on every word, pondering every participle, and embellishment only adds to the excitement.

Peter understood this as he was writing his second epistle. He knew people liked a good story—and the false-teachers did as well. They accused Peter and the other apostles of just telling good stories. Jesus couldn't be everything Peter said. No one could be that powerful, that honorable, that glorious, that loving.

But Peter was certain. And then the false-teacher reminded him he had been certain when he walked on water, when he told Jesus not to go to Jerusalem, when he denied knowing Jesus before a servant girl. These false teachers would latch onto a single specific aspect of God and say this is who God is. These teachers had just taken a glimpse of what the Bible teaches, ran with it, and misled many.

It is all-too-common in our world, to hear who people say Biblical sounding things. False teachers would have you believe that God has just given us a dim reflection & we have to figure out the rest.

They might be quick to say Jesus is Lord. That he did it all. And then they tell you in order to be sure you are saved you have to do more good than bad. How sad! But their error, one we recognize, can corrupt our thinking. Convincing us that our salvation is, at least in part, tied to our good deeds. That we can pay back God a little bit for what he has done.

Or they confess that God is powerful, but they say that he uses his power to manipulate people to do what he wants. They speak of God as a puppet-master, pulling the strings in our lives for his own amusement. And that doesn't sound right—but how can you know for sure? Scripture says that God is powerful—that he accomplishes what he desires—so what is the point of you trying to do anything?

Or people tell you that God is honorable and glorious. And we know that that is true. But then they say the best way to honor God is to see what God has done—in nature. Because, when you get together with other people at church, all you see is sinners and hypocrites. Why would I want to go to a church like that? Shouldn't I be able to recognize God when I see him? I want to see his glory in nature. I want to honor him by protecting the earth he gave me. I want to see God's majesty in the mountains.

Or maybe people tell you that God is love, and that a loving God would never allow anything bad to happen to you. Why would he punish anyone when he could simply remove all the bad things on this earth? Wouldn't that be better? And they paint God to be like your grandfather—always with a big smile, a good story, and a twenty and a Werther's Original in their pocket—someone who just tinkers with our world but is unable to fix it.

Or maybe you hear people on TV or at work talk about how God doesn't care about anyone. How he is vengeful—punishing people he doesn't like by a system of arbitrary rules—and how he is distant—never really to be found when we need him most.

But you know that these glimpses aren't right. They weren't what you were taught. But how can you be sure? You weren't there walking and talking with Jesus like Peter was. You weren't **eyewitnesses** to the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, or the Resurrection. How can you be sure? Because people will take glimpses from the Word and tell you that it means something that you know it doesn't. And you can convince your mind that they just have a cleverly concocted story, that they have just been indoctrinated from a young age—but where does that leave you?

How do you know that you haven't been indoctrinated the same way? How do you know that your entire belief system isn't based on a just a glimpse of what God really says?

Well, how could Peter be sure? Not because he had seen it with his own eyes. Peter knew that he could trust his LORD and Savior, Jesus the Christ, more than his own eyes. The irony of the accusations from the false teachers was that they were doing exactly what they accused him of doing—telling cleverly invented myths about who God was, what he was like, and what he thinks about mankind. Taking glimpses and creating stories—**not being faithful evangelical eyewitnesses**.

So how can you be sure your testimony as an **evangelical eyewitness** is faithful? You have the Bible—the complete plan of God’s salvation—everything you need to know about God, both his justice and his love. Peter was encouraging Christians to learn Scripture. Learn it well. Learn where it came from. Learn whom it came from. Learn why it came. Become evangelical eyewitness. Know the Gospel first hand. God did not give us a message which was at the mercy of clever or creative writers. He inspired the message he wanted men like Moses, Peter, and Paul to write down. Peter offers his eye-witness not as proof that these things happened—God attesting to them is enough.

False teachers’ eyewitness is error-filled and damning. Because God has not given us a dim impression of his nature and told us “figure out the rest”. He has clearly told us about himself, his love—made manifest in his Son—and he has sent his Spirit to do the interpreting for us. He has sent his Word to be a lamp for our feet as we stand confessing him to be God. He has given us his Gospel to light our path as we, as **evangelical eyewitnesses**, walk along with him, with faith-filled eyes fixed on heaven.

This is why Peter writes that God proclaimed his Son was accomplishing our salvation. And this wasn’t a new announcement. God had been saying it throughout the Old Testament. All the Prophets, the whole Old Testament had been looking forward to the Messiah. Peter reassured his readers, and you and me, that the Word we read, the Word we digest, the Word we profess to be of more weight than gold, silver, and our own blood, isn’t of human origins.

God spoke to mankind, the Holy Spirit carried them along in a process we don’t fully understand, but one from which we fully benefit.

Because as we read Scripture we become **eyewitnesses** that God is powerful, honorable, glorious, vengeful, and loving. But to pick any one of these aspects and say this alone is God is not accurate or beneficial. It is deadly dangerous.

Because God has revealed himself throughout Scripture. Yes he is powerful—he created the whole world. Yes he is honorable—he has a name so magnificent we struggle to understand its complexities. Yes he is glorious—no man can look him face to face and live. But he is also loving. He demonstrated this in the work of his Son. This is why Jesus came, to live the life we didn’t all so we could be what we were not. This is the truth of the Truth.

And our God tells us what we can expect from him. He gives us promises about himself and assures us that I the LORD your God do not change. He is the only predictable thing in this fluidly changing world. And God doesn’t not change because he is stuck in his ways—like a grouchy old-timer—he doesn’t change because to do so would be to compromise his love, his perfection, his deity, his God-ness.

So our consistent God has given us his consistent and divinely inspired Word and his promise for the future. He used his power to send his Son, so that we might be spared the just wrath we deserved, and instead bask in his love. He has used his power to work faith in our hearts. He tells us that he uses his power for the good of all those who love him. That’s right, God uses his power to get us to love him, so he can work out everything for our good.

And that is a good story—but not like those of clever or captivating storytellers. This is the story of our salvation, of our God, who doesn’t just capture our ears for a moment; but captures our hearts for a lifetime. This is the story you and I as evangelical eyewitnesses, know well. Hang on to every word, ponder every participle, meditate on his mercy;—because God didn’t have to add embellishment to make it exciting. He just told the truth to save all his **eyewitnesses**. AMEN.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

[Philippians 4.7]