

“Pay Attention”

2 Peter 1:16-2:10

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 4, 2018

I don't know about your experience, but most of the time I find that trying to figure out what God wants me to do is hard work. It involves spending lots of time in prayer and lots of time reading Scripture and lots of time talking the issue over with other wise Christians. It's through those three things – praying, seeking counsel, and reading the Word of God that I hear God speak. But one of the amazing things about our faith is that we CAN hear God speak. The Bible is filled, from cover to cover, with God speaking to His people. He spoke to Adam and Eve in person in the Garden of Eden. He spoke to Noah and told him to build a boat. He spoke to Abraham and told him to move to a country that God would show him later. He spoke to Moses a lot. But he also spoke to Elijah through a “still, small voice” and he spoke to King David through the Nathan the prophet.

One day Jesus took his closest disciples, Peter, James, and John, on a little retreat to a mountain getaway. The Bible says that while they were there Jesus' appearance changed. He was radiant. He began to glow with an intensely bright light. Even his clothes were glowing. What was happening was that Peter, James, and John were seeing Jesus' true, divine nature. They were getting a glimpse of his glory. Then while they were standing there, Moses and Elijah joined them and had a conversation with Jesus until a cloud surrounded them and they couldn't see anything. At that point God the Father spoke out loud to the disciples. In case they still hadn't figured out who Jesus is, the Father says, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

You've probably heard the saying, “it's better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt.” Peter apparently was not familiar with that concept. He says, “Jesus, let's set up some tents for you and Moses and Elijah and we can all just stay here forever.” That's one of the reasons I love

Peter. I know that even when I have dumb ideas and say ridiculous things that Jesus still loves me. Well as you can imagine this was a powerful, life-changing moment in those three disciples' lives. They heard God speak out loud.

In our reading this morning from Peter's second epistle, he reminds us of the story of Jesus' transfiguration. He says, “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,’ we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.” In other words, Peter's saying, “I was there. I saw it with my own eyes and heard it with my own ears. And the others heard and saw it, too.” An eyewitness is powerful and something like this you wouldn't soon forget. In addition to all the miracles they witnessed Jesus do, this was direct proof that Jesus is who He says He is, that He is God.

That's what makes this passage in 2 Peter so amazing. Peter says, “we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.” He's saying, “being there was great but it only confirms what the Scriptures say.” For Peter, the Scriptures are more important than witnessing Jesus being transfigured. In fact we know that at the time Peter didn't fully understand what had happened. It was only after Jesus' resurrection and the Holy Spirit interpreting what happened in light of the Scriptures that Peter could understand what he had experienced. So the first thing we want to remember this morning is that the Word of God is more important than a private experience.

Peter goes on to say, “we have the prophetic word (meaning all of the Scriptures, not just the prophets) more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” The second point is that the Word of God shines a

light us. In the light of God's Word, we can finally see ourselves as we truly are—as sinners. We can't hide from God's truth. In the Bible, separation from God is described as darkness. If you learn the Scriptures they will show you the dark places in your life.

But the light of truth from the Scriptures also shines a light on our path. As Psalm 119 says, "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." It's the Bible that shows us the right way to go. More importantly, it's the Bible that shows us who Jesus is. "We have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." This is all about Jesus. In Revelation 22:16, Jesus says, "I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." We need to pay attention to God's Word even if we don't understand it, even if we don't believe it. We need to pay attention until we know Jesus personally and hear him speak to us. At some point God the Holy Spirit helps us understand. The Morning Star, Jesus, rises in our hearts. That's our third point to remember: The Bible is reliable because it comes from God. The Holy Spirit guided the writing and He guides our understanding.

Now it's not enough to read until you know who Jesus is. Peter says we are to keep paying attention to the Scriptures until "the day dawns." That refers to Jesus returning again, just as He promised. What that means for us is that we need to keep paying attention to the Scriptures until we see Jesus face to face. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known."

Finally, Peter gives us some warnings. He warns us about false teachers who try to convince people of their own interpretation of the Scripture. Be very wary if you hear someone say they have discovered that the Bible doesn't actually mean what it says about sin and its remedy in Jesus. If you ask a few questions you

will probably find that what they want you to think the Scriptures mean is what they themselves are already doing. False prophets are motivated by greed and by their own selfish desires. One of the things we see in this passage is that the current debates over biblical sexuality are not new. Remember that Jesus said that His way is the narrow, difficult way. So Peter reminds us of the consequences of rejecting God and especially of leading others away from Jesus. Our final point is that God will never lead you to something that contradicts His Word.

The passage ends with some examples of God's judgment against sin in the past. In particular, Peter mentions Noah and the flood, and Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. I know some of you are still hoping for a fire and brimstone sermon and you are probably thinking this would be a good passage to do it. But the truth is that these verses are about God's generous, amazing grace. In the reference to Sodom and Gomorrah in particular, Lot had not done anything to deserve being saved. According to Genesis Lot had settled into a life very similar to his neighbors. But God rescued him anyway. He wants to do the same for you. Peter says, "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment."

So pay attention. Pay close attention to God's Word. Pay attention to it as if God is speaking to you directly. Because He is! The Bible is the only book where the author is present every time you read it. Pay attention so you won't be deceived by false teachers. Pay attention so you can clearly see your own sin but also so you can see the path of righteousness. Pay attention so you know Jesus better and know His voice. And pay attention until you see Jesus face to face.

Amen.