

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
Adult Bible Class
2 Peter 1:12-21
January 24, 2021

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.” -- John 21:18–19

Remember, Remember, Remember - 2 Peter 1:12-15

Peter had been told by the Lord Jesus that he would die a violent death. As his death draws near, Peter, like many people turns to the question of how he will be remembered. However, Peter does not want to be remembered for the heroic things he did in his life. Instead, he wants his hearers to remember his teaching so that they may withstand the challenges yet to come their way in service to the Lord.

Three times in four verses Peter talks about the importance of memory:

- I always intend to remind you (12)
- Stir you up by way of reminder (13)
- After my departure ... you may recall these things (15)

By emphasizing memory Peter aligns himself with the prophets of the Old Testament and with the teaching of Paul, his fellow apostle.

- Exodus 13:3 Then Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery, for by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten...”
- Joshua 1:13 “Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, ‘The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.’”
- Isaiah 46:9 “Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me”
- Acts 20:35 “In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Why the emphasis on memory? Luther sums it up as follows:

To exhort, however, or, as Peter says here, “to remind,” is to preach to those who already know and have heard it, to persist, and to rouse them not to lose sight of it but to continue and to make progress. We are all burdened with that old rotten sack, with our flesh and blood. It always chooses the wrong path and constantly pulls us down to its own level, so that it is easy for the soul to go to sleep.”

Biblical remembrance is not simply a mental process but is sacramental.

- 1 Corinthians 11:25 ‘In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”’
- Romans 6:3–4 “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”

This emphasis on remembering the things we have already heard countless times, is sometimes portrayed as unnecessary. Some Christian fellowships tend to regard the preaching of salvation as merely preaching the basics. Mastering of this material will give you a D on your spiritual report card. You pass, but just barely. In these fellowships great emphasis is then placed on growing in more relevant matters – living out the victorious life, serving the poor or focussing on whatever issue happens to be in vogue at a particular time. The problem is however that if we lose sight of “the basics” we lose out on everything else. Failure to remember reduces Christianity to be just another set of rules to follow to live a happy life.

But why? What Authority does Peter have? - 2 Peter 1:16-21

Why would anyone want to remember the teachings of a man who is about to be thrown to the lions? Like Paul, Peter was also plagued by false teachers who would eagerly try to undo what he had proclaimed and taught in his churches. We will deal with the particularities of the false teachers next week, but for now it is important to know they are there and they will proclaim to the churches that true heroes of are not those who are captured and killed.

To counter the objections that are sure to come, Peter offers two reasons why his teaching ought to be remembered:

1. He was an eyewitness to the transfiguration (and other events in the life of Christ)
2. We have the Scriptures, which are inspired by the Holy Spirit

Eyewitnesses of Majesty – 2 Peter 1:16-18

One of the qualifications for being an apostle was being an eyewitness to the ministry of Christ from its beginning at the Jordan River to the day of Ascension. (Luke 1:1-3, Acts 1:21-22).

It is perhaps surprising that of all the events Peter chooses to refer to having witnessed, he is led to the Transfiguration, rather than say the crucifixion or the resurrection. However, as we will see in the later chapters of the letter, one of the prime accusations of the false teachers was the slowness of Christ’s return and with that came scepticism about whether Christ was the King who would return on the last day. At the Transfiguration, they beheld the majesty of Christ and heard the voice of the Majestic Glory proclaiming Christ to be the beloved Son of the Father, with whom the Father is well pleased. Peter relates this event so as to counter the false teachers and to remind his hearers of the truth of Christ’s majesty. Peter’s message was no mere myth concocted to profit off the people of the church. The content of the message was his own personal eyewitness experience.

And something more sure – the prophetic word – 2 Peter 1:19-21

Even though Peter was an eyewitness, he then immediately downplays his experience and points the hearers to something even more sure – the prophetic word of God.

The “prophetic word” is shorthand for the Old Testament. Just as Christ is the centre of the New Testament, so also, he is central to the Old Testament. The Old Testament faithfully illumines Christ, his person and his saving work. There is nothing in the New Testament that is not already in the Old Testament.

Christians hold fast to this word. Here Peter echoes a number of Old Testament passages that call on God’s people to adhere to the word:

- Deuteronomy 32:46 [Moses] said to them, “Take to heart all the words by which I am warning you today, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law.
- Proverbs 4:20 “My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.”

The word is a light shining into the darkness of this earth (Psalm 119:105) bringing the word of Christ, the light of the world (John 8:12).

Luther: “For the Gospel does the very thing that happens when one is caught in a house in the middle of the night when it is pitch-dark. Then it would be necessary to provide a light until daybreak, so that he could see. Thus, the Gospel is really in the midst of night and darkness. For all human reason is sheer error and blindness. Thus, the world, too, is nothing else than a realm of darkness. In this darkness God has now ignited a light, namely, the Gospel. In this light we can see and walk as long as we dwell on earth, until the dawn comes and the day breaks.”

Not only does Peter testify to the message, importance and light of the Word, he also gives us a glimpse of how the scriptures came to be. Together with Paul’s teaching in 2 Timothy 3:16 -- ***All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness*** Peter’s words in verses 20-21 teach the inspiration of Scripture.

Three important points are made:

1. No true prophecy comes from human origin.
2. The writers of Scripture spoke from God, carried along, by the Holy Spirit.
3. Inspiration applies not just to the Old Testament but also to the still emerging New Testament.

So how does Peter wish to be remembered after his death? What was important to him was not just his life and ministry exploits. Above all, he wanted to be remembered for the message he proclaimed. That message was based on his own eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus and the divinely inspired Word of God. “After my departure ... remember these things”.