

Opening

- What do you remember about your baptism?
 - I suppose how you answer that depends on how old you were when you were baptized.
 - If you were an infant, you might only recall what you’ve been told about it.
 - For me, I was baptized at about the age of the young people we will baptize and confirm this morning, during worship, so I remember it pretty well.
 - I remember thinking it wasn’t that big of a deal- just going get a little wet and become a member of the church.
 - But then looking out at my family in the pews- and they were there in full force- all my grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.
 - And I saw my grandfather Winston- a deeply religious man, with tears flowing down his cheeks and I realized that this day was not just about me.
 - And this was a HUGE deal.
 - For some of those people, this event marked a milestone- and it was the answer to a LOT of prayer and they spoke about that day for many years after.
 - I remember that day so well, because I lived it first-hand.
- Do you remember where you were or what you were doing when you heard about the Space Shuttle Columbia disaster?
 - I also remember that day well.
 - I remember being at work, when the news interjected shock and fear into what would have otherwise been an ordinary work day.
 - I remember, because I saw it first-hand.
- How about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy- do you remember where you were or what you were doing on that day?
 - I wasn’t old enough to remember the details of that event.

- Yet in some ways, I feel like I was there, because of what my parents told me about it.
 - They told me of the bravery of his wife Jacqueline.
 - About the long funeral procession.
 - And little John saluting his father's casket as it passed by.
 - And those stories form indelible images in my mind.
- Do you remember 9-1-1?
- Where were you and what were you doing when the Chiefs won the Superbowl?
- In our lives, there are moments in time which touch us and they become anchored in our memories.
 - And because we were there and we saw, we remember them with vivid detail.
 - That's what today's baptisms and confirmations will be like for the young people we will baptize today.
- And there are also those occurrences in the lives of people we know and we can recall those in detail, because someone told us about them.
 - I didn't live during the great depression, but I have an idea what it was like, because my parents lived through it and they told me about it.

First-hand witnesses

- That is what is happening in today's scripture reading from 2 Peter.
 - Today is Transfiguration Sunday, a day recalling when Jesus takes Peter, James and John with him to the top of a high mountain and he shows them the radiance of God.
 - His face shines like the sun, and his clothes become as white as light.
 - And Moses and Elijah appear and talk with Jesus.
 - It must have been amazing for the three Disciples to be there and see this first-hand.
 - And one can be sure that they remembered that day for the rest of their lives.
 - They could never forget something so remarkable.
- And the author of 2 Peter is calling on the reader to remember what they have been told about this by people who were there.

- You see, the church had been around long enough that there were people who began to misrepresent the truth of the gospel.
- They were questioning whether Jesus was truly coming back.
- In John 14:3, Jesus said “When I go to prepare a place for you, I will return and take you to be with me...”
 - And people had expected that to be sooner, rather than later, but it had not happened.
 - And people were beginning to give up on that idea.
 - Many of the first disciples- who had proclaimed the return of Christ- had died and still Jesus had not returned.
- And the author is writing, to remind them that what they have been taught is the truth.
- I imagine most of us can relate to that, right?
 - I mean who here hasn't thought to themselves at least once “If I could just see Jesus and hear him preach and to watch him heal people.”
 - “Gosh, if that could happen, faith would be easy.”
 - And who hasn't wondered to themselves “Is Jesus EVER coming back and WHEN?”
 - But as it is, we wait, just as they waited and there are times when doubts may begin to sneak in.
- But in the face of those doubts, we rediscover faith, by remembering what Jesus said.
 - Because we have a written account to look to- written by people who were there and saw.
 - We have the benefit of history written down to help us understand the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection.
 - And our minds can feed off of the thoughts of the greatest theologians who have shared their understanding of what it all means.
 - It was Jesus who said “Nobody knows when that day or hour will come, not the heavenly angels and not the Son. Only the Father knows. Therefore, stay alert!” (Matthew 24:36 & 42)
 - And it was Jesus who also said “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20:29)

- In this letter, the author reminds the reader - and reminds us- to keep the faith.
 - He reminds us THAT PETER WAS THERE AT THE TRANSFIGURATION!
 - These are not man-made stories, they are eye-witness accounts.
 - The author urges the reader to remember what they already know, saying “We have a most reliable foretelling of what is to come, and you would do well to pay attention to it, just as you would to a lamp shining in the darkness.”

Attested to by scripture

- The author is saying “Pay attention! Have you forgotten that you have this written word? It’s called the Gospel and it’s written by people who were there.”
 - “And this written word, proves the truth in what the prophets spoke long, long ago.
 - What they said about the Messiah has come true- it was proven true by Jesus’ coming, as attested to by people who were there and saw.
 - And these are not just words of people, but they are the Word of God.
 - And just as the Messiah came before, he will come again.
- The purpose of this letter was to build for the reader, a foundation for the Gospel.
 - A foundation which, long after Peter was gone, would fortify the reader.
 - Peter knew his time was short, and his concern was that after he was gone, people remain firm in their faith, because they know the truth of the Scriptures.
 - And he knew that if believers were grounded in this truth, they would not fail.
 - Because they would remember.

Wrap it up

- Do you remember when you were a kid, how your parents always reminded you of stuff, you already knew?
 - Man, I was always annoyed by that.
 - Every day before I left for school, my dad would give me a list of reminders.
 - Remember to wear your coat.
 - Do you have your house key with you?
 - Did you remember to get lunch money?
 - Etc. Etc.

- That list of reminders didn't change for 12 years and I knew it by heart.
 - And yet, my dad went over that list again and again- every day- so that I would remember.
 - I still remember it to this day.
- That's what it's like with today's scripture.
 - Peter knows that they know the truth in the scriptures.
 - He just wants to remind them- again- so that they don't get lost.
- Peter reminds us in the same way today.
 - He gives us our daily list, even though we already know it.
 - Did you remember that Peter, James and John, were there when Jesus showed the Glory of God?
 - Did you remember that the Gospels are not just myth or legend, but they are written by people who were present with Jesus when these things happened?
 - Did you remember to wear God's spirit in your heart today?
 - Like a father who fusses over his kids, this scripture reminds us of what we already know.
 - But we are reminded none-the-less, so that we always remember.
 - For each of us the challenge is to remember again, and to remind ourselves continually, that the Gospel is the truth of God.
- As we baptize and confirm our young disciples this morning, they will have an experience to remember all they days of their journey.
 - May we also be reminded of our own Baptism.
 - May we be reminded of the truth, grounded in God's word.
 - And may we rely on that truth, live into it and let it transform us.
- Amen