Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

If you were here last week, you will know that I have called this passage Peter’s ‘Pre-departure Reminder.’ And I called it that because Peter knew that he did not have long to live, and he used the word ‘reminder,’ in verses 12 and 13. So, he was eager to remind believers about matters he considered most important. And these matters were *so* important, that he put them down in a letter, so that believers could always have access to them.

And last week we began by considering the **function** of his pre-departure reminder. And we saw that it was so that believers might remain established in the truth. Because of the danger of false teachers, we need to read and hear the Bible preached and taught, regularly. And preaching also stirs us up to practice the qualities listed in verses 5-7.

Well, as we continue to consider Peter’s pre-departure reminder, our focus today is the **facts** behind the reminder and the **foundation** for the reminder. Peter was eager for believers to know that he was not just giving them his opinion or some ideas that the disciples of Jesus had invented. He wanted believers to understand that Christian faith is built on the historical reality of Jesus, as recorded and proclaimed in Scripture. And congregation, when it comes to what the Bible is, our text contains one of the most important passages in the whole Bible. Verses 20-21 are a critical and foundational text for understanding that the Bible is the word of God. And we will see what this means when we come to those verses later. But this has huge implications for us all.

1. But we start with verses 16-18 and the **Facts** Behind the Reminder.
   1. And Peter begins by saying, “*For we did not follow* *cleverly devised myths*.” And by “***we***” he means himself and the other Apostles. And a **myth** is a religious or traditional story that has no basis in actual fact.
      1. For example, last weekend was the **Matariki** holiday. And for some iwi, Matariki is part of the creation story. So, when Tāwhirimātea, god of wind and weather, saw that his parents, Ranginui and Papatūānuku, the gods of heaven and earth, had been separated, he was so angry that he tore out his eyes and threw them into the sky. And his eyes are the stars that make up Matariki. And from that flows a whole philosophy of seeking guidance from those stars. But that is an example of a myth, because we know that the God of the Bible created the stars and placed them in the sky.
      2. But if you look ahead to chapter2, Peter talks there about **false teachers** who “*secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the master who bought them*.” And in chapter 3, we see that a particular heresy that was being taught in Peter’s day was that Jesus was not going to come back to judge the living and the dead. Back in verse 12, Peter gave thanks that the believers he originally wrote to were established in the truth. So, we can infer from this that they had been taught by the Apostles that Jesus is the Son of God and that He was going to come back to judge the living and the dead. But false teachers were now telling believers that this was a myth; that Peter and the Apostles had just made this up. And the danger of what they were teaching was that if Jesus was not God and did not rise from the dead and was not going to return to earth for Judgment Day, then how you lived did not matter. And we will see that this is exactly what these false teachers were teaching. So, it was this assertion of having invented a myth about Jesus that Peter wanted to refute.
   2. And he does this, very interestingly, by referring to the account of the **transfiguration** of Jesus that we read earlier in Matthew 17. And Peter emphasizes in verse 16 that he and John and James *saw with their own eyes* Jesus change from looking like an ordinary human being into a glorious and shining God-like figure. And they *saw with their own eyes* Moses and Elijah appear and talk to Jesus. And in verse 18 Peter explains that they *heard with their own ears* the voice of God that spoke from heaven, saying, “*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased*.” And so, in fulfilment of the requirement of the law that there be two or more witnesses to establish the truth, Peter is saying that he, John, and James hare eyewitnesses of this event; this *really* happened.
      1. The other day I was driving back home through Avondale village and traffic had come to a stop. And all of a sudden, I saw a road sign sail through the air and hit a car. And then I saw the man who had thrown the sign. He looked very angry and agitated. He then started punching a person beside the bus-stop. And he crossed the road and there was a bike outside a dairy, and he was getting on the bike when, I am guessing, the owner of the bike came out of the dairy and tried to challenge him, and the man started punching the bike owner. Well, by this time I was on the phone to the police. And when I got through and started explaining what I was watching, it became clear that others were also on the phone to the police describing what was happening. And I could see some of them on their phones, seeing what I was seeing. So, it will not be difficult for the police to prosecute this man because there were many eye-witnesses. This *really* happened.
      2. And that is the point here. We can be sure that what Peter and John and James saw and heard up on that mountain *really* happened.
   3. Now, to see why this event was so important and how it connects with Peter’s pre-departure reminder, we will have to continue with verses 19-21. But the key point here is that the reminder to remain established in the truth and to make every effort to live a godly life is based on ***fact*** – an actual, historical, literal, physical, real event. The Apostles did not make up a myth about Jesus to support some idea of their own invention – they saw and heard this historical event.
2. But as we move on to our second point, why is the transfiguration of Jesus so important? Why did Peter refer to that event in support of his pre-departure reminder? Well, it is because this event made it clear to the Apostles that Jesus is God, and it was also a glimpse or a preview of Jesus’ eternal glory. Let’s see how and why this is so as we consider verses 19-21 as the **Foundation** for the Reminder.
   1. In verse 19, Peter refers to “*the prophetic word,*” which had been “*more fully confirmed*” to the Apostles. And what is in view here is the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus that had become clear with the coming of Jesus.
      1. For example, Isaiah spoke about a **virgin birth**. But the original prophecy in Isaiah 7 is part of an episode in the life of the king of that time. But when you read about the conception and virgin birth of Jesus in the New Testament, and then look again at Isaiah 7, it is plainly about Jesus.
      2. And in **Isaiah 53**, we have the prophecy about a servant of God who would be “*pierced for our transgressions*.” But because we know that Jesus was crucified, what Isaiah was talking about becomes as plain as the nose on your face!
      3. And this is so with many other Old Testament prophecies. It is why the early church father, Augustine, said of the two Testaments of the Bible, “The New is in the Old *concealed*; the Old is in the New *revealed*.” The birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus are all in the Old Testament, but they are hidden or shadowy or hinted at or there by way of types and antitypes. But they become plain with the New Testament. And in this way, the coming of Jesus and the Gospel accounts more fully confirm the prophetic word.
      4. And what Peter had in view specifically here is the **Second Coming of Jesus** in order to judge the living and the dead. And here is an interesting exercise for you all, if I were to ask you where the Old Testament prophets speak about the Second Coming, where would you suggest? That’s a bit of as tough one, isn’t it. Well, I’ve had time to look at commentaries and here is what they put forward:
         1. In **Daniel 7**, we read this vision: “*with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and He came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him*.”
         2. And earlier, we read from **Isaiah 13**. And Isaiah said, “*Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it … I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant, and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless*.” And this concept of “the day of the Lord” and judgment is repeated throughout the Old Testament prophets.
         3. **Psalm 2** speaks about the Son of God. We read, “*Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him*.”
         4. And **Psalm 110** speaks of the LORD (capital letters) with the Lord (lower-case letters) sitting at His right hand. We read, “*The Lord is at your right hand; He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations*.”
         5. So, it’s there, but it is in shadowy form.
         6. But then Jesus came, and He was transfigured in front of the apostles. They saw His glory and majesty and splendour and power!
         7. And Jesus said of Himself, in **Matthew 24:30**, “*Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*.” And in **chapter 26:64** He said, “*But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven*.”
         8. And Paul preached in **Acts 17**, saying that the Father “*has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead*.”
         9. And Paul wrote to Timothy about “*Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead*.”
         10. And back in **1 Peter 4:1-5**, Peter said that those who live in unrepentant sin “*will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead*.”
         11. And so, with the coming of Jesus, what was shadowy in the Old Testament is now crystal clear or “*more fully confirmed*.” Jesus is the Son of God who will come again to judge the living and the dead. That is the specific truth that Peter was setting before his readers, again.
   2. Well, as we draw to a close, look at the last part of Peter’s argument in **verses 20-21**, where he says, “*No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*.”
      1. The Greek word translated as “*carried along*” literally means to be **ferried** along.
         1. Who here has been on a ferry? Picton ferry? Waiheke Ferry? Well, when you get on those ferries, you end up wherever those ferries bring you. You can’t get off. You can’t turn the ferry around. You go where the ferry takes you.
         2. And similarly, the authors of the books of the Bible were ferried or carried along by the Holy Spirit. David, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the other Old Testament prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote. And what Peter was writing was guided by the Holy Spirit. So, it is not myth, it is not fairy tale, and it is not the opinion or private interpretation of men; it is the Word of God.
      2. We call this the doctrine of the **inspiration of Scripture**. And we have said plenty about this doctrine on other occasions, but we will keep our focus narrow today. The major point is that what we read in the Bible is trustworthy and without error and unchanging, because it is from God. Jesus is God. If we believe in Him, we receive the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. And He will come again to judge the living and the dead, because that is what we are told in the word of God.
         1. Soon we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper. Our explanatory form says:

*The remembrance of our Lord’s death revives in us the hope of his return. Since He commanded us to do this until He comes, the Lord assures us that He will come again to take us to himself. As we share now in the Lord’s Supper, we are assured that we shall one day see Him face to face, and rejoice in the glory of His appearing. Our Lord Jesus will surely do what He has promised.*

And you can be certain of this, believer, because it is in the Bible! But knowing that Christ will come again, and wanting to confirm your calling and election, should make you eager to practice the qualities listed in verses in verses 5-7. That is the main message of this whole passage. If you expect Jesus return, then “*make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue … knowledge … self-control … steadfastness … godliness … brotherly affection … [and] love*.”

* 1. But there is a message here also to those of you here today **who are** **not yet believers**. In **verse 19b**, Peter appeals to the authority of Scripture and says, “*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*.”
     1. You have heard today that Jesus was transfigured and that He rose from the dead and that He will come again to judge the living and the dead for the first time. You did not see any of this with your own eyes. All you have is what you can read in the Gospels and Epistles. But it is not myth. It is not fairy-tales. It is the truth. Don’t ask God for a vision to be sure He is real. That is not how He works. He has given you His word. He has laid it out for you in black and white. He has set Jesus before you in the Bible. It is everything you need to be certain that He is the Saviour you need. Just take God at His Word. Believe and the fog of doubt will lift, and the certainty of knowing Jesus as your Saviour and Lord will rise like a morning star in your heart!

Congregation, the Bible is the Word of God. It tells us the *truth* about Jesus. And it tells us how to live as believers who are saved by grace through faith in Christ. Amen.

Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you your Spirit guided Peter to put down on paper what we need to know to remain established in the truth. Help us believe all that we read in the Bible. And, by your Holy Spirit, bring our lives into conformity to its truth. In Christ's name, Amen.