

The Prophetic Word

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Date: 08 November 2020

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us.

We are glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good, they don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it.

And so that's why we come back week after week to look at God's Word together. I missed you all last week. I was sorry I couldn't be here. I joined you on the live stream. We're just at a season right now where we have to be extremely cautious and protect one another.

And so I didn't want to do anything to put any of you all at harm. And of course, I ask you to do the same if you're feeling sick or unwell to stay home. And to watch via our live stream, which you can find on our website.

I did get a COVID test, no COVID. My doctor says I'm not contagious, so I'm just glad to be back with you all. I thank you for your prayers. And we continue our study in the book of 2 Peter.

[1 : 10] As I've been telling you, 2 Peter is a letter, and it's a letter written by a man named Peter to a church in the 60s A.D. somewhere in the Roman Empire.

And Peter writes this letter with one desire. He wants these people to grow. And we know that because he tells us at the very beginning of the letter that he wants grace and peace to be multiplied to them through knowledge.

And then in the very last verse, chapter 3, verse 18, he gives them a command. He says, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And so we see that this growth comes in two ways.

It comes both in grace and in knowledge. And at the very beginning, we spent a lot of time talking about the dangers of knowledge and the necessity for growth in grace. The last time we were in this book, we turned from grace to knowledge.

We've been looking at this question of why do we trust the Bible? We're coming to God's word. Why do we believe it? Why do we think it's reliable? And of course, as we talked about last time, this is incredibly important, right?

[2 : 12] We are making choices about our time and our money and our relationships and our commitments and our sexuality and our ethics and our religion based on what we find in this book.

And so it better be true. In fact, as I mentioned last time, Paul, in his letter to the 1 Corinthians, brings this up.

He says in 1 Corinthians 15, If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. In other words, our faith better be true.

And also, as I mentioned last time, we see here how God handles our doubts. He doesn't say to us, just have more faith, just believe.

But instead, he gives us reasons, right? God gave us minds. And so he uses real arguments, real reasons, logic to help us understand why we should believe and trust.

[3 : 07] And so it's with that continued question from last time, why is it that we believe and trust in the Bible that we're going to come now to God's word? I invite you to turn with me. We're in 2 Peter 1, starting at verse 19.

And you can find it printed near the end of your worship guide, in your Bible, or in your phone. Regardless of where you turn, the important thing is that this is God's word. And God tells us in Isaiah chapter 40 that the grass withers and the flowers fade, but his word remains forever.

And so that's why we read it now, starting at verse 19. And 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, knowing this, first of all, that 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. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we praise you and thank you again for giving us your word. And we confess that we are people with short attention spans and hard hearts.

[4 : 33] And so we ask that you would send your spirit to help us. You'd help us to hear and pay attention to what you have in your word. That you'd work in our hearts to soften them.

That we would respond eagerly, wanting to know and trust and obey you, because of how beautiful and gracious Jesus is. And so we ask that you would shine a light on him for us this morning.

And we ask these things with joy, because we know that we haven't earned them, but we can ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. A few weeks ago, when we were talking about fruit, I told you the story.

Of how I was so excited to send in my one penny to the seed company so I could get my mystery pack of seeds. And of course, I left this dangling part of the story that many of you called me out on, which is that I never told you what the seeds actually were.

And I explained the next week, the reason I didn't tell you what the seeds were is because I didn't remember. That's not what I was excited about. What I was excited about was that there was something coming for me in the mail.

[5 : 42] And so my four or five-year-old self was just eager with anticipation that there was going to be something in the mailbox. And I'm here to confess for you this morning that many years later, nothing has changed.

I am still very excited about things that come to me in the mailbox. However, I have way more strategies and resources at my disposal now, because now I receive these things called tracking numbers.

And so when I order something online, I get an email saying, your order has shipped. Here's your tracking number. And of course, I click on it. The first thing I see is that it has actually not shipped. It's just that they printed out a mailing label, which is really disappointing.

So I have to wait and watch. And I have a strategy for this. So I keep these tracking label browser windows open on my computer so I can refresh them from time to time and see where's the package.

Is it in Ohio? Maybe it started in California. When it gets to Denver, the processing center, then I know that the time is approaching. And things are going to be good soon.

[6 : 49] Now, it's been harder with COVID. Some things have been delayed. And sometimes, recently, they've just skipped scanning it. So I'll see that something was shipped, and then suddenly it'll show up in Denver.

And I know that's not where it started. And then, hopefully, right, at some point, the package arrives. And at that point, right, there is something sure.

I have a sure package. There are things that could have gone wrong along the way, right? The shipping company could have made a mistake and delivered it to the wrong house. That's happened to me before. Many tears.

Or they could have shipped the wrong item. So I receive it. It's not what I ordered. There's all kinds of things that I'm hoping are true. When I see the tracking number, I don't know they're true until I actually receive the package and open it up.

It's not that it is a different package. It's that it's a more sure package once I've received it. I know 100%. This is what I've ordered, and it has finally arrived.

[7 : 50] That is what we see here in this passage. We are starting out with this confusing phrase telling us, verse 19, we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed.

What does that mean? Well, when he's talking about the prophetic word, he's referring to Old Testament prophecy. How can a prophecy be more fully confirmed? And why is it that the people here in this city in the 60s A.D.

have it confirmed when other people don't? Well, if we're talking about Old Testament prophecy, what we understand is that the prophecies for these people have finally been fulfilled. Those Israelites who lived in the Old Testament only had the tracking number. They didn't have the package. They knew, they were told that something was on the way. They had to trust and believe that that was true. They did not have proof yet. But for these people in this letter, they know for sure because what was a tracking number in the past is now a sure and confident package now.

[8 : 59] And it is what it was supposed to be. In other words, Jesus, who was foretold throughout the Old Testament in many ways and at many times has finally arrived.

And in fact, that's what we look at often during the season of Advent. If you were here with us in 2017, you know that we looked at prophecies from the book of Isaiah about Christ, things that were told in the tracking number.

We were told in Isaiah chapter 53 that he was going to be crushed for our iniquities. We were told that the Lord was going to lay our sins on him. Well, what happened?

People in the New Testament saw. Wow, that actually happened. That prophecy came true. Jesus actually arrived. Jesus was crushed for us. Last Advent, 2019, we looked at the book of Micah, right?

We saw in Micah chapter 5 that this king who was coming was going to be born in Bethlehem. Guess what? Tracking number arrived. He was actually born in Bethlehem.

[10 : 01] This Advent, we're going to look at Zechariah, which gives us prophecies about the coming king. We're going to see, for example, in Zechariah chapter 9, verse 9, that he's going to come on a donkey. Guess what? He shows up on a donkey in the New Testament.

They have a prophetic word that is more sure because they can see that God has kept his promises. And so we're looking at the same question from last time, this time, but with a different answer.

Remember, when we looked at the earlier verses, the answer was that we trust the Bible because of eyewitness testimony. We saw that there was eyewitnesses throughout. Peter himself has put his skin in the game.

He has done what he would only do if he actually saw the things that he writes about. Here, however, the answer is not that we see eyewitness testimony. The answer is that we see the track record of prophecy.

The answer is not that there are people who have seen what happened, but that we now know how much God can be trusted.

[11 : 09] Why do we need both answers? Remember last week, we talked about the fact that what Peter witnessed was the transfiguration.

The reason that event was important was because it pointed forward to Jesus' second coming, when Jesus is going to return to the earth again, which has not happened yet. We need both these answers because eyewitnesses talk about what has happened in the past, but we're talking about what's going to happen in the future.

And so there are no eyewitnesses yet of Jesus' second coming. How can we be sure then that it's going to happen? Because we trust based on the record.

Right? I receive a package. It is what I ordered. It arrives to the right house. I can say, good. I trust UPS. They know what they're doing. Good. I trust this merchant.

They know what they're doing. Prophecy was correct about Jesus' first coming. It will be correct about his second coming. Prophecy was correct about Jesus' first coming.

[12 : 21] It will be correct about his second coming. And remember, we have false teachers. We're going to meet them next week. One of the things the false teachers are saying is that Jesus isn't coming back.

And so Peter here is reminding them why they have confidence in Jesus' return. He then goes on to explain to us why this prophecy happened.

We talked about this earlier in our confession of faith. Because God is in control of the world, of course he's able to tell us what's going to come. And we find a little bit about how that happens in verse 20.

We should know, first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. Now, I was intending to preach this right before the election.

However, it's still true the Sunday after. There are many people, some of them are called pollsters, who provided their own interpretation of what was going to happen on Tuesday.

[13:15] There are many people with opinions about who is going to win what state. And they were speaking out of their own intelligence, their own minds.

It was their own interpretation of what was supposed to happen. And in many ways, many of those things didn't happen, right? Those are just men speaking.

What Peter is telling us here is that when these prophets prophesied, they were not providing their personal opinions. That's what he means by their own interpretation here.

They are not giving their hot takes on what they think might happen in the future. They are not speaking out of something they studied and tried to figure out. They are not looking at mathematical tables trying to understand who is going to go which way.

Instead, they have a very different source for their information. And so that's why they were able to accurately predict what was to come. Verse 20, okay, it doesn't come from someone's own interpretation.

[14:21] Where does it come from then? Well, we're told in verse 21, it's not produced by the will of man. Again, not someone's own interpretation. But men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Now, this is a confusing phrase. But what he is telling us is that these men are speaking authoritatively about what is to come, not based on what they know, but what God's Holy Spirit has revealed to them.

His Spirit was at work in them in such a way that they were able to know what the future held. Now, this raises all sorts of questions about how this is called, by the way, in Christian theology, we talk about inspiration, which is the discussion of how the Holy Spirit works in men to allow them to write what's true, what's going to come in the future.

We cannot say more than the Bible tells us, and we're actually told a lot here. We're told they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Now, many people have pointed out this carried along word is also used in other parts of the Bible to talk about a ship being carried along by a wind.

And so there's this sense in which God's Spirit used these people and was at work in them so that what they wrote was true. Now, this leads into all sorts of discussions about how this works.

[15:39] Did God dictate it to them? Did he tell them the exact words? And, of course, we know as we look at the Bible that there's all sorts of differences between different letters, right?

There's different personalities that come through. There's different backgrounds, different levels of education. Luke writes in a different way. He writes more like a historian because he's much more educated than other people who write other portions of the Scriptures.

The book of Hebrews, whoever wrote that, really liked to write difficult Greek. Don't ask me why.

And I want you to think about it like this. Last Sunday, I did not preach, right?

Davis Morgan preached. I preach in very different ways. We have different personalities. He started out by telling a story about his father.

I'm never going to tell that story because his father is not my father. Davis Morgan has spent a lot of time in Texas. I've spent a little bit of time in Texas. We're going to outline and organize things differently.

[16:38] And Davis Morgan and I are going to preach and do preach the same gospel. We're part of the same denomination. We believe the same things, but we have different personalities.

And we teach the same things because we base it on the same Bible and we base it on the same confession of faith. The same is true for the authors of Scripture. They have different personalities. They have different backgrounds. They preach the same truth, not based on what Davis Morgan and I do, but based on something even more sure. They're basing it on the Holy Spirit inspiring them.

And so while Davis Morgan and I can both make mistakes and err in our interpretation of Scripture, these writers do not. And so it's one spirit working through multiple men, carrying them, you can think of it like a wind, to say what is true.

And so that's what he's telling us here. In essence, these are not men speaking their opinions.

These are men speaking from God. And so this is an explanation here of why these people are able to tell what's true.

[17 : 44] Now that's not the ultimate point of this passage, right? We're going to miss the point if that's what we focus on. The point is that God can be trusted when he speaks about the future. Even though there are false teachers here that are telling them that God is not returning.

They're telling them things that are not true about what is to come. And so we actually get to the main point here when we come to verse 19.

Okay, we've talked about this word more fully confirmed. We have all this information about why we should trust it. But here's the application, the takeaway. And what Peter is doing here is he's comparing the present and the future.

In the present right now, November 8, 2020, and in the 60s AD in the Roman Empire, we live in a dark world.

In that dark world, we have a lamp providing us with a little bit of light. That lamp is the scriptures.

[19 : 00] That lamp is the Bible, God's word, right? There's a reason that I hold this with me when I preach because this is our hope, not me. But there will come a time in the future where we will not need a lamp anymore.

Instead, there's going to be a dawning of the day and a morning star rising. And what we have to understand here is that when the Bible uses the word day like this, the day, it is talking about Jesus' return.

In the Old Testament, it was referred to as the day of the Lord, which people would understand was when God would come and make all things right, when he'd bring judgment. In the New Testament, we understand that it's the day of Jesus Christ.

And so we're looking forward to this day when we don't just have the lamp of scripture, but we have Jesus himself. Not only are we going to have the dawning of the day, we're also going to have the morning star rise in our hearts.

We understand from other portions of scripture that this star is also a reference to Jesus. In the book of Numbers, chapter 24, there's a prophecy about a star that's to come.

[20 : 11] And then even more explicitly, in the last book of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, Jesus speaks in the first person, in chapter 22, verse 16, and he says, I am the bright morning star.

In other words, we don't have Jesus now, but we have his word. One day, we will have the full son. We will have Jesus himself with us. One commentator explains it this way. We need to think about what Peter is saying as if we are someone separate.

Yeah? Oh, hey. That's a lot easier. Hold on, right? Hold on to the letters so you remember what's true.

Hold on to the letters so that you remain faithful to the one who's not there. Hold on to the letters when other people are trying to tempt you to give up and seek after other lovers.

[21 : 12] Hold on to the letters. Hold on to the letters. And one day, you won't need the letters anymore. One day, we will actually have Jesus with us.

We won't need the letters he's written us anymore. And until then, verse 19, pay attention.

Pay attention to what we have. Pay attention to the light, right? You will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place until Jesus returns.

And so that is the application for us as well. We have these love letters, right? We're remembering what's true. We're remembering that Jesus is coming back. There is growth in knowledge and growth in grace as we've talked about.

This growth in knowledge sticking close to the letters allows us to grow in our grace as well because these false teachers are telling them that the second coming is not going to happen. And so we pay attention in two ways.

[22 : 16] We pay attention as a source of hope and we pay attention as a point of warning. First, as a point of hope, we know that Jesus is coming back. And we remind ourselves over and over again, it may not change our circumstances now, but it does change our perspective.

Our hope about the future affects how we live now. Remember earlier in the letter, we looked in verses 5 through 7 about the fruit that God wants his people to bear in their lives. The holiness that they're meant to pursue.

We pursue that holiness because Jesus is coming back. And that's the hope that we're hauled out in verse 11, right? He says, In this way, there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Jesus has kept his promise, right? The package has been delivered. He can be trusted. The reason he can be trusted is because he has already visited the earth. He has already done the hard part of dying for our sins.

He has already proved that he will do what he says. And so we hold out hope.

[23 : 28] We don't listen when others tell us that he's not coming back. The package has arrived. The merchant is trustworthy.

Jesus shows that God keeps his promise. He is coming again. Live accordingly. Live with hope. And live with holiness. It's not just here, though, as an encouragement.

It's also here as a warning. Remember, the false teachers are attacking the idea that Jesus is coming again. And part of the reason they're attacking this knowledge is because they're also attacking their growth in grace.

They're teaching them to do all sorts of sinful things, saying it doesn't matter. Jesus isn't coming back. You're not going to have to answer for any of this.

If he was coming back, why haven't we seen him yet? We're going to talk about that more in chapter 3. And so this is here as a point of warning.

[24 : 34] Jesus may not have come back yet, but he will. And so don't be lulled into a false sense of security. Jesus provides hope and encouragement when he returns for those who have faith in him.

And he provides judgment and destruction for those who do not. The day of the Lord in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is known as the day when Jesus will make all things right. Which means that for those who have faith in him, those who he has died for, who have repented of their sins, and followed after him, he will rescue them and forgive them. For those who have not, he will bring full and final judgment.

They will answer for everything they have done and every word they have spoken. And so there's a warning to those people, to you, if you have not trusted Jesus Christ to forgive your sins, if you have not repented and turned to a new life, do not be deceived.

Jesus came once, he will come again. And so while there's hope for the believer, there is a call to repentance and faith for those who do not believe in Jesus.

[25 : 48] Because he is coming to judge. But he also provides hope because his first coming was a coming to die.

In his first coming, even though he lived a perfect life, the life that we should have lived, he died a horrible death, the death that we should have died.

And he offers to give the merits of that perfect life and the payment of that destruction to anyone who repents of their sins and turns in faith to him, believing that what Jesus tells us is true.

And so there's a challenge here for us to repent. If that's true of you, that call is now. You're welcome to talk to me or many of those around you in this church about what it looks like to have hope in Jesus' second coming.

The time when he will come and make everything right. He will do what we want politicians to do, but they can't. To fix this world. And so that is what Peter is holding out to these people here.

[27 : 03] Jesus is coming back in judgment and restoration. Which side will you fall on? Will you be restored by him? Or will you be judged by him?

I mentioned earlier during our confession of faith the idea of the sun and why we have faith that it rises every day.

It's a certain leap of faith to assume that the world is orderly, right? The scientific method relies on faith. It relies on belief that the world is going to continue as it has in the past.

Now, you can't prove that, right? You can't use the scientific method to prove itself. And so that actually rests on something deeper. It rests on a trust and confidence that God is faithful and he's in control.

That God is orderly and he's going to do what he said he would do. And so just as we wait for the sun to rise knowing that God was faithful in doing it the day before, the same is true when it comes to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

[28 : 17] Why is it that we trust the Bible? Why is it that we believe he will come again? Because he said he would and he did it the first time.

He says he will and he will do it the second. And so we hope and trust and believe in him. Please pray with me. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are trustworthy and you keep your word.

We thank you that you have done that for us in Christ and you will do it in the future when he comes again. We ask that we would pay attention, that we would not take our eyes off of him because we know that your eyes are on us.

We ask that you would do this by your spirit at work in our lives, that we would grow in faith and trust and confidence in you and your word, holding on until the end.

We ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.