

Ben Libby
 Sermon
 February 2nd, Epiphany 4

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, well equipped for every good work.

That inspired and well-equipping Word of the LORD which forms a portion for our sermon text this morning comes to us from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 11, beginning with verse 25:

At that time, Jesus continued, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from clever and learned people and have revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, because this was pleasing to you. 27 Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

28 “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...

Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and from your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed

Today is a very eventful day. Not only is it “Superbowl Sunday”, but it is also Groundhogs day. It is not the rarest of occasions that these two days fall on the same date. After all, Superbowl Sunday is typically the first Sunday in the month of February, and Groundhogs day is always February 2nd. It’s bound to happen.

It is funny how both of these events have become unofficial national holidays. They both draw eyes. First, eyes will be drawn to a little Pennsylvania Town, one Punxsutawney. We will all see if the rodent saw his shadow. Next, the eyes will turn to a much bigger town, one Miami Florida. There, two teams will face off to determine who is the champion in the NFL this year.

But neither one really matters all that much. A strange tradition of a groundhog supposedly determining if we will have 6 more weeks of winter really doesn’t mean much, and Punxsutawney Phil’s track record backs that up. If you happen to be a fan of the Chiefs or of the 49ers, the day might mean a

great deal to you. But neither event has real lasting implications. Whether or not Phil sees his shadow will not determine the weather for the next month and a half. Whoever scores more points tonight in that game, doesn’t really mean that much to you or me in the long run.

Both events, even though not that important, are widely speculated on. People like to predict what the groundhog will see and people like to wager money on the outcome of the Super Bowl. But even with those events, not even the wisest of wise guys can really predict what will happen. They can have an informed opinion, but it’s pretty arbitrary, it’s random. But, yet again, it doesn’t really matter that much.

But there another event that we are celebrating here today. Today is Transfiguration Sunday. You might be able to tell this from the bulletin cover (perhaps the banner as well), but you wouldn’t necessarily be able to tell from the readings this morning. It is appropriate to celebrate Transfiguration during the season of Epiphany, because this was the ultimate act of

revelation. The disciples who were that mountain with Jesus that day saw something that no one else has seen up to that point, yet it was a sight that all eyes one day will also see. They got to glimpse the full power of Christ, and it overwhelmed them.

What is interesting about our text is that we see Jesus' point of view in all of this. Here, He talks about His special relationship to His Father in Heaven, and what He says is pretty revealing. It is information that could not be guessed or predicted. This is the heavenly inside scoop. What is revealed to us here by Jesus? Things that were hidden are revealed. A relationship that we should know nothing about is revealed. And, a rest that we should have no part of becomes revealed and hoped for! These are vital things that are revealed to us, and they have been by God Himself! And so we pray: O LORD, SANCTIFY US BY YOUR TRUTH, YOUR WORD IS TRUTH, AMEN!

To really grasp the full revelation that is the transfiguration, it would be good to go over that event. Before we dive into our text, let us read the account known as the transfiguration from the gospel of Mark:

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. 4 And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"— 6 because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. 7 And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" 8 Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. (Mark 9:2-8)

Peter, James, and John got to see something very special indeed. It was such a glorious event, the only response from the disciples to it was from Peter, and

that was largely nonsensical. We don't know what exactly Jesus said to Moses and Elijah on that mountain, but it had to do with what He was about to accomplish. Then, all of a sudden, the voice of God boomed out of a cloud: "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM!!!" Then, it was all over.

Years later, when the Apostle Peter reflected on this event in his second epistle, he would conclude: **For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18 And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:16-19)** To Peter, an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, he knew the things that were revealed by Him. He knew the truth. Everything that Jesus said and did was real, and Peter knew that they were Words that needed to be followed. He knew the seriousness of the Word of Christ and he saw the results of the Word firsthand.

Yet, what Christ's Word reveals cannot be comprehended, at least by conventional wisdom. **"I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from clever and learned people and have revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, because this was pleasing to you."**

What is it exactly that Jesus is referring to? What things have been hidden? Well, He doesn't specify, but we know what He is referring to. He is, of course, talking about the Gospel!

But how is the Gospel hidden? After all, the Bible is the most published book of all time. Anyone can pick up a copy and comb through the pages. How is what the Bible speaks about (namely that we have a Savior who was both God and man and died for us on the cross) [how are those things] hidden? Well, they are

hidden, and the key to understanding how they are hidden is to know to whom they are hidden from and to whom they have been revealed to...

Here Jesus calls the people to whom these things are hidden the **“clever and learned people”**. Who does that include? Well, you can probably think of some examples. Who does the world consider to be wise? Scientists, professors, deep thinkers, and philosophers. These people try to come up with new explanations of things that God had already made known in the Bible. They find a new way to explain creation, or to disprove other events described and recorded for us in the Bible. These people are strangers to the mysteries of the Gospel. Paul said in first Corinthians, **But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:7-10a)**

What is so shocking about to whom these things have been hidden is the contrast of to whom these things have been revealed! What does Jesus call the people to whom these things have been revealed? **“little children”**. Who does this include? Whoever has a child-like faith in Christ. Indeed, we are these little children.

Who would you rather be described as? A clever and learned person? Or someone who is like a little child? Well, probably the former. We like to think that we are learned. But what good does the wisdom of the world really get you? Yes, it may gain you power or position or status, but all of those things can be so easily taken away. The only things which cannot be taken away from us, those are the things to which Christ is referring to in this text. It is the knowledge that we have been given by faith. It is the knowledge that Jesus suffered, died, and paid in full the debt we owed. It is that peace which surpasses all understanding, that peace that we are going to

heaven even though we don't deserve it. These are things only those who a faith like a child can receive. This includes everyone here in this church. If you know that Jesus is your Savior, then you are truly wiser than the wisest of the world. Truly, Darwin's *Origin of Species* or Hawkin's *A Brief History of Time* are dwarfed in real wisdom by a small child who sings “Jesus loves me this I know”!

Of course, knowing Jesus has implications also. He explains here: **27 Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him.**

How is your relationship with your Father? Is it positive? Negative? Somewhere in the middle? Perhaps your father is no longer around, you have been separated from him, either by death or some other factor. Relationships with parents can be complicated, and they may be hard to understand if you don't know the dynamic and history between the father and the child.

Well, when it came to Jesus and His relationship to His Father, that is God the Father, they had a special relationship. When you know who Jesus is, then you start to understand why Jesus and God the Father were so close. They had an intimate relationship. That relationship was the whole reason why Christ was here in the first place. Jesus was always about His Father's business, as a youth, and in His ministry. Jesus was always praying to the Father. In His most critical moments, He would take time to pray to the Father. Jesus didn't *JUST* do this to provide us with a good example, He did it because He considered communication with His Father to be **VITAL!!!**

But then, once you know the nature of who Jesus was, the motive makes sense. After all, Jesus was true God, a fact the disciples suddenly became fully aware of that on the mountain that transfiguration day. Some times it is hard to understand the relationship between a human child and a human father. But it is impossible for us to grasp the dynamic between the

First Person and the Second Person of the Triune God.

Yet, it is not that important that we understand it. What is important is what that relationship means to us now. Because Jesus had an intimate relationship with the Father, so too now do we!

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him.

This is kinda a confusion proposition that Jesus is laying out. What exactly is He saying? No one can know Jesus except God the Father. But then, no one can know God the Father except the Son? So then no one can know either the Son or the Father? NO! Of course not! If that was truly the case we would not be here today. There is an exception...**no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wants to reveal him.** This is where then the Third person of the Trinity steps in! The Holy Spirit is the one who provides us an introduction to the Son, and the Son, in turn, brings us to God by faith. The intricate relationship of the One true God works to bring people like us to Him!

But what does that intimate relationship really mean? Well, it's pretty clear. You need Jesus. If you don't know Jesus, then you don't know God. If you don't know Jesus, then you don't know grace. If you don't know Jesus, then you don't know true wisdom.

These are the things that the clever and learned people of this world cannot grasp! The Pharisees, who probably would have described themselves as clever and learned, never saw Jesus for who He really was. They just saw Him as a carpenter's son from the north. And even the Apostles were skeptical at times. When Phillip told his brother Nathanael about Jesus, his only reaction was **"Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46)** Eventually, they both knew Him to be the Savior, but the world's reaction to Him is largely the same!

And what do we hear so often today about Jesus? "I believe that a person named Jesus did exist, but He was much different than what your Bible says. He was a good man, sure, but He wasn't the Son of God! While He did die on a cross, He didn't ever perform

any miracles. He was just a man!" People today LOVE to tell you that what you know to be true about Jesus is really fiction.

But we know Jesus to be God, and God to be true. Peter said it, He was an "eyewitness" of Christ's "majesty, honor, and glory". When Nathanael did realize that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus told him **"Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51)** Jesus is our God and our Savior, and He is how we even know God the Father and have a relationship with Him! On the Mount of Transfiguration, God declared Jesus to be His most beloved Son. You either question that event through your so-called wisdom, or you take it by faith to be the absolute truth!

What does that relationship that Jesus has with the Father mean for us? Well, in one word, REST! **28 "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

These words of Jesus are so beautiful. Who can not relate here?

They say that nothing beats a good night's sleep. I have found this to be true. But when I find the most truth in this saying is when you don't get the rest you need. You can really take sleep for granted some times. Getting regular rest is truly one of the most healthy things you can do. When you all of a sudden stop getting the sleep you need, then you really notice how much of a difference it can make!

Jesus provides us with the ultimate rest. Yes, there is the rest in heaven that He won for us on the cross, and that is our ultimate hope in this life. But He also provides rest for your soul today, right now! He does this by giving us His yoke.

This concept might not mean as much to us as to the original audience who heard these words. After all, we do not work with yokes all that much today. But,

the idea was that it was a wooden crosspiece that you place on 2 animals, perhaps oxen. They would pull the yoke together and thus drag a plow.

So, what does it mean to be yoked with Christ? It means He does all the work for you! Jesus fulfilled the law and did all the work for you. When we are yoked with Jesus, He brings us to God! Because we have this special relationship with Christ, we can bear anything that this world could possibly throw at us. No longer do we bear the guilt of all the wrong that we have done in this life. It has all been forgiving by Christ! This is true rest! Any load that has been on your shoulders, when you take it to Christ it is removed.

He is gentle and humble in heart. When Peter saw Jesus transfigured, he started blabbering. This is what witnessing the full power of Christ can do. Yet, even though He is true God, which is a terrifying thought to any sinner, that is not how He comes to us. He came to earth and took on our flesh and blood. He can relate to us because He is one of us, a man. And yet He is also true God and has the power and authority to do anything. How can our burdens ever be too much for Him to handle?

Yes, it is quite the day today. There are events going on in the world, and there will be more events tomorrow and the next day. But, our day to day lives is different now, for we were the yoke of Christ. Our burdens are heavy just like anyone else's. But the difference is where know where to go with them. We can always go to Jesus. He removes the load, and we receive the real rest that only He can provide. He is the Son of God and He brings us to God. He reveals things to us that no one could ever understand, yet we do and we know what it means. He reveals to us true rest; rest from our sins and rest with Him forever in heaven. Amen!