

Sermon: The Glory of the Coming Jesus

(Preached by the Rev. Paul Wu, at St. Giles, Ottawa, February 15, 2026)

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts
be acceptable to you. O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

I suspect we have all been in social occasions when someone would asked, “where were you when so and so happened?” Take for example, when the twin towers fell in New York on September 11, 2001. For decades after, many would hold fast to memories of where we were, what we were doing on that fateful morning. It was a defining moment of our generation that binds us together, to not only that initial moment of shock but its aftermath, the subsequent wars fought in Afghanistan, in Iraq and elsewhere, and the memories of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defending our freedom, our way of life.

Of course I understand different generations have their own particular defining moments that act not necessarily to bind people together, but to demarcate generational differences. For the baby boomers, their defining moment may have been the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, which was followed a few years later by the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. I cannot even begin to imagine how that generation lived through such turbulent period in history.

Of course, my parents’ generation have their defining moment in the Second World War, particularly how it impacted those living in Taiwan. Even now, as prosperous as Taiwan is currently, people would still greet each other by asking, “Ja-ba-a-boe?”, which is loosely translated as “have you eaten your fill?”, which harkens back to the impoverished time during the war when having a simple meal was a luxury to behold.

We all have defining moments that anchored our lives, molded our values, and shaped our commitments. We find it frustrating when later generations do not understand those moments. We find it insulting when some would purposely distort those memories for political or other nefarious gains. We hope the memories we do have of those defining moments could be passed on, could even be a blessing to others. I think the author of 2 Peter had that in mind when he penned down his letter.

Traditionally ascribed to Peter the Apostle, this letter should really be read as a last will and testimony—or a living legacy, if you will—that speaks

to the experience, values, and commitment that had guided the life of this disciple of Jesus. As the author wrote, *“And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.”* (2 Peter 1:15)

It is interesting, for Peter, his defining moment was not the Cross, but the Transfiguration,

“For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (v.16)

We know Peter was referring to his experience in the Transfiguration of Jesus, because in the following verse, he alluded to what God had said,

“For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” (v.17)

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, on this Transfiguration Sunday, we come to the story, the historical account, as recorded in Matthew 17 (as well as Mark 9 and Luke 9). It is a pivotal moment in the New Testament where Jesus becomes radiantly divine in glory, on an unnamed mountaintop, with by Moses and Elijah, in view of Peter, James and John, three of Jesus’ closest disciples.

It was a moment steeped in radiant mystery for the Scripture does not inform us as to the why or the how, but only that it occurred. It was a moment so mesmerizing and wonderful that Peter wanted to capture it and preserve it, by suggesting three tents be built—one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.

I don’t want to come down too hard on Peter of his inclination to speak before thinking, for he was always that sort of fellow. There is something admirable about the rashness of Peter, about him stepping into the water of faith without fully knowing where his foot will land.

But this moment of glory, of the transfiguration of Jesus, was not meant to be kept in a tent. That mountaintop glory was only a glimpse, of what will one day be a full-fledged reality, of a future promised but yet to be realized.

Meanwhile, the disciples were given assurance from the voice of God, affirming Jesus as the beloved Son, with whom God is well pleased. It is the same affirmation they had previously witnessed in the baptism of Jesus, along the Jordan river, except this time, at Transfiguration, one additional command is inserted: “listen to him”. **Listen to Jesus, obey him, do his will, walk his way.**

Scanning through this letter of 2 Peter, it is worth noting all the various occasions the author urges his readers to “remember” or to “not forget”. Remembering, is a practice of persisting, of persevering, of growing in consistency and in faith. In choosing to remember the Transfiguration, as his legacy, Peter is telling his readers, telling us to remember who we are and who we are called to be.

We are the forgiven and the chosen people of God. In choosing to walk this faith, this life, we are essentially choosing to be chosen, by entering into the covenant with the eternal divine. Life on earth in our particular time and local may be daunting and harsh—glimmers of light hard to find. But by remembering the Transfiguration of Jesus, we are reminded of what is to come, as confirmed by prophecies in the Old and New Testaments, of the promise of God. We are heading into glory, towards new heaven and new earth, towards the glory of the coming Lord Jesus Christ.

I have two boys, wonderful and healthy and good in their own ways. I never get tired of reminding myself and reminding them of the day they were born, of holding their newly formed bodies in my arms, of the love I have for them, and the promises they hold for me and my wife.

I have told them of how they looked and behaved, and knew how they were distinct from one another. I have told them of how afraid I was, being their father, and not knowing if I was going to be the father they needed or deserved. And I have told them of how proud I am of them, and reminded them of how much God has loved us and blessed us. It is up to them to chart their own path, and walk their own faith, but it is up to me to remind them to remember.

It occurs to me the pastoral life of the church is not so different. It involves reminding and being reminded of our call, our election, our choosing to be chosen, and our determination to walk the life of faith. In choosing to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, in choosing to be baptized into faith in Christ, we become the people of God, beloved by God.

By remembering the glory of Christ in Transfiguration, we anticipate when Jesus comes again in full glory, we shall be caught up in that rapture, of the new heaven and new earth, as the one seated on the throne declares, "See, I am making all things new."

Should someone ask, "Where were you when that happened?" I hope your answer would proudly be: right in the middle of it all!

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**