

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 4, 2018
Reformation Sunday

Scripture Lessons: Jeremiah 18:1-11, Mark 13:5-11

Hymns: 261; 373:1-5; 774; 50:2 (238:3-5)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Revelation 14:6-7

⁶Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—⁷saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Reformation Day

The world celebrates Halloween. Many Christians do too. We may even forget that Reformation Day is the same day, or that there is something to observe, even celebrate that is worthy of our attention each and every year.

We do make a strong association between Dr. Martin Luther and Reformation Day; we make that association with the entire Reformation for that matter. You see, it was on October 31, 1517, 501 years ago, that Martin Luther wrote and then posted those 95

theses on the door of the Castle Church. We also take note of many other events in Luther's life that were actually of greater significance and impact for us in our spiritual lives. Indeed we are Lutherans aren't we?

However, having said all this it would be a serious mistake to say that Martin Luther was the central figure in the Reformation, as serious an error as if one were to conclude that Luther was the central figure of our faith. The Reformation was not about advancing Luther, and most certainly Luther was not about advancing Luther.

Our text this morning has led many to think that the Lord Jesus was making a direct prophecy of the coming of Martin Luther with these words. That is a mistaken notion. The vision containing these words of our text was a vision that covered the New Testament era and explained how God works His plan of advancing the gospel for our good and blessing, indeed for our salvation.

On this Reformation Sunday let us praise the Lord for this wonder of his grace --

THEME: God Sends Out His Message of the Gospel.

There had been a period of spiritual darkness throughout Europe as the gospel had been shrouded by the teachings of works of penance and many superstitions. Many people, including Martin Luther, were going through life without any clear understanding of God's love and forgiveness in the cross of Christ. They were terrified of Christ and the judgment to come. Very little was taught in the church, and much of the worship was conducted in Latin which most people could not understand. Indeed darkness covered the land and deep darkness the people. (Isaiah 60:2) However, it was not the will of God for this darkness to prevail, and the gospel was not lost. What Luther discovered as he read the Scriptures was --

I. The Everlasting Gospel of God.

In our text we read what the Apostle John saw in this vision:

Revelation 14:6 “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth.”

This is a vision of the plan and working of God for our salvation. God sends out the messengers of His grace to the earth because it is the will of God that His gospel, the gospel of a crucified and risen Savior be proclaimed on the earth.

Instead of identifying this particular angel with Martin Luther it is far more appropriate to associate this angel with all proclaimers of the gospel starting with the apostles, including Stephen, and Philip and the rest of the seven deacons, and then also all those early Christians who under the duress of persecution continued to be faithful witnesses of the gospel even when forced to leave their homes and look for safety in distant lands. It includes every faithful witness of the gospel: pastor and layman, professor and Sunday school teacher who has faithfully taught young and old concerning the hope which we have in Christ Jesus.

And that is where we want to focus our attention, on the message of the gospel that God sent out by His messengers. We too easily take this gospel for granted. We fail to comprehend how rare the gospel in its truth and purity is. So often, even within Christian churches, the message of the gospel has been polluted with the ideas and false notions of men, as it was in the days of Martin Luther. Most commonly the false idea that some works of our own, some merit, some goodness finding its origins within us should be included with the merit of Christ; that such works would make the gospel better.

This isn't anything new. The Apostle Paul already saw it happening in his day among the congregations where he worked, where he had taught the pure gospel. He was astonished that the Christians in the congregations of Galatia should be so easily deceived. Calling them foolish for allowing the gospel to be taken from them Paul reminded them of the truth of the gospel which they had been taught.

Galatians 2:16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in

Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

To be justified is to be declared innocent of all charges, ALL charges. The Lord laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all just as Isaiah prophesied. (Isaiah 53:6) The holy righteous blood of Christ is the full ransom price for our sins. There was nothing left for us to do but be the recipients of God's abundant grace and mercy. It is "*by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.*" (Ephesians 2:8) Nothing we do adds to this salvation, not even to its assurance, for we have full assurance of salvation in Jesus, through faith in His name.

This is the **everlasting** gospel. This is the same gospel which God presented to our first parents in the Garden of Eden right after the fall into sin. This is the same gospel that Abraham believed and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3) This is the same gospel Isaiah prophesied would be fulfilled in the suffering Servant of the Lord. (Isaiah 53) This is the only gospel for Jesus is the only "*name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved!*" (Acts 4:12)

This is the very heart of the gospel which has come down to us also that we know how God planned, promised and delivered eternal salvation --

Galatians 4:4-5 "when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

This is the **everlasting** gospel conceived in the mind of God in the greatness of His love before the world began and fulfilled in Christ Jesus and proclaimed by the apostles and prophets down through history and so it will continue to the end of time!

It is God working through His messengers whom He has sent out delivering the gospel in America today. This prophecy continues to be fulfilled in the United States of America today, and not only in

America, but to the farthest corners of the earth. Our text reveals that God intended this as --

II. A Message for All Who Dwell on the Earth

Let us complete that first verse of our text:

Revelation 14:6 “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”

This is **God’s** vision of this gospel of Christ going forth into all the world. Even as God was in Christ reconciling the world – the entire world- to Himself, (2 Corinthians 5:19) so it is the will of God, a will that He facilitates, that this gospel of a crucified and risen Christ should be known among all peoples in every nation under heaven.

This will of God is the foundation for the great commission. Jesus made it clear that this was to be not only the mission of the twelve apostles, but the life purpose of every Christian. We are to “*go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*” (Mark 16:15) Jesus left us with assignment: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:19-20)

And so the will of God is done among us also. This divine purpose has been fulfilled time and again so that all peoples under heaven have had the opportunity to hear the good news of God’s grace and salvation in Jesus name. Already in the days of the apostles Paul declared by inspiration of the Holy Spirit: “*the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,⁶ which has come to you, **as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit.***” (Colossians 1:5-6)

The reason this vision is so important is because this gospel is --

III. The Only Way to True Worship of the One True God.

Listen to the message of the angel in the vision:

Revelation 14:7 “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

The message is not one of terror, but one of awe! When we know the glory of God through the gospel it removes the terrors from our heart. It implants the love of God within us and we are overwhelmed with wonder of His grace. Think of it; “*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*” (1 Timothy 1:15) Fear God and hold Him in the highest esteem, for He has loved us and saved us by sacrificing His only begotten Son as the payment for our sins, to deliver us from death. Give God the glory He deserves, the glory He alone deserves!

Now is the time for us to worship Him, “Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2) His judgment has come! It has come to us first in the declaration of our justification. God has declared us innocent. This salvation has come to us through faith in Christ Jesus. And surely the final judgment is at hand. There is no time to waste! There can be no procrastination to repentance and faith!

And as for the gods of this world, they are not real. They have been fashioned by the hand of men. God Himself scoffs at these phony idols. We read in --

Psalms 135:15-18 “The idols of the nations *are* silver and gold,
The work of men’s hands.

¹⁶ They have mouths, but they do not speak;

Eyes they have, but they do not see;

¹⁷ They have ears, but they do not hear;

Nor is there *any* breath in their mouths.

¹⁸ Those who make them are like them;

So is everyone who trusts in them.”

That conclusion hits hard, it hits home. These idols can provide no hope of life and no deliverance from death, and so those who trust in them are indeed without hope of salvation for time or eternity.

But what of us? What the psalmist says of our God corresponds exactly with the words of our text. Even as the psalmist writes:

Psalm 115:3 But our God *is* in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.

We have not made Him, but He has made us. We have not made Him, but He has given us life. We have not made Him but He has saved us from sin and death because it pleased the Lord in the greatness of His love and grace to send a Savior. This is the message, the revelation of the one and only God, the God who made all things, the God who saved us by His grace, the God who prepares us to meet Him. And surely that lies before us all, even as it lies before all men. We shall stand before the Lord clothed in the robes of Jesus' righteousness, those white robes having no spot or stain, and we shall be invited to enter into the courts of heaven.

This is what we celebrate on Reformation Sunday. It is the message the devil and the world would obscure, and even destroy if they could, but they can't. They can't because this message is the Lord's and He has sent it out to be preached in all the world! It remains the **everlasting** gospel intended for the peoples of every land and tongue so that we might join in the praise and glory of our Savior today and every day until we too join the angelic choir.

Psalm 1125:1 Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,
But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy,
Because of Your truth.

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.