

Revelation 14:6-7 ⁶Then I saw another angel flying in the middle of the sky. He had the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. ⁷He said with a loud voice: Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.

The book of Revelation is a complicated book. It is a vision given by God to the Apostle John. Some of the images in this vision are very similar to ones that the Prophets Daniel and Ezekiel saw so they can help in interpreting these things. Unfortunately some people dive right in to Revelation without first having a solid foundation on the direct, non-vision parts of the Bible and they come to some crazy conclusions.

The book gives us a picture of the struggles that the true Church will face between the time when Jesus ascended until his return. In this part of the book, things look pretty grim. Two beasts are attacking. One represents earthly governments which God created for our good but so often fight against God's Word. The other represents visible church bodies that twist and distort what God's Word says. With powerful enemies like this, how can the true Church survive?

This text is one answer to that question. In midair, hovering above all the chaos and totally unaffected by it, an angel brings the good news of God's Word. Nothing will stop that. This text was used as the text for Martin Luther's funeral sermon. He is one example of these words being fulfilled. So am I when I get into this pulpit. So are you when you tell your children or a friend about their Savior. Today we will hear The Message of the Reformation. It is for everyone, it prepares people for judgment, and it leads people to worship.

On Reformation Day we aren't looking to pat ourselves on the back for being so faithful. We aren't here to praise Martin Luther or any of the other reformers. Rather we take this opportunity to thank God for restoring the preaching of his Word in its truth and purity. That message is just as necessary today as it was in the 1500s. It will remain vitally important for all the years yet to come until Judgment Day.

In this part of his vision, John sees an angel proclaiming that message. It's interesting that in both Hebrew and Greek the word for angel can also be translated as messenger. The name of the author of the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, means "my messenger" or "my angel." So many times God sent angels to bring a message to people, including the message that the Savior was born.

The message he brings is "**the everlasting gospel.**" The word "gospel" means "good news." It's the best news anyone has ever heard. It is the message of God's love for the whole world. It's the message about Jesus—that God himself has come into our world as a human being. He is not merely an example for us to imitate. He did what we could never imitate. He lived perfectly. He died on the cross like a sacrifice. Through his one death, forgiveness and eternal life had been won for the whole world.

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his Church to go out into the world with the good news of what he has done. He gave us the tools to use—baptism and the Word. The Holy Spirit works through baptism to wash our sins away and give us all the blessings that Jesus won for us. The Word proclaims Jesus faithfully. We don't have to worry that maybe we can't bring it as powerfully or beautifully as other people can. That's OK. The Holy Spirit is the one who really gives the Word its power.

He says that this gospel is everlasting. That's good news too. What was true when John originally saw this vision remains true today and will be true forever. There will always be only one way into heaven and his name is Jesus. God is never going to change his mind or alter his plans. This also means that as long as this world goes on, the gospel message will be proclaimed.

John also shows who this message is for. It is "**to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people.**" When Jesus gave the Great Commission he sent us to "**all nations.**" We are living proof of how true this is. We are over 2,000 years after Jesus on the complete opposite side of the planet, speaking a language that did not exist on John's time. But we are still hearing the good news about Jesus.

One man I was tutor for back at Northwestern and Martin Luther College didn't end up going into the pastoral ministry, but God used the skills that he learned there to do some other very important work. He has spent the majority of his adult life living in Africa, working to translate the Bible into different languages that I had never heard of before. The Bible is the most widely printed and widely translated book in human history.

This verse also makes our work of proclaiming Jesus pretty easy. We never have to wonder if God wants us to talk to this person about their Savior. If they are a human being who is alive, then they are a person that God wants to know what he has done for them. The reason why God hasn't yet taken us home to heaven is because he still has opportunities planned for us to be his witnesses.

The Message of the Reformation is for everyone and it prepares people for judgment.

In the second verse of this text we hear a summary of this angel's message. The first part is, "**Fear God and give him glory.**" That word "fear" is used in two different senses in the Bible. Some times it means to be terrified of someone or something. That doesn't seem to fit this context. The gospel message wouldn't make people scared. You also aren't going to want to glorify or worship someone you are scared to death of.

So this is fear used in the other sense, namely to respect God for who he is and what he has done. Yes, we respect him for the power that he wields over all the earth. But mainly we respect him for all the work that he has done to save us from our sins. That is an amazing display of his power, but more importantly it is an amazing display of his love. His love is undeserved. It is self-sacrificing. It is expecting nothing in return. No human being can show this kind of love perfectly, but God can.

So we want to give him glory. That means to give him the praise and honor that he deserves for everything that he has done for us. One of the best ways to do that is to do exactly what we see the angel in this text doing. He is telling other people about what God has done for them. God doesn't want for us to wait for people to walk through the doors of this church. We want to go to them.

When the two hurricanes hit the southeastern part of our country, rescue workers from the federal government and other organizations mobilized. People were without the basic necessities of life. Some of them remained in danger. We have to help. That gives us a picture of the spiritual condition of the whole world. No one is born with the spiritual necessities. You can't buy them in a store. God sends his people out to find them.

The angel also tells us, "**the hour of his judgment has come.**" When we hear that we might assume that Judgment Day is near. But in the context of this vision, that day is still in the future. But that is a day we want to be ready for. The end of the old church year and the Advent season remind us that Jesus is coming soon. That is not a day to be afraid of, but it is a day to look forward to.

The whole point of this vision in Revelation is not to scare us silly. Instead it is to give us confidence for the future. God already knows how every moment of the rest of history is going to play out and he has planned accordingly. Satan will try his hardest, but his head was already crushed when Jesus died on the cross. There are battles yet to be fought, but the war is already over. God shows us that we are safe in his hands.

Really though, every day is a day of God's judgment. That word is not necessarily negative. Last week I reminded you of the definition of the word "justification" which is one of the big words of the Reformation. It means that God in Christ has declared us all to be not guilty of any sin. God has made a judgment and it is in our favor. Through the Word and Sacraments God gives us the ability to keep our sinful natures under control so that judgment will not change.

There is another judgment that has been passed, though. Everyone who does not yet know or believe in Jesus as their Savior already has a guilty verdict passed against them by God. That's not the way God wants things to be. But the time for that change is now. You sometimes hear people say, "I'll think about that when I'm old." That's assuming you will get old or that Jesus won't return in the meantime. There's no time like the present. As I said before, don't wait for them to come to you. Go to them.

The Message of the Reformation prepares people for judgment and finally it leads people to worship.

The last part of the angel's message is, "**Worship him who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.**" Worship has always been an important part of the life of a believer. One of the key aspects of the Reformation is that people began worshiping in German, which they understood, instead of in Latin, which they did not. If you came here one Sunday and everything I said was in Latin, I'm sure it wouldn't be long before someone would say, "Pastor, what exactly are you doing?"

Every part of our worship service is designed to proclaim law and gospel, sin and grace. We begin by confessing our sins and being assured of our forgiveness. We praise God for his love to us. We hear him speak to us in his Word. We respond to him with our hymns, prayers, and offerings. The hymns put the good news of the Bible to music and make them rhyme which makes it easier for our minds to retain them.

Every part of the church speaks to us. When you come in you immediately see the pulpit, altar, lectern, and baptismal font which remind us of how God comes to us in Word and Sacrament. The stained glass windows walk us through everything that God did to save us. Crosses are everywhere—try to count them all! That's there to remind us that on the cross Jesus made us God's children now and eternally.

After the service we go back to our vehicles and go home. So is worship over then? Actually no, it's just beginning. Sometimes it can be as simple as whistling the melody for a favorite hymn that we just sang. I remember one of my sisters riding her Big Wheel down Wenona street in Bay City singing the liturgy at the top of her lungs. My parents didn't tell her to do that. She learned it and so she sang it!

Paul talked about our daily lives of worship in his letter to the Romans, “**Therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy and pleasing to God—which is your appropriate worship.**” Being a living sacrifice seems to be like a contradiction in terms. Sacrifices are killed. But it’s a perfect way to describe the life of a believer.

A believer’s daily worship life means that we’re not going to live for ourselves, but for our God. Everything we think, say, and do is filtered through the lens of God’s Word. My neighbors aren’t just people who live nearby. They are people God brought close to me so that I can bring him close to them. I’m not working for a paycheck or working for the weekend. I’m working for my God who gave me the ability to work. Like parents and children communicate with each other daily we will listen to his Word daily and speak to him in our prayers daily.

Why do we want to do this? We might expect that the angel would point to Jesus. Yes, that is the main reason that we worship. But instead the angel points to how God created the world and sustains it every day. When you look at it in the context of the whole book of Revelation, that makes perfect sense. Everything in the world seems to be spiraling out of control. The whole world seems to be rebelling against him.

Remember how God responded to “threats” like this in Psalm 2? “**The one who is seated in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them.**” Nothing in heaven or on earth is a threat to him. He lives and rules over all of creation for the good of his blood-bought people. So if we might be tempted to worry, remember who is with us. The Almighty God is our Father, our Savior, our Comforter. Victory is assured.

The Message of the Reformation is for everyone, it prepares people for judgment, and it leads people to worship. The message of the Reformation is not something new that Martin Luther invented. It was nothing more than a return to the pure message of the Scriptures that was in danger of being lost. That message of grace alone by faith alone through Scripture alone is the beating heart of the Gospel. It is our treasure forever.