

Goal: The hearers proclaim the eternal gospel to those who dwell on earth.

In our text, we find an angel. In Scripture, whenever angels show up, they always have an important message. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to tell her that she would give birth to God in the flesh. A whole host of angels showed up in the hills to tell the shepherds that the Savior has been born. And this morning we read, ***“I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.” (Revelation 14: 6)*** So, who does this angel represent? Some have suggested that it’s Martin Luther, but that would be improper to think that Luther as the only fulfillment of this prophecy. The word angel means *messenger*, so the angel can represent all faithful pastors and prophets who proclaim the Gospel, past, present, and future.

So, what is the eternal gospel? Well, Gospel means *good news*, and the good news is, ***“And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.” (Revelation 14: 7)*** God’s judgment has come, how is that good news? Honestly, should we really be surprised at God’s judgment coming?

If we look at the world around us; at all the moral decay, at the disrespect for authority, at the arrogance, at the abuse, the lack of love, at the assaults against the Christian Faith and the apathy of so many Christians, yeah, God’s judgement is justified. And if we look within our hearts; at the sinful pride we see there, our lust for all sorts of false gods, at our spiritual laziness and our reluctance to carry out God’s commands and will, we can’t escape it. ***“The hour of (God’s) judgment has come.”***

So, what can we learn from the message of the angel as to where that judgement has come? Luther was terrified of God’s judgment because he knew he deserved it. His eyes were always on his own sinfulness. But the Holy Spirit turned his eyes to the cross. There Luther saw that in Christ’s suffering and death, in that horrible instrument of torture, he saw God’s judgment against every single one of us. Jesus, who is God in the flesh, took upon Himself the curse you and I deserve. He became your substitute and was judged in your place. God punished His own Son for what you and I have done.

So, what does this mean for us? It means that every single one of us is forgiven, completely. God is at peace with you. Whatever you’ve done, however you’ve behaved or lived, turn your eyes to the cross of Jesus. He’s your Savior who paid the price for all

of it. That's why the angel says that the gospel of God's judgment has come, and it's eternal. Meaning that it's never changed. It's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It was proclaimed to our first parents, Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God, and they heard the gospel of forgiveness in Christ. After King David sinned with Bathsheba, Nathan spoke the gospel of forgiveness to him. Later, the gospel was spoken by Jesus to Zaccheus, the sinful tax collector, and to Peter, who regretted denying his Lord, and to Paul who traveled to Damascus to put Christians in prison, and to all people of all time, peace through the judgment God brought upon Jesus.

The message hasn't changed. God is merciful to sinners for Jesus sake. So, look to the cross and away from your heart. Look to your baptism and away from what the world says. Look to the altar and the body and blood of the Lord and away from the whispers of the Devil. And hear the eternal gospel from the angel flying overhead, "*By grace you have been saved.*" Hear Jesus pray from the cross, "***Father forgive them.***" And know He does. He forgives you.

Brothers and sisters, all of your sins, even those that are lurking in the dark corners of your past, those sins you tried to bury deep down, just like I do, God forgives in the judgement Jesus suffered for you. This is the greatest message anyone in this world can ever hear because it gives freedom and peace that nothing in this world can ever offer. (***Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."***) (John 8: 34 – 36)

Each Reformation day, I wonder how our proclamation of the gospel will impact our community. Do we have the courage of Luther to speak in today's world of God's judgment that brings freedom? You may be thinking, I'm not like Luther, I can't stand against the powers of this day. It's hard to stand up for something, especially when you feel like you're the only one. But God isn't leading you to start another reformation, He's simply sending you to proclaim the gospel, to share Christ, with someone else.

A few weeks ago, Rachel and I were challenged to do just that while at our PLI immersion in Washington. The task was to go to the nearby Salmon Creek Regional Park so that someone might encounter Jesus through us. We went and we prayed. We prayed for the people who were at the park that day. We prayed to God to reveal a person to us who might be open to us sharing the gospel. Then we listened and observed.

Our first encounter was a couple brought their dog to walk the trails. They had rescued many dogs from the shelter and were friendly to us, but I didn't feel that God was pointing me to them. In the distance, there was the woman with her grandchildren. She was from Russia and was helping her daughter. Rachel was drawn to her granddaughter and she had a surprising exchange, but I'll let her share.

Then I saw an older man fishing by the lake. I prayed, and felt like I was being led to him. I started up a conversation about fishing and was curious where he was from. It was obvious that I wasn't from there since I was wearing an aloha shirt and jeans in 50° weather. Over the next 20 minutes, he opened up to me and shared all of the places he lived and all of the places he worked. He'd never been to Hawaii and wanted to fish here sometime. I told him that I was a Christian pastor and asked if I could pray for him.

"Pray that the fish start biting," he said, but then, *"yeah, can God help me understand?"* I prayed, a prayer of thanksgiving and for the God to guide both of us to a closer understanding of His grace in Jesus. It didn't seem like a life altering moment. That is, until I got back to the car and another person who was there was surprised I was talking to him, *"Didn't you noticed the Muslim prayer book near him."* They did, and were turned away. I didn't, and the Lord did something pretty wonderful. Can you imagine this man just sitting there fishing, carrying some heavy load and God brings a Lutheran pastor all the way from Hawaii, on a cold and rainy day to pray with Him? Crazy story, right?

That's what repenting to a new perspective does, it gives you eyes to see judgment in Christ's cross and souls who need to hear the Gospel. On this Reformation Day, I'd like you to consider how the Lord might use you to share the gospel. It's time to let your little light shine and be Christ to those to whom God is sending you. Think of yourself as an angel, a messenger of God, and go somewhere this next week with the intention to be Christ to someone. Start with a prayer, that the Lord would open your eyes to see who He wants you to connect. Be attentive to His Spirit's lead. Then simply just watch and listen and observe. Look where God is pointing you, listen to His lead, and be open. I can assure you that God will answer in ways that you could never anticipate.

Here I stand to proclaim the eternal gospel of God's judgment to you and the freedom you have as forgiven children in Christ. Use that freedom to be angels of God to every nation and tribe and language and people. To God be the glory. Amen.