

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

God sends out messengers of the eternal gospel.

- 1. For all nations and people**
- 2. So that we may give glory to the only one who saves us.**

The great spectacle caused crowds and crowds of people to gather at the shoreline. Overhead powerful jets rushed through the sky as people below had been drawn from all over to watch, and listen to, and take in this awesome experience. The US Air Force Thunderbirds ripped through the Milwaukee skyline and over Lake Michigan. They were moving at high speeds and in precise formation, and the roar of their engines was unescapable as the massive sound rushed inland. For miles upon miles the impressive sound could be heard and it was incredible. We weren’t able to make it down to the beach that day to take in the sights, but we heard the roar several miles away from shore and we saw the jets soaring high up in the air. Perhaps you have been able to take in such an airshow, maybe you were able to see the fabulous Thunderbirds or maybe you were even able to see the famous Blue Angels, either way this is something that you will not soon forget.

Our lesson describes the apostle John as he was in the midst of a vision from God that he would never forget. In the book of Revelation John recalls the remarkable, incredible, unforgettable, sights and sounds that he saw and heard. In this particular vision John describes how he saw an angel, a messenger of God, flying high up in the sky with the eternal gospel to proclaim and speaking in a loud voice.

The message of the Reformation is, of course, closely linked to that eternal Gospel, which has been sent out by God. And we praise the Lord for messengers of grace that our Lord used to make sure that his gospel was shared and continues to be shared with all people. As we celebrate the Lutheran Reformation this morning, we will recall this truth. **God sends out messengers of the eternal gospel. For all nations and people. So that we may give glory to the one that saves us.**

These words from the book of Revelation are linked to Martin Luther in a variety of ways. This was a scripture lesson that was used at his funeral. And some have linked Martin Luther as a fulfillment of this prophesy. John speaks of an angel, a messenger of God, that had the eternal gospel to proclaim to all those who lived on the earth. Martin Luther, is not the only one ever that has fit this description, but he certainly is an individual who did indeed fit this criteria. The imagery and symbolism would certainly fit as Luther served as a messenger of God who proclaimed the eternal gospel, and his life and work was vital in bringing the gospel to many different people on earth.

Very rarely do you see a single individual make such a gigantic impact on world history. Martin Luther was indeed a dynamic, unforgettable, and influential figure in the world of history. The Lutheran Reformation is often described as one of the top 10 influential events in world history and Martin Luther's name is always right there attached to the Reformation's significance. God used this man, his gifts, and abilities, and his search for the truth of the Scriptures - God used all of this - to bring the Scriptures back to light for the good of God's Church and for the salvation of many souls. Luther's efforts to return the church to the simple truths of Scripture, his efforts to put the Scriptures in the hands of everyday people by translating the Bible into the common language, his exceptional writings, and his powerful and historical stands before king and councils, shook the very landscape of the church and the society of his day and his voice continues to echo with impressive importance still today. The Lutheran Reformation may have started in Germany but its results have spread from nation to nation, to people who speak all sorts of different languages and who come from all sorts of different cultures. There are churches all around the world that can trace their heritage back to Luther's influence. And here we are nearly 500 years after Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, nearly half way around the world from that German church door, and his influence is clearly felt on our faith and the way we teach and proclaim the eternal gospel in this particular nation and in this particular place.

Like a jet that thunders through the sky and leaves a resounding sound that echoes for miles and miles, Martin Luther thundered with the Word of God and his important teachings spread for even more miles than a jet can be heard, and the roar of his voice has been heard for years and years. Martin Luther was certainly not alone in this effort, but his voice in particular is one that will not be soon forgotten, but will continue to be heard for years to come. Like an angel soaring high above the nations holding the eternal gospel and calling out with a great voice, the voice of Martin Luther speaks so loudly through his writings as he calls all people to give God the glory.

The message of salvation by grace alone is a message that gives God his proper glory. It is not by works that we are saved, we don't pitch in to help accomplish our salvation after God has gotten us started, but rather we are saved by grace alone. The scriptures tell us that it is Christ alone who saves. God alone is given glory for salvation as he is also the one who creates saving faith in our hearts through the power of the Gospel. Grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, is clearly proclaimed in God's Word the Holy Scriptures. Just as I played no part in the creation of the world but God created it all; just as I had no decision if and when my birth on earth would come but instead I was blessed with life when God saw fit, so too you and I can take no real credit in my new birth into faith. God blessed you and me when he saw fit. He reached out to us with his eternal gospel. He sent out messengers of grace: parents and spouses, pastors and teachers, faithful neighbors and friends who shared that word with you. And in turn God uses us to be his messengers of grace as well. A father who sets his children on his lap and reads the family devotion holds that eternal gospel and proclaims it to the next generation. A conversation about Jesus held with a friend, a word of gospel encouragement shared with a spouse. God sends out his messengers of grace. That is how God sends out his Word and how he will reach out and save others still today.

And so there is a real need to share this message and it is a need that God will see that it is met. Ultimately that is what God means when he sends this vision to John. God's Word will

continue to be proclaimed. God wants all men to be saved and so he sends out his messengers of his word. In this vision we see how God is committed to reaching out the world with the message of salvation. Whether it is through Martin Luther, or another dynamic preacher, or another brilliant author, or another caring pastor, or simply a friend speaking with a friend, it is God's will that the gospel is carried to the ends of the earth.

Some of John's visions in this book of Revelation, and in this same fourteenth chapter, have to do with the very Day of Judgment or what follows, that is, heaven and hell. But this vision lays before us the entire New Testament era, the time before the Day of Judgment as God sends out his angel with the eternal Gospel proclaiming this message with a loud voice. ***"Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."*** This is a message of God calling people to faith before it is too late. Fear God and give him glory before Judgment Day comes. The end has not yet arrived, but it is near. No one knows when this world will be over, or when our lives will be over. Only God knows, for God is the only one who grants life and grants us the amount of days that we will have. And the gift of eternal life in heaven through Christ Jesus is only his to give as well, and it is a gift that will no longer be offered after Judgment Day. Therefore, there is urgency in the work of God's messengers. They are to speak and act in faith, to speak and act boldly to God's glory so that many may fear the LORD and worship the one true God before Jesus comes again.

"Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." This is a call to faith for those who do not believe and this is a call to action for those who already know the LORD. For those of us who know God and his word we are to fear the LORD and follow his will. And our LORD has commanded us to be dedicated to the word and to be prepared to share our faith when we have opportunity. The three men in the fiery furnace made a remarkable testimony to their faith and the importance of their God, the apostles would make their stand on the Word of God as they faithfully proclaimed the message of Christ even though it would cost them their lives. And Martin Luther stood firmly on the Word of God, proclaimed the message of salvation by grace alone to as many even if it meant banishment, excommunication, or worse. Because he sensed that his eternity and the everlasting lives of so many others were at stake he spoke boldly and passionately.

Martin Luther and so many others were bold to speak, to live their faith, to share their faith, but sometimes we are more than a bit reluctant. We hesitate to share that message, to speak about Jesus, or stand for God's Word when we are with others. We even come up with a number of excuses not to, with some excuses being more flimsy than others. One such excuse that is sometimes given, that I have heard used, is that it is somehow built into our conservative German heritage to be more reserved when it comes to sharing our faith, that we are not that passionate of a people, or that it's just not the type of people that we are. Well, correct me if I am wrong, but I believe Martin Luther was German, and he was far from reserved when it came to share his faith. He was very passionate about God's Word. That was exactly the kind of person that he was. He wanted to share the simple truths of salvation. He possessed a deep desire to give God the glory and so he passionately stood on the Word of God and shared the name of Jesus. That, dear friends, whether you come from German heritage or not, that is the heritage that we have as Lutherans and as those who believe in the LORD God. Our heritage is one of bold confession. As those who believe in the LORD we have not been

given a spirit of timidity, but we have been blessed with the powerful gospel and a passionate spirit of faith.

We have been given the eternal gospel. The very good news that God promised to Adam and Eve, the very word of assurance that God shared with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, the very good news of forgiveness proclaimed by Christ to his disciples, the very gospel that Martin Luther so passionately uncovered for the world to see, that eternal gospel has been given to you and me. The LORD has seen to it that it has been passed down through his messengers so that it would reach out into all 4 corners of the world, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. That eternal Gospel has been placed into your hands. The message of the eternal gospel has been shared with you in your very own corner of the world. And now as we live in these days knowing that the Day of Judgment is near and could be upon us at any time, therefore how could we not, worship and serve the LORD by doing what we can to share the good news that we are saved by God's grace alone? This eternal gospel has been placed in our hands and it is ours to share and support and proclaim with a loud voice for all to hear. Jesus paid for the sins of the world. His undeserved love led him to the cross. While we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8) For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9) We are saved by grace alone through faith alone. Faith itself is a gift of God. Through Word and Sacrament he has created the gift faith in your heart and continues to strengthen and sustain that faith. To God alone be the glory. It is only through Christ alone that you are saved from the destruction that we deserve in hell and instead you and I are given the free gift of eternal life in heaven. And it is only by his love and guidance that he will welcome me into this place of eternal bliss through the life and death and resurrection of Christ Jesus. This is the eternal gospel that we have been given.

We have been united in this faith. The eternal gospel has been placed into our hands and we are to speak it in a loud voice. One of the amazing things that happens at those airshows is how a number of planes fly together as one. Multiple planes flying in midair tip to tip, united together in movement and purpose. And so by God's grace we are brought into alignment with great believers who have lived and shared their faith so well. The Lord has brought us into his family of believers, he has brought us into his church, and now he leads us and helps us and guides us that we may follow the lead of those who have gone before us. Made bold by their example, inspired by their faith, our voices join the mighty roar of those who have been blessed by his gift of faith as we proclaim the gospel in this life and our voices will thunder in perfect praise with all the saints in heaven for all eternity. We have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, and the eternal gospel has been placed into our hands. To God alone be the Glory forever and ever. Amen.