

Reformation Sunday

November 1, 2015

**Prayer of the Day:** Gracious Lord, our refuge and strength, pour out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep them steadfast in your Word, protect and comfort them in all temptations, defend them against all their enemies, and bestow on the Church your saving peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Revelation 14:6-7**

<sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.”

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia! If you continue in my Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. Alleluia! (John 8:31-32)

**Sermon Text:** Revelation 14:6-7

You sang that well-known hymn just moments earlier:

*Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpow'r us.  
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,  
He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done!  
One little word can fell him. (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, verse 3)*

Do you really believe that? That you have no reason to tremble at the sight of devils filling the world? No, not the devil himself, but there are people who also want Christian teachings to be forever silenced. Do you tremble no as watch them succeed in their efforts to devour sound Bible teaching? Do you fear this world's prince? The “world's prince” is another name for the devil; Jesus says that much himself ([John 12:31](#), [14:30](#), [16:8-11](#)). So, are you never afraid when worldly leaders fall into the temptation of limiting what you can and cannot say about your Savior? Are you never worried that those who hate the Bible's teachings might actually harm your life?

As you watch the world's prince still raging throughout our world, is your very first thought: *They shall not overpow'r us? He's judged; the deed is done?*

Sometimes you might feel ready to collapse under all the pressure which comes from believing everything God says in his Word. Sometimes you might feel that even God himself cannot undo the sinful choices the world has already made. Yet, your God gives you timeless Words today. Words to build up. Words to encourage. Words to strengthen and calm you. **TAKE HEART! THE ETERNAL GOSPEL REMAINS!** *This is your hope; this is your refuge.*

As you look around our world, there does not always appear to be a reason to have hope, does it? At least, not a hope that what God says actually matters anymore. Day after day it only appears that God's Word is only being slowly extinguished and not eternally remaining. Even our reading from Revelation seems to suggest that. The very first verse says: *"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave [John] to show his servants what must soon take place"* (1:1).

Jesus quickly unveils those things that "must soon take place." He addresses seven Christian churches about certain events that are coming. Some churches would face anti-Christian persecutions. Christians would be snatched away, imprisoned, tortured, and killed (2:10). Other churches would battle false teachers. Certain people would enter their congregation and share teachings that sounded like God's Word, but were really teachings filled with error (2:14-15, 20-25). Still other churches would shrink. Christians would turn away from God's Word; they would let their own opinions judge what they would and would not believe (3:1-3; 14-19).

I mean, Jesus reveals what is coming and the future does not sound pleasant, does it? More than that, you already live in that future. You know that those things that "must soon take place" still take place today! Anti-Christian persecution rages throughout the world. That Middle-East group, ISIS, has forced tens of thousands of Christians out of their homeland, away from job and house—and even family just because of what they believe. You might have seen dozens of Christians lined up and beheaded for the simple reason that their God is Jesus Christ and not Muhammad. Here in our country, you might not face physical harm, but you still encounter a persecution just as harsh. Some city mayors demand that pastors cannot share what the Bible says on social issues. Educators who have already rejected the existence of God force their thoughts on their students. People might tell you that they hate what you believe—and their words hurt deeply.

You see false teachers still standing before groups of people. They open their mouths and present teachings that sound good, sound delightful. Yet, much of their teaching twists Scripture around to say things they already want to hear.

You know that many Christians have wandered away from God's Word. Congregations throughout the world have become so much smaller in just 50 years! An increasing majority of people admit that they have never read the Bible, but they are willing to admit they know what the Bible teaches.

Knowing that these things already happen are frightening, scary—and maybe even depressing. Jesus reveals the things that must soon happen and we see them unfold daily all around us. Sometimes you might wonder if God really has any control anymore. You might feel like you are on the losing side, that you might as well enjoy popularity rather than suffer for clinging to God's Word. It almost seems easier to change with the world. It feels easier to compromise on Bible teachings—to let go of teachings the world considers "controversial" or "unnecessary." It might appear easier to follow false teachers because while their teachings are not perfect, they also do not sound too terrible.

You know, as scary as Revelation might appear in some places, the truly scary thing is that the Risen and Victorious Christ still reigns forever. He will continue conquering everyone who sides themselves against him and his Word!

When life all around you seems to be nothing more than a swirling mess of chaotic troubles, **TAKE HEART! THE ETERNAL GOSPEL REMAINS!** Your God provides you with a calming oasis. He shows you his power and might in something so simple as the Bible. In the end, his Word *is your hope*.

In our reading from Revelation, God shows us **another angel flying in midair...** high above the troubles of the world. This angel cannot be stopped. He flies high in the heavens, in the airspace ruled by our God; the devil cannot reach up and swat him down. His mouth proclaims a message that God has given him; no enemy of God can shut his mouth and silence the message. God ensures that his Word will be heard above any other word.

... **[H]e had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people.** What trumpet continues being blared to every nation, tribe, language, and people? What does this messenger of God proclaim to you? The gospel. What does that word [Gospel] mean? Of what does its message consist? Simply put, “Gospel” means “good news.” The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. Jesus has done all of the work for you. The gospel does not give you a set of rules to obey. It does not place new expectations on you. It proclaims the simple truth that Jesus died on the cross for your benefit.

See who owns the gospel message. In the Greek, “angel” means messenger. The angel is simply someone who carries a message. The messenger does not create the message; he simply repeats what he has been told. God owns the gospel message—the same God who makes sure his Word is heard in heaven and on earth—whether people want to hear it or not!

That gospel message has existed from the beginning of time. God creates the heavens and the earth and puts Adam and Eve in this perfect Garden of Eden to live with him. The very moment they fall into sin, there God is, promising that his Son will come to crush the devil’s head ([Genesis 3:15](#)). That Jesus will set them free from sin, death, and hell. As the centuries roll throughout the Old Testament, countless believers look forward to the day when Jesus would crush the devil’s head.

On Good Friday, it all happens. Jesus gives the absolute final word: “It is finished!” ([John 19:30](#)). He has made complete payment to cover over every single sin. Easter Sunday, Jesus comes out of the tomb and declares you forgiven. He powerfully enters heaven, proclaiming that you can stand before God wearing his perfection! Nothing can erase this good news. The devil cannot reverse Jesus’ Easter Sunday victory. The devil cannot remove your forgiveness. He cannot make Jesus’ death and resurrection not happen. *[The devil] can harm us none. [Jesus has] judged; the deed is done! One little word can fell him.* The good news that Jesus paid for your sins stands forever; **THE ETERNAL GOSPEL REMAINS!** *This is your hope.*

As you go out into a world swirling in chaos, **TAKE HEART! THE ETERNAL GOSPEL REMAINS!** *This is your refuge.*

Most, if not all people, have some place to turn when troubles arise. If you are ill, you find relief in a doctor’s diagnosis. If you are scared, you find comfort in your parents. If you

are worried, you find answers with your friends. These are types of “refuge;” they are places of safety from where you draw strength.

As a Christian, continue drawing strength from your God! That is what the flying angel blares out. **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 is the Creator and Maker of the entire universe and everything in it! If he holds that kind of power, who can defeat him? Better yet, who can harm you since you belong to the Almighty?

You have no fear. In fact, when the angel declares to “fear God,” he is not telling you to tremble in fright. No, he tells you something that you already do: you respect God—that is what “fear” also means.

You continue fearing God, respecting him, by holding onto all of his Word. That is what Martin Luther did. He grew up, worshipping at his local church. His preachers read the Bible on Sundays; he knew some Bible stories. He listened to their words— and they sounded accurate. Yet, there came a time when Luther could read the Bible for himself. As he read it, he realized some teachings he was taught did not agree with what the Bible taught. His preachers told him that God might forgive sin if people gave money to the church, if they purchased forgiveness, if they did good actions. Luther read that forgiveness is a free gift of God, obtained by Jesus and given freely by Jesus. Forgiveness is not something that we earn ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). Later in life, Luther met other preachers. Both Luther and these men preached from the same Bible. They both knew that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. Yet, some of these men called Baptism and Holy Communion is something optional for a Christian. It was tempting for Luther to ignore the Bible’s teaching on these sacraments; he could easily have gained more popularity! Yet, Luther feared God; he respected God’s Word above any other human word.

My dear friends, remain in that eternal gospel. The things that Luther encountered are the very same things you encounter today. Many still add and subtract teachings from the Word of God. Many try to unravel the mysteries which God has not revealed to us. Many have a message packaged well, but they warp major Bible teachings. It is easy to join with such wayward thoughts. We can look popular. We could gain more people from certain age-groups. We could have multitudes praise us! Is it worth obtaining worldly success at the expense of God’s Word?

Keep yourself safe from false teaching! The eternal gospel is your refuge. Not just your own hearts— but watch out for what your family might be listening to as well! Many false teachers have gone out into the world. Some even open the Bible and preach really nice sounding, morally correct messages. Are they accurate? Do they come from Scripture or from people’s heads? Go through Scripture together and read the eternal gospel. *This is your refuge.*

It always will be. Jesus reveals some of the things that must take place. Persecutions. False teaching. The masses shifting ears away from the Bible. Sometimes you might feel ready to collapse under all the pressure which comes from believing everything God says in his Word. Sometimes you might feel that even God himself cannot undo the sinful choices the world has already made.

Yet, your God gives you timeless Words today. Words to build up. Words to encourage. Words to strengthen and calm you. **TAKE HEART! THE ETERNAL GOSPEL REMAINS!** *This is your hope; this is your refuge.*