

SERMON FOR SUN. OCT. 31, 2021

Reformation B 2021 Rev 14:6-7 “An Eternal Gospel.”

Dear fellow redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ, in today’s first reading, we heard, **“Then 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.”**

Those words of St. John are what the Reformation is all about. Today is not about Luther, though it includes him, and it is not about the events that happened 500 plus years ago, though we remember them.

Today is about the ***Gospel, an eternal Gospel***. This Gospel has been proclaimed through the ages, from Adam and Eve down to the last person to be born before the 2nd coming of Christ.

It is the Gospel that is for **every nation and tribe and language and people.**

The Gospel that is happening here and now, for you. The Gospel is the result of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of sins that we have in Him.

And so, the Gospel is eternal, for He is eternal. It is eternal, for His love for fallen mankind is eternal.

You stand in a very long line of Gospel recipients; patriarchs, prophets, saints, fathers, and martyrs.

Adam and Eve were the first to hear this Gospel, to give them hope even as they were exiled from Paradise.

To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob this Gospel was proclaimed so they’d know that God’s kingdom was their true home even as they wandered this earth with no home.

To Moses and Israel this Gospel was proclaimed, that they might see that their great deliverance from slavery in Egypt was just the beginning of God’s delivering them from their enemies.

The Gospel was declared to Joshua that he fear not the kingdoms of this earth, for God would deliver all his enemies into Joshua’s hands.

To David and Solomon this Gospel was proclaimed, that in their kingdoms they’d see that their earthly kingdoms were but a pale foreshadowing of the glorious kingdom that is to come.

To God’s people in exile this Gospel was proclaimed through the prophets, that they might know that God had not forgotten them, and that God’s loving discipline lasts only a time.

And then the Gospel came to earth. All God's promises were fulfilled as Jesus, the Word was made flesh, and in Him, the hopes of all God's people were fulfilled.

For in Jesus, the Son of God came to set us free. And - as St. John also told us today, in His Gospel - **if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.**

Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that through His atonement for sin on the cross, our sins would burden and threaten us no more.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads us through the valley of the shadow of death - the One who is uniquely qualified to do so - being the only one to pass through that valley Himself in His death and resurrection.

Jesus is the Strong Man who has come and bound satan, stripping him of his power and demolishing his stronghold, that we need fear him no more.

Jesus is the Son of God whose ministry makes us sons of God.

Christ has risen and ascended, yet His work among us continues. Through the Gospel, God still calls His people and builds His Church.

For though this Gospel is proclaimed by **many**, the Church is built only by **One**: Christ Himself. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote:

It is not we who build. Christ builds the church. No man builds the church but Christ alone. We must confess - he builds. We must proclaim - he builds. We must pray to him that he may build.

And so the Church is built by Christ through the apostles, who proclaimed this Gospel before governors and kings and were not ashamed.

Christ built the church through martyrs, who proclaimed this Gospel with their blood; that He who held the power of life and death was greater than the one bringing down the sword or releasing the lions.

The Church was built by Christ in the dark ages ensuring that the light of the Gospel could not be snuffed out.

The Church was built by Christ during the Reformation when a conscience-stricken monk proclaimed a Gospel message he desperately needed to hear himself.

The Church is built by Christ under the oppression of communism, and the skepticism of post-modernism.

And the Church is built by Christ also in you. And this may, in fact, be the greatest miracle of all.

For this eternal Gospel has come **to you** in your fears, your doubts, your sins; your questions, your wanderings, your despair; and in your rebellion.

But not only in times of trouble, but the eternal Gospel comes to you also in the times of prosperity - when lack of troubles makes us think we were good people, and so we turn not to God but to ourselves for what we need.

This is why we pray in the great litany of the church: ***“in all time of our tribulation, in all time of our prosperity . . . help us, good Lord.”*** And He does.

For His Gospel is eternal. And the Lord **“who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”**

God is not like us. He does not start something and then not finish. No, **He is the beginning and the ending, the Alpha and the Omega.**

And so His work begun in you in your baptism, making you a son of God in Christ, continues. He is a faithful Father who raises His children in perfect love - not sugary love, not indulgent love, not overbearing love, but perfect love.

And though your mind be filled with many false words of wisdoms, seeking to lead you astray; though your life be filled with riches seeking to capture your heart, or if it's filled with troubles seeking to rob you of your hope, the work of Christ continues in you with His Word of life, to lead you in His way of truth.

The way of repentance and reliance on Him.

And though satan constantly holds the sword of your sin and guilt over you, the work of Christ continues in you by continually raising you to life in Absolution: proclaiming that your sins are not held against you - they were held against Christ on the cross.

And if your sins are on Him, then they are not on you, so you are forgiven.

Though your sinful flesh wants to indulge in the things of this world that do not satisfy, the work of Christ continues in you to fill your heart as He fills you with Himself, feeding you with His own body and blood, given and shed for you.

Apart from Him and His work, we would be lost. Both the pleasures and persecutions of this world would quickly destroy us.

But as this eternal Gospel has lasted through so many generations, so many challenges, so many temptations, so many assaults, so many persecutions, so it will last in you.

Not because of you; because of Him. The One who is faithful, the One who is true, the One who is your Lord and Savior.

And so you need not wonder: is this Gospel for me? *Yes, it is for you.* For it is **for every nation and tribe and language and people.**

It is for all who are enslaved to sin and subject to death and cannot set themselves free. For the Son has come and set you free. And ***if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.*** Both now and forever.

For though the day of judgment is coming, for you it has, in fact, already come. Your Savior has spoken His “not guilty” upon you here, for He has taken your condemnation on the cross.

What then remains for you now is forgiveness and life. Life in Him. The life of the eternal Gospel which gives eternal life.

Now, it may not always look like the Gospel is winning; that’s okay. We do not know the plan of God, but that He is working and building, have no doubt. On this you have His Word, and the witness of generations past.

And most of all, you have the witness of the cross - the place where above all places it looked like satan had won; but which was, in fact, the place of his defeat. For there, death did not win - life won.

So come now and receive again that life. Receive Him who has done - ***and continues to do*** - such great things for you.

Come and join ***the “angels and archangels and all the company of heaven”*** - all those who have gone before us - at the feast of our Lord.

Come and feast on Him who loved you **then**, who loves you **now**, and who will love you **forever**. Come, **He is here for you. AMEN**