

Reformation Sunday – October 29, 2023
Text: Revelation 14:6-7
Theme: Let the Eternal Gospel Rain Down

C.F.W. Walther was one of the founding fathers of the Missouri Synod and he believed that Luther was the angel in Revelation 14 proclaiming the Gospel to a faithless, ignorant world. Think about it. The world had lost the Gospel. The Church was as corrupt as the government because the Pope ruled the emperor. If you have been attending John Brust's class in the Trinity Center, you heard about Bishops were borrowing money from the Jews to buy their bishoprics for exorbitant prices, and then, to pay back their huge debt, they convinced the people that they had to pay to have masses said to get their loved ones out of purgatory. Purgatory was a place created by human beings way back in the intertestamental period because it just seemed ridiculous that a sinful human being could go straight the heaven. Sure, God gives us His grace and all but WE MUST HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! Right? That wrong notion took shape and was promoted by Pope Gregory in the 6th century. Later, by Luther's day, it had become doctrine of the Church and was abused by Pope Leo X to get money for the basilicas of Rome. As many of Satan's lies do, these lies created a cesspool of works righteousness in the Church. Wherever you can convince people that there is something they must do for salvation, there is money to be made.

Luther came into that world, and with his careful study of the Bible, he became convinced that we are saved by Grace alone and Faith alone and that the only authority in our lives is Scripture alone. That is called the three sola's of the Reformation: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Scripture Alone. He began to teach this information that he had discovered and so began to undermine the financial system of the papacy. The pope can put up with heretics. They pop up all the time. You just create a new order for them and send them off to some place where they won't be heard from too much. But start cutting into his profits and things get ugly fast. But like Jesus said, "If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

And so, we are. We are free to give or not to give. We are free to worship or not to worship. We are free to do whatever we like because the Son has set us free. There is no human regulation that can spiritually bind us. No religious leader can hold salvation over our head. No government can force us to worship in a manner they condone. No social influencer can force us to believe anything that contradicts God's Word all because Jesus died on the cross for us and set us free from all the worldly nonsense. That is the eternal Gospel. Jesus Christ set us free from Satan, from sin and from our own human nature, and He empowers us through His Word and Sacrament to rise above this earthly vale and fly high with Him.

Was Luther the angel to whom Jesus is referring in Revelation 14? We don't really know, but we do know that the reformation of the Church that Luther helped to usher into the world in 1517 sounds an awful lot like Revelation 14. It changed the world for us. Yet, sometimes, we forget that Luther reformed everything. We still slip into nonsense arguments and ideas. We sometimes forget that the Eternal Gospel is not something we strive to obtain but something that is already ours. We can become completely distracted from our mission by gender identity, corruption in Washington and whether or not a child should be allowed to identify as an animal. And when we become distracted from our mission, which is the mission of the angel in Revelation 14, Satan twitches with glee. He cannot stop God. So, he works to distract and so derail the Church.

That has always been his plan. If he can derail the Church, he can entice some people to get off the salvation wagon and follow him down any number of rabbit holes that he has devised for just such a purpose. That is very much to his liking. All he has to do is to get us to focus on something, anything realyy, other than the Eternal Gospel. Global warming? Sure, why not? Homelessness? Rising crime? LGBTQ+ rights? Sure, anything will do. It does not matter what it is to him. Just keep the Church busy with something other

than proclaiming the Eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ's death on the cross to pay for all the sins of the world. John said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" He did not say "Oh look, Jesus! We should solve all the problems in the world with his help." Jesus has already solved all the problems of the world. He died on the cross to pay for all of them. Whatever issue you can imagine, Jesus died to fix it eternally.

So, we no longer have to solve the problems of the world. Jesus did that. Now we can rejoice. Now we, "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." That's all there is to it. Knowing that takes a load of pressure off our shoulders as Christians who sojourn in this world until we reach the Promised Land.