

The Reformation was 500 years ago. Was it easier to be a Christian in 1518 or right now? They had no Bible and one church that said the only way to heaven is to obey all the rules. We are so busy that it's hard to find time to read our Bibles and so many churches that people think it doesn't matter what you believe. 500 years ago and now the devil is always busy. He wants us to people to doubt God and it seems like he's having a lot of success! But in Revelation 14, God assures us that though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not we fear no ill they shall not overpower us. He taught that lesson to Martin Luther and today we will learn from Revelation 14.

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. He said in a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.”

Jesus' disciple John saw this flying angel right after he saw a big red dragon and two huge beasts. They were deceiving people on earth, just like the devil. But John saw a few people who have were saved by the blood of a lamb, just like we have been saved by the blood of Jesus. And then John saw an angel flying in mid-air. We'll learn three lessons from the angel. 1) What to have. 2) What to do with a megaphone. 3) What to fear.

1) What to have. When John sees the angel, the first thing he mentions about him is that, **“He had the eternal gospel.”** The number one thing to remember about this angel is that he has the good news. The previous chapter tells what the good news is. A lamb was slain and his blood can pay for people to get into heaven. And this good news about the lamb, it is eternal. The good news of Jesus has been around forever. On the first pages of the Bible, God told Adam that Jesus would come and crush the head of the devil. And this good news will be around forever! Even after the whole world ends and we are all in heaven, we'll still be talking about how Jesus destroyed the devil so we can go to heaven. This flying angel had that good news.

Martin Luther had the eternal gospel too. But he didn't always have it. When he was a monk he would go to church and hear that he had to do good works to get into heaven. But then he would go to the library and read stuff like, **“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.”** He heard preachers say that you could get to heaven more easily if you paid extra money. He read in the Bible that, **“It was not with perishable things such as silver or**

gold that you were redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” The Bible taught him that getting to heaven wasn't about money, it's about Jesus. Martin Luther wrote about Jesus, **“He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.”** He had the eternal gospel.

The angel in Revelation had the eternal gospel. Martin Luther did too. So what about us? Our confirmation students all memorize Luther's words about Jesus. On Sunday we all confess that Jesus is the most important. But on Thursday nights at home it's easy to let family time or relaxation or work leapfrog Jesus and become our top priority. In those moments we need to learn what the angel had, what Martin Luther learned, that nothing in the world is more important than the message that's been around forever—Jesus saves us by his blood. No matter how bad the world seems, no matter how confusing the world seems, no matter how many distractions come your way, God promises there will always be messengers to tell you the eternal gospel.

And today by some miracle of God, we know that good news. But Reformation is not a day to throw ourselves a party for being Lutheran. It's not a day to bad-mouth all the other churches in town. Today is a day to think about our church's future. In the future will we be all about what Martin Luther was all about, what the Bible is all about, the eternal gospel of Jesus?

I heard a pastor tell this story about the world's first digital camera. It's sitting in the Smithsonian museum in Washington, and it's a bulky looking thing, but that camera revolutionized the photo industry. Can you guess which company invented it? Kodak. Kodak created personal photography and by the 1960s they owned 70% of the market and they were making a billion dollars a year. In 1975 an employee of the Kodak company invented a digital camera. So 25 years before digital photographs became popular, Kodak invented the forerunner to every snap, every Instagram post, every selfie. And do you know what they did with their invention? They set it on a shelf. See they thought they were in the film business, so they got all caught up in the process and the details and they forgot what they were all about, which was capturing moments and recording memories. This year there will be over 1 trillion digital images captured, and Kodak had the technology 25 years before anyone else. But they use it. Looking back, it is really easy to see that they did not value what they had. In 2012, Kodak, the inventor of the digital camera, went bankrupt.

Now could it happen that our church might forget what we are all about and not value the eternal gospel that we have? Is it possible that we could get caught up in the process and begin to think that we are all about being well organized, or providing excellent education, or making our church relevant? Could we have the eternal gospel of Jesus, and put it away on a shelf? Could we begin to think that success in our church isn't based on the eternal truth that Jesus has paid for the sins of the entire world with his blood, could we think that success is based on our programs, our budget, our meetings. Could we get so caught up in the process of doing church, and attending church, that we forget what we have—the eternally relevant message that Jesus has redeemed me a lost and condemned sinner, purchased me with his holy precious blood. Friends I have some great news for you, we have everything we need to be successful because we have the gospel! We don't need to discover anything new. We just need to not set it on a shelf. We need to value it and implement it in our lives. Valuing the good news of Jesus means that each day every one of us recognizes that we have been bought by Jesus. We are headed for heaven. And now Jesus invites us to do like that angel and proclaim the good news to anyone who will listen! Which brings us to lesson number two from Revelation.

2) What to do with a megaphone. Because the angel in Revelation is described as having a *MEG-EH PHON-EH* it's where we get our English word, megaphone, and it means a loud voice. His voice is so loud that if he was proclaiming on a map, people from every nation could hear him. His voice is so loud that if he were proclaiming on a timeline people could hear him from one end of history to the other. Because he has an eternal gospel to proclaim. And with his megaphone he tells about Jesus.

Martin Luther did not have a megaphone, or a particularly loud voice. But 30 years before he was born, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. That meant that for the first time in history you could take a message and mass print it to send your message to every nation. Martin Luther used this new technology to proclaim the eternal gospel to people everywhere. He was one of the most prolific writers in history and his writing was all about Jesus. Luther also had an incredible mind, which he used to learn about Jesus. He had a position as a university professor which he used to instruct his students about Jesus. He had great musical gifts, which he used to write songs like A Mighty Fortress is our God, which tells all about Jesus. Luther used his mega phone to tell about Jesus.

What about us? What's a megaphone for today? It's for telling about Jesus. So what's your megaphone? Do children love you? Tell them about Jesus. Are you a good listener? Build friendships and then share Jesus. Do you have a cheerful personality, a lot of Instagram followers, or a lot of time to pray? Put it to use, not to draw attention to yourself, but put it to use to share the good news that Jesus has paid for the sins of the world with his blood. That's what to do with a megaphone.

So this angel, when he uses that loud voice, do you remember what he says? **"Fear God."** In English, the word "fear" is almost always negative like terror. But what the angel means could be negative or it could be positive like, "awe-inspiring." Fear is the jaw-drop feeling you get when you realize your fate is in the hands of someone much bigger than you. It's like a movie scene where the hero is on a ship fighting the bad guy when suddenly a sea monster picks up the whole ship. Is that good news or bad news? Depends on whether the sea monster is on your side! So the angel wants everyone on earth to know that the beast is not worth worrying about or worshipping because their fate is in the hands of someone much bigger. Fear God! That's terrifying if you are not on his side. But if you know that Jesus spilled his blood to take away your sins, that is awe-inspiring news!

One time Martin Luther found himself facing a pretty powerful enemy. Charles V, the most powerful man in Europe sat in front of him and demanded that he take back all of his teachings. But Luther knew that his fate was in the hands of someone much bigger than Charles V. He didn't need to fear Charles. Luther famously wrote, **"We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."** So he didn't fear the emperor. He didn't fear the devil. He knew that God had forgiven him. He knew that God was in control. So he feared God.

What about you? When the devil tells you that you've gone too far to be forgiven. Don't trust him. When someone tells you that your faith is silly. Don't fear them. Your fate is in the hands of someone much bigger, someone who shed his blood to get you into heaven, someone who is always in control. So listen to the angel and fear our awe-inspiring God.

Martin Luther learned three lessons from the flying angel. This year we will mark the reformation rightly if we hold onto the eternal gospel. Say the gospel with a megaphone. Fear the God who loves us.

Amen.