

Sermon Rev 14 6 7

Sermon: 22nd Sunday after Pentecost Series B – Reformation Sunday

Text: Revelation 14:6-7

Theme: The Gospel is eternal and is for all!

Goal: To assure God's intention to save all through the Gospel of Christ: Word+ Sacraments

Dear Friends,

Introduction: As we are celebrating the Reformation Sunday, it is good to remember that Dr. Martin Luther (from whom we carry the name 'Lutherans') did the Reformation based on one single premise: The truth of the Bible! The church at his time was so corrupted and far from the truth that Luther's aim was: 'Let's go back to the fount, let's go back to the Bible!' And the Reformation/Restoration of the church began on 31st October 1517. We are going to celebrate the 500 anniversary of the Reformation in just two years.

We praise God that He used Luther as His instrument to restore the truth that Jesus talked about in the Gospel and that He blessed Luther's efforts and ministry, bringing the truth of the Bible to the light again. We as heirs of the Reformation cannot diverse our way and our teachings from the rediscovered truth. But we have to cling to it and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to all; because God wants to save all!

I – The Gospel

Our text says that "an angel flying in mid-air...had the eternal Gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth..." What is this Gospel?

The best-known definition of the Gospel is found in the Christmas Story (today in two weeks!!!) when the angel announced to the shepherd in the fields: "Do not be afraid. I bring you Good News (the Gospel) of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town

of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord!" (Luke 2: 9, 10). The word Gospel (euaggeliou) in Greek means Good News. The coming of Jesus was the accomplishment of a long series of promises that God Himself would come to dwell with His people and help them (us) to go back to the right way, the way of God's truth. The first verse of the Gospel of Mark says: "The beginning of the gospel (good news) about Jesus Christ, the Son of God" ... and after this it says: "Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news (the Gospel) of God. 'The time has come', he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news'" (the Gospel) (Mark 1.1, 14, 15).

Before Jesus returned to heaven He committed His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the good news (the Gospel) to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16). This text brings us to the present day, when God applied His Good News (the Gospel) to Isla Hope Hillermann as she was baptized, receiving God's forgiveness and has been accepted as God's child in His family, the Holy Christian Church.

The Apostle Paul gave a definition of the Gospel when he wrote to the Romans (1:16-17): "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes... for in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith... as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'". This was the key word for Luther's Reformation: We are saved by faith in Christ alone, not by what we do, but by what Jesus had done on the cross for us. This is the core of the Gospel = Good News, that Jesus reconciled us with God through His sacrifice.

II – The Gospel is Eternal

God's Gospel doesn't change. It is eternal. It has been the same

Gospel since the fall of Adam and Eve, when God promised them to send a Saviour to restore the good relationship between man and God, the relationship, which had been broken. The promise had been repeated several times during the centuries till Jesus came. As the promise was accomplished and the reconciliation done through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection, the Gospel is reaffirmed and proclaimed to all till the end of the world, when we will experience the Gospel in its fullness in heaven.

The Gospel cannot be changed. Due to many human interference and decisions according to different opinions, the church had swapped the Gospel of Christ for human doctrines during Luther's time. The young Luther took his church-life very seriously, but he couldn't find comfort in the way the church was teaching him. He was always oppressed by laws and commandments, most of them not from the Bible, but just rules of the church. He tried to obey all of them; but he didn't find peace with God through the obedience to the law. As a priest and professor of theology, He studied the Bible earnestly, searching for a gracious and merciful God. When he came to the text of Romans previously mentioned, 'The righteous will live by faith', he realized that his salvation was not dependant on his own efforts to obey the law, but it was given free by God through faith in what Jesus had done on the cross for us. He confessed later: *I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel ... All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates.*

Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. (Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Works (1545))

Luther had rediscovered the eternal Gospel and he began to share it with all in his preaching, in his classes and in his writings.

III – The Gospel is for all

What Jesus did on the cross was not only for certain people; it was for all! Our text says: “Then I saw an angel flying in mid-air, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language, and people.” This matches the Institution of Baptism when Jesus said after His resurrection: “All authority in heaven and on earth had been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of *all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). No one is excluded from God’s plan. There is no discrimination in God’s Kingdom. God calls all to repentance and to faith, young and old, little children and adults, from all nations and background. The Gospel is for all. He is offered in the reading/preaching of the Word; he is offered in the Word plus Water = Holy Baptism; he is offered in the Word plus bread and wine = The Holy Communion, the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus, given and shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Conclusion: By God’s grace, Luther brought the eternal Gospel back to the centre of the church and to the hand of the people. He translated the Bible to the language of the people. He wrote the Small Catechism as a brief summary of the Bible. He composed hymns for the people to sing. He valued the baptism in a very high level. He himself had been baptized when he was only one day old; and he thanked God that he was laid in God’s hands through this Sacrament the day after his birth. Having baptized little Isla Hope on Reformation Sunday is very meaningful. May God preserve this little one and all of us in His grace and in faithfulness to His eternal Gospel to receive the promised inheritance prepared in heaven for all who believe in Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 25 October 2015