

### Revelations 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.”

### Introduction

Imagine being the apostle John. From your youth and for decades you have been an apostle of Jesus. You saw Jesus do miracles. You saw his Transfiguration. You were with him in the Garden of Gethsemane. You watched him die. You saw him alive after his resurrection and watched him ascend into heaven. The Holy Spirit used you to write a gospel and three short epistles. Now you are 90 years old. You are in exile on the Island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. You’re there because the authorities want to silence your message of Jesus Christ and stop your leadership of the Christian churches in western Asia Minor.

It is in this setting that the Lord gives you a series of vision – a vision of himself, glorified; of seven letters to seven churches; of seven seals; seven trumpets; seven visions, seven bowls; of himself victorious over his enemies; and one of the final judgement and eternal glory. It is in the middle of the vision of the seven visions that you see something uplifting and encouraging even among the turmoil of the last days. You see **The Angel with the Eternal Gospel**.

On this Reformation festival let’s consider the vision and what it meant for the Reformation and for today.

### Symbolism

The Book of Revelation is filled with symbolism. What or to whom does the angel with the eternal gospel represent? Since the days of the Reformation many Lutheran commentators have pointed to Martin Luther and his discovery and repositioning of the gospel at the heart of God’s church. Certainly this is an application of great importance and impact. We and many others are blessed today because of the Luther’s refusal to let the gospel be buried under false teaching and soul-damning doctrine. He brought the message forgiveness and salvation that comes through the gospel and is ours by grace through faith in Jesus.

But that angel with the eternal gospel is every faithful witness throughout the New Testament era who has shared the message that forgiveness and salvation are one’s by grace through faith in Jesus. It includes pastors, teachers, missionaries, moms, dads, siblings, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and even strangers who have shared the gospel message with someone else in the very nation, tribe, language, or people.

### All People

A few years ago, I read a book called *The God Delusion* by atheistic author Richard Dawkins. (Not Charles like in the sermon card – I must have Dickens and Dawkins crossed in my mind.) Dawkins, in an attempt to show Jesus to be a nothing more than human, tried to paint Jesus as racist. He pointed to Jesus ministry predominantly to the Jews ignoring Jesus’ interaction with non-Jews and his directive to his disciples to go into all the world – every nation, tribe, language, and people. He wants all people to hear the gospel.

### Gospel

The gospel is the good news that everything God demands of us in his law, Christ has provided for us in his life, death, and resurrection. God’s law demands that we have no sin but are holy. God’s law demands that we love and obey him to perfection and love others with an unending love. His law says that if we have sin and we fail, we deserve to die and go to hell.

But the gospel shows us Jesus – God’s son and yet true man – like us in every way but without sin. The gospel shows us Jesus pleasing his Father loving him perfectly and obeying him completely. The gospel shows us Jesus suffering and dying for our sins. The gospel shows him rising from the dead to assure us that he has done everything to save us, and that our Father in heaven now view us as forgiveness and innocent. The gospel tell us to believe in Jesus.

Paul sums up the gospel nicely in 1 Corinthians 15: **“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. <sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, hat he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”** The gospel also includes all God’s promises of his love and faithfulness in our lives.

This gospel is eternal in that it will never pass away. Even though at the end of time spreading the gospel will cease, the blessings it brings will not.

### **Gospel Going Out into the World**

In fulfillment of this vision of the angel with the eternal gospel I mentioned how Martin Luther and the reformers brought the gospel out of darkness and into the light of the life of God’s church. Also think of the apostles sharing it on Pentecost or Paul spreading it through his missionary journeys and imprisonment in Rome. Consider how in the centuries after Christ the gospel spread throughout Europe in spite of repeated persecutions.

We come to today when the message of Christ has been translated into over 3,300 languages and 2.2 billion people profess to be Christian. The angel has flown with the eternal gospel and the gospel has spread.

By God’s grace it came to you – through baptism, through your parents reading Bible stories to you, through Sunday School, Wednesday School, VBS, Bible classes. Through it the Holy Spirit brought you to saving faith. Now you fear God with the fear of faith, live to glorify God, and worship God as Lord.

### **The Angels Needs to Keep Flying**

God wants the angel with the eternal gospel to keep flying and proclaiming. Even though the gospel has been translated into over 3,300 languages, that is still less than half of the 7,000 languages in the world today. Even though 2.2 billion people profess to be Christian, that is less than one-third of the world’s 7.5 billion people.

God can get the gospel out without us. But he wants to use us. God wants parents to baptize their babies and raise them in God’s word. God wants us to seize the opportunities to share with others telling what we believe and why. God wants us to generously support the ministry of our church and our synod to make and nurture disciples of Jesus here and in place we can’t go but others can whether personally or through technology.

### **The Results God Wants**

God wants the angels with the eternal gospel to keep flying because it is only through the gospel that people can believe and be saved. Paul wrote that the gospel is the power of salvation for everyone who believes. It has the power to fear God with the fear of saving faith. This is what the angel was referring to when he said, **“Fear God and give him glory...”** This is not fright, but the awe and reverence for God that comes with knowing that he loves and has saved us. When we have that peace, we want to do all to his glory.

There’s an urgency to getting the gospel out. The angel referred to judgment – **“The judgment has come.”** Judgment Day is not here yet. But when we died there is a personal judgment in which God determines whether we and others will go to heaven or hell based on whether we have faith in Jesus or not. Any day Jesus could come and if we are still alive, he will determine whether we go to heaven or hell based on whether we have saving faith in him or not. Therefore, the Lord wants us to listen to and believe in the gospel and be saved. He wants the same for others so that they may hear the gospel and as a result fear God with the fear of faith and live to his glory.

The angel also points to another result or response that comes from people hearing and fearing God with the fear of faith. **“Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.”** God wants us and others to hear the gospel, believe in him, and worship him.

God likes it when we do what we are doing today. Therefore, when we come to worship, it’s just a matter of what we get out of worship, it’s also a matter of what we give to God. Don’t get me wrong. We do what to be built up and strengthened in faith and energized for life. But worship is first of all what we give to God for saving us and creating us and the universe in which we live. It’s amazing how many hundreds of times the Bible mentions God’s creation of all things. Even if a person says I’m not going believe in Genesis 1 and 2, what does one do with all these other references to God’s creation?

Creation is a reason to worship God – both in formal worship and as we live our lives for him.

### **Take-homes**

What do we take home from John’s vision of the angel with the eternal gospel? Let the angel keep flying and proclaiming the gospel to you. That gospel preserves your faith, helps you to grow in it, ad to live it to the glory and worship of God. Through the gospel the Holy Spirit works the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. This makes us more godly men and women, boys and girls, friends and neighbors, co-workers and strangers.

Keep the angel with the eternal gospel flying to others. Seize the opportunities you have to share the gospel with others – in your family, among your friends, at work or school, with strangers when the opportunity arise. Generously support ministry and missions.

Remember that the time for the angel to fly and proclaim the gospel is limited either by the length of life or the return of Jesus. Don’t wait.

Keep the angel with the eternal gospel flying. God can do that without you. At the same time he wants to do it with you. God’s doing his part. Let’s do ours. (DRS)