



## Christ Lutheran Church

605 South Fifth Street • Norfolk, NE 68701

**Share God's Word, share His love, and do it now!**

Pastor Chip Winter, Director of Ministries

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### ***"An Eternal Gospel" – Revelation 14:6-7***

*21<sup>st</sup> after Pentecost – October 29, 2017 – Reformation Day*

**Pastor Chip Winter**

Grace to you and Peace, from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. The text for our sermon is the first lesson appointed for the day and already read for us from the Revelation of Christ to St. John, the fourteenth chapter.

My dear family in Christ, how many of us – though we need to take a break from it now and then as we get overloaded – keep up with the news? I would imagine a good number of us. And what were some of the bigger stories in the news this past week? I'm partial to the Houston Astros making it to the World Series. We've had the dust-up over presidents contacting the spouses of servicemen killed in action – **"who said what?"** and **"who was listening in?"** Along with this we have the investigation into Russian Collusion turning in a direction different than many anticipated and questions over Nebraska Coach Reilly's future.

Journalism is a competitive business as people desire to know the latest revelations and the newest twists. But even the hottest stories fade, becoming **"yesterday's news."** Time to move on to a different topic, the latest message.

Today we celebrate some news, some good news, that is completely different from all this. It is news that never grows old. Never outdated, this news is perpetually relevant. This good news is the enduring, forgiveness-bestowing, life-giving Gospel of Christ Jesus. Today we celebrate the

500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, a time when God used Dr. Martin Luther and his fellow reformers to spread the clear message that there is forgiveness and salvation by Grace, through Faith, in Christ Jesus alone. It was the age-old message that through faith in the substitutionary suffering and death of Jesus, our sins were paid for. Through His triumphant resurrection, our right standing before God was assured for all eternity.

Our text pictures this gospel proclaimed by an angel in mid-heaven. That is our first clue that this Gospel, the Gospel of the Lamb, is unlike any other message. **(1)** it's a *heavenly* message. It is so different from the deceptions of the earth. Both Jesus (Matthew 16:17), in speaking of Peter's faith, and Paul (Gal. 1:11) are adamant that this is not something man could dream up – it comes from the Almighty. **(2)** It's a *Gospel* message; good news, joyous news. For it is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), abolishing death and bringing life and immortality to light through the Gospel (1 Timothy 1:10). And **(3)** it's an *eternal* message, enduring sufficient and unchanged throughout not only the entire history of the world but also eternity. That the Lamb would be slain for sinners was established from the foundations of the world (Rev. 13:8), the promise being revealed already in Eden (Gen. 3:15).

This Gospel which was promised throughout the Old Testament and prefigured in the Passover Lamb is the same Gospel which will be proclaimed until the end of the world. It's the eternal Gospel, leading to eternal life and eternal praise.

And finally **(4)** it's a *universal* message. This is a Gospel for every nation and tribe, people and language.

Such comfort as a heavenly, eternal, universal Gospel brings is necessary for this age. Because in this and every age the great enemies of God and His Gospel seek to extinguish the message – and that ought not be news to anyone.

Already in the day of St. John, deception and murder were marshalled against the message and work of God's people and God's good news. The two evil beasts representing this in the previous chapter of Revelation (13) picture the severe opposition to the Christian faith which would arise throughout the subsequent centuries.

In the early Church faced Roman persecution, martyrdom, opposition from the Jews and false teachers from within. You can imagine some of them asking "**Can the church continue? Can the Gospel endure?**" But God's gospel kept flying as we would learn that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church: The eternal Gospel spread throughout the empire and across the world.

In the Reformation times Muslim armies threatened to overrun Christian Europe, and the Roman church and Christian sects clouded the Gospel with false teaching. We can hear some of the faithful wondering aloud "**Can the church continue? Can the Gospel endure?**" But God's Gospel kept flying as He raised up Luther and other reformers who pointed clearly and unmistakably to Christ Jesus as the Savior of sinners through His cross and open tomb. God put into Luther's heart and into his pen and onto his tongue not some new message for the world but the eternal Gospel of the Lamb Who was slain for the sins of the world.

In our day violent Islamic groups, false teachers within the Church itself, and governments which forbid or restrict the true Gospel of Christ Jesus are all imminent dangers. It was good that the White House released a week or so ago a document spelling out the freedoms of religious expression. But our Concordia University Nebraska has had a significant school district pull out of a relationship with Concordia because, as Concordia exists to be a distinctively Christian University they strive to keep their faculty 100% Christian, 90% of which are Lutheran. Concordia would not back away from that and there went \$100,000s as that relationship ended.

Add to all of these that we ourselves are often apathetic, loveless, self-centered and seduced by the idols of the day. **Can the church continue? Can the Gospel endure?**

Behold again this consoling image from our text. Beasts may deceive and murder. God's people will falter. But God has this eternal, universal, heavenly Gospel still flying mid-heaven and among us all!

We celebrate Dr. Martin Luther and the Reformation, today. We do so on this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary because God used him, used that movement to bring this bright, heavenly, joyous eternal Gospel also to us and through us to many, many others.

We have inherited very helpful testimonies to this Gospel in our catechism: **(LSC, Meaning of the Second Article, page 322 in LSB)**. We have it also in our confessions: **“Our churches teach that people cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works. People are freely justified for Christ’s sake, through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake. By His death, Christ made satisfaction for our sins. God counts this faith for righteousness in His sight”** (Romans 3 and 4[3:21-26; 4:5]).

Through the Lutheran reformers and their followers this eternal Gospel has spread over these last five hundred years to sinners throughout the world. In 2015 a Confessional Lutheran Leadership Conference was held in Wittenberg, Germany, the little university city where Luther taught and preached. This conference included participants from Germany, from Sweden, from Norway, from the US and Canada, but also from Ethiopia, Madagascar, Tanzania, Cameroon, Cambodia, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Mexico, Venezuela, Panama and many other countries.

Gathered together, they heard with joy the preaching of the news that all are forgiven freely through faith in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus. They sang with joy praising together the Lamb Who was slain, Who, by His blood, has redeemed people from every nation and tribe, language and people. Together they thanked God for what He had given them through the Reformation – the clear light and testimony of the eternal Gospel. It's the same thing we gather here today to do.

Though threats and enemies continue to surround God's people, God is still sending us His message of comfort, strength and life. Thanks be to God. Amen.