

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim. Dwell on those words for a moment: an eternal gospel.

Eternal. Timeless. Fixed. Unchanging. We don't really like that word, eternal. I mean, we know when it comes to theology eternal is supposed to be a good thing, but in our daily lives, we don't like it if things take an eternity. Even in the church, we start to get agitated when it feels like the sermon is dragging on forever. We like to be on the move. To be adaptable. We also like to be relevant. But eternal is standing still and staying the same no matter what is happening around it.

Gospel. Good news. Who doesn't like good news? But what do we mean by *good*? Because that matters. Are we talking like Halloween candy good? The things that give me pleasure good? Or the kind of good like how I came home yesterday tired and hurting from starting karate with the boys, and Marie said that it is *good* for me. Sometimes the best things for us come through pain.

Today we celebrate another Reformation Day. Five hundred years ago this year, in 1522, Martin Luther published this eternal Gospel in the common German language so that people could read and hear this eternal gospel for themselves. The Reformation was not about changing or adapting to get with the times, but it was all about a return to this eternal gospel, the Word of God.

How often it has been said that the Church needs to be relevant. One of the modern critiques of the Church is that she is losing members because she refuses to adapt. But what people often neglect to pay attention to is that the churches that have sought relevancy by adapting to the culture are the churches that are on the steepest decline. No, the message of the Church is given to proclaim is eternal, standing still, staying the same no matter what is happening around it.

What the Church must do is seek, like Luther and the other Lutheran reformers, to proclaim this eternal gospel to all who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. But as the Church proclaims this eternal Gospel we also must understand that not everyone will receive it from us. Some will politely refuse and others will refuse strongly. We shouldn't be surprised as many refused to receive it from Jesus as well.

That's because not everyone loves the truth. That is because the truth can be painful. We'd much rather look at a photoshopped picture of ourselves than look in a mirror. But a mirror is what Jesus provides. In His holiness, we see our sin. And in His Word, our sin is laid bare. "Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The salve does not remain in the house forever." We know what our sin deserves, and so we decide to cover it up. We hide it. We minimize it. We justify it. We embrace it. We teach others to do it. It's a never ending cycle.

But there is no rest for those who play this game because the truth is something that we cannot ignore. It always finds its way to the surface. We cannot go on forever. We grow weary. We slow down. Cracks begin to form. We break. So we are left with two choices. Either we can keep moving, keep chasing, keep adapting to keep running from the truth, or to turn to Christ and say, "I give up. I cannot go on any longer. I cannot keep running for eternity. I admit, I am a sinner."

And do you know what happens when we look at our sin? It becomes a mirror in which we see Jesus and His holiness. "But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith."

When we stop playing the game and turn to acknowledge the truth of who we are, we are then freed to acknowledge the truth of who Jesus is: the one who came to take our sin upon Himself and suffer and die for our sake. And this is the good news, that eternal gospel. Yes, we are sinners, but we have a Savior. When we stop trying to take things into our own hands, when we stop trying to change or adapt,

but surrender to the truth of Christ we find rest. Because that Gospel is eternal. It does not adapt to the whims of men, but it is still and unchanging.

Even as the chaos of life rages around us, Jesus Christ is still the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And when you find freedom from the bondage to sin and death there is no longer any need to cover over, to hide, to minimize, to justify, or to teach others to do the same. Instead, there is only receiving God's love and mercy and forgiveness and life and salvation in Christ.

It may not be the good news of indulging in the pleasures of your flesh, but it is good for you that you need. For the hour of judgment is coming quickly, but all of us who are in Jesus Christ have already been judged as righteous on account of His blood. May we always take comfort in and celebrate this eternal gospel. Amen.