

October 31<sup>st</sup>, Reformation Sunday  
Revelation 14: 6 – 7  
Pastor Arndt

*<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.”*

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Before I begin, I have a public service announcement of sorts. Someone has lost their family dog (pictured here). The owners wanted to pass this along, *“We miss Dolce very much. He is a male 13 year old Pomeranian and still very active. He is gentle and sweet and loves people. I pray everyday I will see his sweet face again. My family is heartbroken.”* If you see Dolce I can give you the contact information.

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In Christ Jesus,

Today is the 504th anniversary of the Reformation. The angel in our lesson gives us a warning. In Europe, the land of Luther, Christianity has been in steady decline for more than a century. Luther is credited with changing *society* in wonderful ways, but as for *salvation* by scripture alone, by faith alone, by grace alone... It could be argued that Europe is worse off spiritually today than it was 500 years ago.

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century church historians looked with hope to America. European immigrants brought their faith with them and lived in a country where church and state were separate from one another. But how quickly it is happening right beneath our feet! Those same church historians question whether the United States is a post Christian society and if the Gospel of Jesus Christ has passed on like a rain cloud to some other place.

If we are here to celebrate the Reformation as an anniversary of something... then that is what it will become—an anniversary of spiritual renewal that happened in the past, but no longer exists in the present.

Our angel is flying in front of you today, suspended in midair. Let us hear (here) the eternal Gospel!

**I. *“Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.”***

These words don't exactly sound profound. Yet, they are the heart of the reformation. Luther once summarized his message by saying, *“we should know and learn where we come from, what we are, and to whom we belong.”*

The angel reminds us that we are *“creatures”*. A creature is something that is *“created”* and has a *“creator”*. You are a creature. You have a creator. Most importantly, your creator is a loving God that cares for you. *“Worship”* is nothing other than loving your creator and trusting him. It is as if God says,

*“Whatever you lack of good things, expect it of me and look to me for it. Whenever you suffer misfortune or distress, creep and cling to me. I will give you enough and help you out of every need; only let not your heart cleave to or rest in any other.”*

-Luther (Large Catechism, 1<sup>st</sup> Commandment)

When Satan tempted Adam and Eve he didn't as much question God's word as he questioned God's love. He insisted that God was hiding things from them. *"You'd be better off if the creature crawled away and found someone else to worship and trust."*

In the book of Revelation, beast after beast emerges from land, sea, and air. They blaspheme God and demand the adoration and affection of his creatures. To earn your adoration, they always come bearing "gifts". They tell us, *"I see that your God created you male and female. But why live under His constraints? God wants you to think of others first. Follow me! If you were my creature, I would let you think of yourself first!"*

The world gushes at such an offer. Throughout Revelations we read about hideous beasts with horns and tails. The problem is our sinful nature is not afraid of them. To the contrary, our sinful nature *loves* them. We feel electric as we imagine a world with no God to constrain us. That is how the beasts of this world teach you to view God. He is not your creator who loves you. He is an unnecessary chain that constrains you.

It is sobering to consider how accurate the book of Revelation is when it describes our world. We've fallen headlong into the idea that creatures can transform themselves into creators. God's wisdom is challenged openly and everywhere. God's Word has been reduced to poetic snippets of scripture that we put on decorative art. Many a person has a passage tattooed on their forearm while in their heart they deny the core of Scripture.

In Luther's time there was one papacy that set itself up in the place of God... Today we have a world of papacies. One of the most egregious is the little papacy that lives in all of us. You too have listened to that little beast that crawls from the earth and whispers, *"did God really say?" "Your creator is old fashioned. Your creator is stingy and doesn't want you to be happy. Who needs a creator after all? Rise up little creature and be the creator yourself!"*

But the angel interrupts us.

## **II. "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.**

In our world we understand cause and effect. In the lobby of our school there is a monitor that tells you what the weather was like yesterday, the conditions today, as well as what the weather will be tomorrow. We also can set cause and effect to the side.

Back to Dolce, the missing dog. Dolce is real. I didn't make him up. After 13 years of loving care, he wandered off. I don't know why. It makes no sense! Maybe Dolce wandered and doesn't know the way home. Maybe there was something that enticed our little Pomeranian... something shiny. Maybe Dolce was lied to by other dogs. It's great out there *"going it on your own!"* Or, most tragic of all, maybe Dolce's owner walked right past him as he hid in a bush because he was afraid he would be punished for running away.

As John looks out over the landscape of revelation, he sees beasts with many following their deception. And yet what else does he see?

*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.*

All those who live on the earth have a Creator. God the creator loved his creatures so much, that when they wandered off God the creator became a creature to save them. This is the eternal Gospel.

At its heart, the Reformation is about the relationship between creatures and their Creator. It is about God calling you back to himself through Christ. This is not an anniversary of something in the past. It the eternal gospel that we hear here!

-Amen