

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
November 1, 2015
Reformation**

Revelation 14:6,7

The Flying Gospel

Revelation 14:6-7 –

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. 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.”¹

In one scene, we see an enormous red dragon enraged and seeking to devour, a multi-headed beast coming out of the sea blaspheming against God, and another beast coming out of the earth looking like a lamb, speaking like a dragon, and deceiving many.

In the other scene, we are told about false Christs with deceptive words;

¹ *The Holy Bible: New International Version*. 1984 (Re 14:6–7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

wars, earthquakes, famines; persecutions, imprisonments, floggings; betrayal, rebellion, hatred, and murder.

No matter where you look - whether it be at the figurative language of that first scene given to us in the book of Revelation, or to the literal words of Jesus in the Gospel – the message that God gives to his people in his Word concerning this world is very clear. During the End Times, which is the era that spans from Jesus’ ascension to the day he returns, earth has been, is, and will continue to be a menacing place for God’s people.

And yet in the face of everything that is portrayed in John’s Revelation, through the reality of everything that is clearly spoken about in Jesus’ words, we hear good news from God. In Revelation 14:6-7, God gives us the proclamation of what we’ll refer to today as “The Flying Gospel.” As we look at this proclamation, we will first see that there are three specific promises that God gives to us regarding this “Flying Gospel;” they are promises we see kept during the Reformation; they are promises which give us confidence still today.

John tells us about this “Flying Gospel” with these words, *“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, lang-*

uage and people. 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."

As we listen to that promise of The Flying Gospel, we are first told that it will fly when we think that it can't.

To understand how unlikely this angel's appearance was in John's vision, you really need to go and read through the chapters of Revelation that surround this section, especially chapters 12-17. They are the chapters of the Bible that cause many to be filled with fear and uncertainty when it comes to the End Times. But here, in the midst of all that gloom and doom, comes this flying, proclaiming angel. For John, it must've been a welcome, yet surprising, sight – this angel flying at a time when he wouldn't expect.

And it flew to a place where we would think that it wouldn't. In a place where the beasts and dragons seemed to have control, where we hear about the multitudes being deceived and corrupted and turning from God in mass, God gives this promise that his angel would fly "to every nation, tribe, language, and people." As much as the world would try to prevent its flight, this angel's flight would not be able to be

restricted, and neither would the message that the angel brought.

As the beasts of Revelation 13 would strive to take control and be worshiped as gods, this angel would announce with authority to the world: "It is God who is to be feared and respected; it is God who is to be praised; it is God who is to be glorified because God is the Creator, God is the Savior, God is the Judge of all." Through his words, he would bring the proclamation of the eternal and victorious Gospel.

In Revelation, God's promise of the Flying Gospel shines as a great beacon of light in an otherwise dark setting. God promises that he will never abandon the earth or its people to the control of Satan and the beasts. He announces that the good news of the Gospel will always persevere.

Today, as we remember the Reformation, it is an opportunity to see God's promise of the Flying Gospel kept.

The Reformation happened in an age when the Church had been completely corrupted, both in its leadership and in its message. The church was led by men who were focused on politics and fueled by greed. And the message of the church was corrupted with demands of work to earn God's favor and opportunities

to buy forgiveness. The institution that was to stand against Satan and herald the Gospel was now Satan's most deceptive tool. Yet, it was in the midst of this dark age that the Gospel would take flight when most would think that it had lost its place in the world.

The Gospel also flew during the Reformation where we would think that it wouldn't. It was actually from within that corrupted church that the resurgent Gospel began its flight, as a monk and his friends discovered the truth of the Gospel as they studied the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit moved them to proclaim truths that had been hidden.

This Gospel, too, found an audience among people who had long had the truth of God's Word hidden from them. For thousands of years, the Gospel had only been available in the Latin language, accessible only to those who were educated. For the common people of the Word, the Bible may as well have been written in code. But through the Reformers, who also translated and printed the Bible, the Gospel flew in rapid ways just as God promised it would – to every nation, tribe, language, and people! It flew where it previously had not.

And that Gospel flew with a great proclamation: *Sola Scriptura, Sola Fide, Sola Gratia* – Salvation and

Forgiveness is heard through Scripture Alone; it is by Faith alone apart from works; it is by God's grace alone. It was through the Reformation that God showed defiantly that his Gospel message could never be grounded and kept from flying.

That promise of the Flying Gospel remains today, and it promises that the Gospel will fly when we think that it can't. We live in a time when the voice of Christianity seems to be growing dimmer; when the world seems intent on silencing the voice of God; when even many in the church seem okay with diminishing and dismissing what the Bible says. In these times, we might be tempted to doubt God's promise given in Revelation. We might wonder whether a church that stands so strongly on the Word alone has a place in this world. We might question whether the Gospel can really soar, or whether we should just hope that it can sputter along, hoping for our children's sake that it doesn't crash to its end. But God has promised, and for our good, God has shown, that the Gospel will continue to fly, especially in times like these when we think that it won't. And so God tells us to put away our doubts and fears and questions.

And he shows us "The Flying Gospel" soaring where we think that it wouldn't. In the atheistic and idolatry-filled countries of Asia, we

find the Gospel just beginning to take flight in lands with billions of souls. In the nations of Africa, we find hearts and lives that need the hope that only the Gospel can bring. Even here in our country, there are still many searching for a place where the Truth is protected and preached; there are still many who search for hope in a lost world. The Gospel remains to fly to them.

And it does so with same proclamation that has always made it a light shining in a world of uncertainty. The Gospel still soars with that great proclamation of salvation in Christ alone, by Grace alone, through faith alone, a promise found in Scripture alone.

All of the trouble that the devil brings into this world, all of the opposition that he raises up, every ugly activity that was promised in Jesus' words and in John's Revelation, it is all to have people, to have us, doubt God's power and control and shake confidence in the Gospel's ability to soar. But the promise of "The Flying Gospel" is given to combat the lies of the devil. It is a promise meant to sustain God's people in the face of fright and to encourage God's people through every struggle.

On this Reformation Day, may we fully recognize that God's Gospel message cannot be grounded; may we give thanks for those who have

given the Gospel flight through their dedication to the Word and their proclamation of it; may we resolve ourselves to trust that the Gospel will fly among us as we proclaim it with diligence and confidence. Amen.