

October 26, 2025

Reformation Day (observed)

“With Urgency”

Revelation 14:6-7, John 8:31-36

Reformation Day at its core is really all about God’s grace in Christ. What Luther and the other reformers made clear is that it is by grace, meaning a fully free gift of God in Christ, that our sins stand forgiven and eternal salvation is granted. This gift is received by faith, and faith is another free gift of God’s grace given by the Holy Spirit working through the proclamation of the Gospel. The reformers did away with the falsehood that any part of salvation is accomplished by us, our good works, our piety, and of course our giving cash to the church to purchase indulgences. Salvation is all a gift of the Gospel.

So when we hear this short two-verse reading from Revelation it sounds really great. *“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. And he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.’”*

The angelic proclamation of the eternal gospel sounds wonderful. But in context you have to understand that while that Gospel is God’s constant invitation into His eternal kingdom through Christ, this message is proclaimed to those dwelling on the earth and judgment also is greatly highlighted. The lectionary committee that chose these two verses didn’t go any further for a reason—immediately after this, two other angels follow and they speak nothing but God’s wrath and anger. The call of this first angel has urgency. Either you react to the Gospel and fear God and give Him glory, or you don’t and you get what the next two angels are bringing.

I fear many in Christendom have lost this sense of urgency. We muddle through life day by day and the Gospel good news of Jesus Christ is hanging out with us all the time. We know God is loving, merciful, forgiving, and He gives His gifts freely by grace. So we say our prayers, go to church week by week, and life rolls on with its joys and its sorrows. If we allow ourselves to, we can become complacent, thinking that we’ve got the whole salvation thing handled.

The entire time, though, we are in a world of sin surrounded by temptation from without and from within. And that temptation at the core is toward idolatry, making gods of the things of the creation in which we trust. [Talk about common false gods.] We take the grace of God for granted and lose the sense of urgency to fear God, give Him glory and seek His grace in Christ. And we get comfortable and we start seeing that worldly idolatry as just part of life. The idolatry can start to seem like a no-harm/no-foul kind of thing. That free gospel grace will always be there, so why worry?

Maybe this is similar to the attitude of the Jews in the first century. The Jews in our Gospel reading today are Jews who believed in Jesus, not the ones opposed to Him. But when Jesus talks of the truth setting them free, they don’t see anything from which they need release. They’re Jews, under the favor of God, His chosen race. It’s ironic that they under Roman occupation but they still say, *“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free.’?”*

They have so taken the promises of God’s favor for granted that they don’t even recognize the fulfillment of that promise is standing right in front of them, come to grant them freedom from the sins they don’t seem to realize condemns them. They see no urgency to turn from the empty belief with which they’ve grown comfortable. Jesus makes it plain: *“Truly, truly,*

*I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the horse forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*

These words should give everyone of us a sense of urgency each and every day. Show of hands—who sinned today? Jesus said, *"Everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin,"* so of course this should set off alarm bells.

But I want to be crystal clear here: If you are baptized you stand baptized into Christ and the Son has set you free indeed from sin's power. Yes, we sin. But again, by His grace in Christ God has set us free from sin.

The urgency is that each day you wake up to a world, a fallen nature, a prince of darkness that plots, and schemes and tempts you to release that baptism and instead cling to the false gods of the world. This life is not a ho-hum existence muddling through life day after day. It's spiritual warfare against an enemy that seeks to enslave and destroy you by causing you to not necessarily deny the Gospel, but maybe just put it on a shelf next to all the other lesser earthly things and then, eventually, bit by bit, move your faith and trust elsewhere.

This is why every morning we need to urgently renew our focus of faith on the divine grace made manifest for us, fear God, give Him glory, and seek His eternal gifts as our greatest good. Every day we recognize there is a judgment and it is only Christ crucified who places us on the good side of that equation through the forgiveness of sins. Every day we recognize the temptations of sin, death and devil for what they are, deny the world and set our hope in Christ as our greatest and eternal good.

A lot of those first-century Jews messed this up by trusting in their Jewishness and the temple in Jerusalem. We can do the same by kicking back as a good Lutheran and trusting in our name on the LCMS membership role and our church attendance record. Not that you shouldn't be in church, but if your faith is in your performance there, all you've done is turn in into another earthly false god in which you trust. You might as well trust that your weekly offering is purchasing an indulgence for your salvation. You're still a slave to sin because you're thinking you're the one needing to pay its price.

There is an urgency to faith in that you constantly have to be making sure it is aimed rightly at Christ crucified in a world tempting you to aim it anywhere and everywhere else.

This is what Luther was all about—recalibrating the crosshairs of faith! The Roman Catholic church had aimed faith at the pope, the saints, good works, adoration of relics, rituals, penance and who knows what else. Ultimately it was aimed at me and what I can do for God. Luther freed the Gospel truth that no; faith is rightly, always and only aimed at what God has done and still does for you in Christ—gracious gift of forgiveness, life and salvation.

Luther was very urgent about this because he lived in a world that was trying to misdirect people away from this Gospel. Guess what? The context may have changed but the misdirection continues. The enemy is still at work.

Thus, urgently, we look to God's grace in Christ always and do not fear anything except the true God. Such fear is the beginning of wisdom. Christ is crucified. Christ is risen. The enemy is defeated. Our faith and hope is aimed fully and only at the cross and empty tomb.

Each morning look to the Son of God Son of Man Jesus Christ and remember "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." Urgently follow Him.

Amen.