

Sermon 10-28-18 **Now Is the Time of God's Favor Revelation 14:6-7**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord

Happy Birthday!

October 31, 1517 is the birthday of Lutheranism and the Reformation.

On this day nearly 500 years ago at 12 noon the 34 year old Martin Luther nailed 95 statements to the wooden church door of the Castle Church at Wittenberg, Germany. Luther had intended these statements to be read by the faculty and students of the university for a debate over pieces of papers called indulgences.

What were these indulgences? To raise money for the building of St. Peter's Church in Rome, the Pope allowed the sale of a piece of paper which promised people release from the punishment of their sins in purgatory in exchange for a payment of money. This piece of paper was called an indulgence.

Luther objected to these worthless pieces of paper. He wrote the 95 statements which showed that the sale of these indulgences was contrary to the Bible. He nailed these statements on the door of the Castle Church which was a common practice back then when posting public announcements. The church door was like a community bulletin board.

In Luther's introduction to the 95 statements he gave his motive for this document: "Out of love and zeal for the truth, the following statements will be debated at Wittenberg, the Reverend Father Martin Luther, Master of Arts and Sacred Theology, presiding.

Luther's purpose in posting these statements was to challenge someone from the university to debate them with him. The 95 statements however were quickly printed and spread over much of Germany and other parts of Europe. Wherever they were spread they stirred up much excitement.

Why? Because people's souls were burdened down in Luther's time with the false teaching that forgiveness was something that people had to work for.

In the Revelation reading the Apostle John reveals to us the vision that the Lord gave him about the end of the world. John saw an angel flying in midair with the “eternal gospel” to proclaim to those who live on the earth. Much of Revelation deals with God’s judgment upon the earth for rejecting him as their Savior. There is no wiggle room in God’s message to the world. There are only two groups of people in the world, those who believe in the Gospel and are saved and those who reject the Gospel and are damned. There is no third group of people who are “nice” but don’t believe in Jesus. Salvation is only in Christ Jesus and apart from him there is only separation and condemnation.

In Revelation 14 it is too late for the sickle is about to be sent into the fields for judgment upon those who reject Jesus. Yet, for those gathered around the word this day it is not too late because the night has not yet come.

As the Apostle Paul says:

“Now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.” II Corinthians 6:2

As the Lord sent his angel throughout the world with the “eternal Gospel” to proclaim salvation to those who live on the earth, so the Lord raised up Martin Luther to proclaim the Gospel at a time when the Church of the late Middle Ages had fallen short in declaring the truth.

Luther said: “Forgiveness of sins is not something which we earn for ourselves by our own good deeds. Rather it is a free gift which God gives to us as a result of all that Jesus did for us as our Savior. Salvation is completely and only by faith in Jesus.”

Who was this man – Martin Luther?

Luther was born in 1483 only nine years before Columbus discovered America. He was born in Eisleben, Germany. Luther was a bright boy and did well in school. He went on to college to become a lawyer but upon graduation he knew his future was not as a lawyer.

Peace for one’s soul

Luther was raised in a Catholic home and his parents taught him to pray to the saints, to respect the Pope and to do good works. Although, Luther did all these things faithfully, his sins still troubled him very much. He knew that God was angry with man because of sin. Luther lived in constant fear that death would mean that he must face the terrible punishment of God for his sins.

To find peace for his soul, Luther entered a monastery and became a monk. He tortured himself by sleeping on a hard floor and by beating his body. He thought that he must do something to pay for his sins. Later Luther became a priest and a professor of theology at Wittenberg University. He studied God's Word and taught students the Bible. Through his study he began to see the love of God in Christ and finally found the peace he had been seeking.

Luther earned the reputation of being a very good teacher and preacher. Students came from many places to hear him. Many people came to hear the "new" things Luther was preaching. This "new" teaching of Luther was really a return to the simple truth of God's Word.

What is the simple truth of God's Word?

- "It is by grace you have been saved." Ephesians 2:5
- "The gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." Romans 5:17
- "God saved us not because of anything we have done but because of his grace." II Timothy 1:9

Luther brought this clear pure message of grace back to the church. It wasn't without a struggle, however, with the established leaders of the church of Luther's day.

The Catholic Church called Luther to admit that his teaching on the Gospel was wrong. Luther said he would not unless he could be shown from the Bible where he was wrong. The Pope and other Catholic leaders did not want to debate Luther. Rather Luther was removed by Papal proclamation from the Church.

In 1521 Luther was called to state his case before Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in Worms, Germany. Luther again was told to admit he was wrong in his teachings of the Gospel. Luther stood before the leaders of the church and said: “Unless you can prove from the Bible that I have made wrong statements, I cannot and I will not take back anything. My conscience is bound by the Word of God. Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. God help me. Amen.”

Because of Luther’s refusal the Emperor Charles the V declared Luther an “outlaw” whom anyone could kill after twenty days. However, Luther was taken by some friends to a secluded castle called the Wartburg where he stayed in hiding for one year. After his year in hiding Luther returned to Wittenberg where he lived and taught God’s Word until his death of natural causes in 1546.

For those last 23 years of his life he taught at the university and preached at the Town Church. He translated the Bible into German and wrote many hymns and commentaries on the Bible. He married a former nun, Catherine Von Bora, and was blessed with 6 children.

Why do we remember Martin Luther? Because Luther emphasized that the Bible is the supreme and sole authority in matters of faith. Of the 95 statements that Luther wrote no. 62 said:

“The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God.”

Luther stressed that salvation is not the work of man but the gift of God’s redeeming love, as it is found in the merits of Christ’s vicarious suffering and death.

“The just shall live by faith” This is the theme of Scripture. Luther said:

“Man needs only Jesus Christ.”

Romans 3:28 “A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.”

Man has been ceaseless in his determination to share in the credit for achieving his salvation. We can’t take any credit for our salvation.

- I John 2:2 “But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks...in our defense --- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.”
- Romans 5:9 “We have now been justified by his blood...”

We simply receive God’s grace with the hand of faith. As the lungs take oxygen from the air, as the hand of the beggar accepts a gift so faith appropriates the blessings offered in the Gospel.

- By Grace Alone
- By Faith Alone
- By Scripture Alone

John writes here in Revelation 14:7 as the angel flew in midair and said in a loud voice: “Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come.”

God will judge the world. But for us who believe God’s word says:

“How much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Jesus.” Romans 5:9

Luther was used by God to bring the Church back to the truth of the Gospel. There were others before Luther who pointed out the error of the Church when it came to the Gospel...

- Waldensians of Italy
- Savonarola
- Jerome of Prague
- Wickliffe of England
- John Huss of Bohemia

But it was the hammer blow of Martin Luther nailing those 95 statements on the Wittenberg church door that caught the world’s attention.

The Lutheran Church stands for two great principles:

Word of God and Justification by faith alone

1. That the Word of God is the one and the only source of doctrine and life.
2. Justification by faith alone without the works of the law brings salvation.

We thank God that he led Luther to the truth of the Gospel so that the church was again focused on the foundation of Christ crucified. What if Luther had not come! Think of living under the threatening wrath of an avenging God! Think of the impossible task of working out your own salvation which is not necessary as Christ has done it all for us.

Yet, so many people are under the false illusion that their salvation depends on something they must do. We are what we are by virtue of the blood of Christ --- We are justified by faith alone in Jesus. End of story.

You are the torch-bearers for the world wandering around in darkness. You know and believe and share the Gospel truth. We proclaim healing for weary souls as the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:7: “For in the Gospel a righteousness from God is revealed a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...the righteous will live by faith.”

The angel in Revelation 14 proclaims these words: “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.” What is our response? What needs to be the response of everyone who has ever lived?

- Who will rescue me from God’s wrath? Jesus - Romans 7:24
- Turn from sin and repent Romans 13:11-13
- Reach out to others with the pure Gospel John 9:4-5

The angels of judgment have not yet come but someday they will as described in Revelation. The Gospel is still finding its way in the world through the church. Some may wonder how a merciful God could send his judgment upon the world. The answer: God’s wrath has been poured out on Christ.

The mercy of God is found in Christ alone --- Solus Christus!

This is the cry of the Reformation. This is our cry!