

Reformation Sunday – November 1, 2015
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

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Revelation 14:6-7(NIV)

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. 7) 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."

Friends in Christ Jesus;

When it's just about time for our worship service to begin, one of the ushers will usually look at me and ask is it time to ring the bell? Is it time yet? The question reminds me of cute skit I've seen numerous times. Here's one version of it. (Show "is it time yet skit") That skit is especially appropriate when the audience is waiting perhaps a bit impatiently for something exciting to happen.

Is it time yet – believers and Christians through the ages have asked that same question as they have impatiently waited for something exciting to happen. After God promised Adam and Eve a Savior who would be born of a woman; it's possible that as Eve gave birth to her first born – she may have wondered, "Is it time yet?" Is this the promised Savior? It wasn't time of course. And as the Lord shared more and prophecies with his people about their Savior; believers would wonder when will it happen? And then, **when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law ...** (Galatians 4:4 NIV)

But that didn't stop believers from asking, "Is it time yet?" Think of how often the disciples would ask Jesus "is it time yet?" In fact that was the question that prompted Jesus to speak the words of our Gospel lesson in which he spoke of the Gospel being preached to all nations before the coming of the great day of judgement.

"Is it time yet?" That's the question believers ask whenever they are anxiously waiting for one of the Lord's prophecies to be fulfilled. The Epistle lesson from Revelation 14 contains a prophecy that was meant to comfort believers who were living in some terrible times of persecution – and were wondering when the Lord would fulfill his promise to come to the aid of his people. In a vision the Lord gave John the answer – it wasn't time yet – but the time would come when the Lord would send an angel with the eternal gospel to proclaim to all nations. With a call for repentance the angel declared that the hour of judgement was at hand.

As we hear these words or words like our Gospel lesson which speaks of the evils which will signal the coming of the Lord's return we might well ask, "Is it time yet?"

It's Time!

1. It's God's hour of judgment
2. It's God's hour of mercy and
3. It's God's hour of opportunity

It's important for us to understand that in this vision the word angel is used to describe God's messengers. In the verses today John was privileged to see and hear messenger of God. **He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come."**

Previously in John's vision he had seen "beasts" who tried to bring ruin on the earth by usurping trying to do destroy what God is doing and to set themselves up as gods to be worshipped. They wanted God's authority for themselves.

That spirit was alive and well at the time of Luther when the message of the Gospel was obscured by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Through the preaching of Martin Luther and other reformers God's message – Fear God and give him glory rang out.

As the clear message of the Scriptures and the Gospel were brought to the light of day and shared with people God's judgement upon evil and false teaching was announced. When the Gospel is under attack the Lord will send his messengers to call people to repentance to turn away from their idols, their false gods and false teachings and to stand in awe of God, to give him the respect he is due and to give him glory.

The Scriptures speak to our generation today with the announcement that the hour of the Lord's judgement is near. He sees the evil in our society and in our world; he sees the world-wide persecution of Christians by violent extremists – he has not lost control as some might suggest. The psalmist paints the situation for us. **Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? 2) The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, 3) "Let us break their chains and throw off their shackles." 4) The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. 5) He rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 6) "I have installed my king on Zion... Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. 11) Serve the LORD with fear... Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

When the Lord's messenger says in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of judgement has come," this is in part a threat of punishment for those who do not fear love and trust in him above all things. But it's also a warning and an invitation for believers to see their Savior in the Lord's anointed one – Jesus Christ the only one who can save us from God's wrath in the day of judgement. The fact that the Lord is still in charge comforts and encourages us to be about the Lord's work and business.

With might of ours can naught be done;
Soon were our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one
Whom God himself elected.
You ask, "Who is this?" Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord. And there's no other God;
He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill;
They shall not overpower us.
This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done!
One little word can fell him.

The Gospel slays Satan with its powerful truth that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. It cuts through the devilish debris with the simple truth that there is no God apart from the Lord -- a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but him. (cf. Isaiah 45:21) **"This is what the LORD says-- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."** (Isaiah 44:6 NIV)

As we hear the words of our text for today we can say:

It's Time!

1. It's God's hour of judgment
2. It's God's hour of mercy

Now is the hour of God's mercy – the end has not yet come. The onset of birth pains as described by Jesus in the Gospel lesson are in evidence today; but as the Lord Jesus said, the Gospel must be preached to all nations. John saw fulfillment of the Lord's words in his vision. **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.**

This messenger had the eternal gospel to proclaim. He had “good news” to proclaim to those who are on the earth – the good news of salvation and eternal life through Jesus. This good news will endure forever – not even the gates of hell can prevail against it. The beloved reformation hymn reminds us of the hour of God’s mercy by proclaiming:

The Word they still shall let remain,
Nor any thanks have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain
With his good gifts and Spirit.
And do what they will -- Hate, steal, hurt, or kill --
Though all may be gone, Our victory is won;
The kingdom's ours forever!

Truly, the mercy of our Lord and the eternal presence of the Lord Jesus is a comfort to us in these troublesome times – in the hour of the God’s judgment. But the eternal Gospel isn’t just for us – in John’s vision the angel messenger had the eternal gospel to proclaim to every nation, tribe, language and people. The Lord reaches down to earth with his message of mercy and forgiveness and carefully searches every nook and cranny for the lost by empowering his faithful messengers to go into all the world with the Gospel message that Jesus is the way the truth and the life.

Jesus is the one who defeated sin for us with his perfect obedience. Jesus is the one who removed our guilt by his death. Jesus is the one who defeated death for us with his resurrection. That was the message of the reformation – that we are saved through Scripture alone, through faith alone and by grace alone. And this is a message that our world desperately needs to hear again because it is being buried by an avalanche of false teaching and heathen persecution.

It’s time – it’s the hour of God’s mercy as Peter reminds us: **The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9)

The Lord’s patience is an indication that it’s time! It’s God’s hour of opportunity.

It’s time – not just to shuffle in our seats, to switch positions a bit – no it’s time to get out of our seats and to get going with the Gospel.

In our text John saw an angel (a messenger) with the eternal Gospel flying in midair. His words were meant to bring comfort to those who were under siege and attack by the forces of Satan. This promise of intervention by the Lord in the affairs of the world is one which the Lord still fulfills today.

God continues to carry out this promise by using messengers like you and me to share the eternal good news of Christ with a world wandering hopelessly through Satan’s maze of spiritual darkness. God assures us that his gospel will not be silenced – that his word will accomplish the purpose for which he sent it. The Lord will continue to see that the news of salvation through Christ is proclaimed in all the world to the end of time.

Now is the hour of God’s opportunity – he has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light that we may declare the praises of him who saved us and redeemed to be his special possession. (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)

Our congregation’s mission statement reflects the fact that it’s time –

**Our Mission is to
Encourage others as we grow together; professing our faith in Christ's resurrection.**

This work of encouraging others and proclaiming the Gospel requires resources – which the Lord himself has provided. In an effort to be able to devote more of the Lord's resources to proclaiming the eternal Gospel both our congregation and our synod have decided to gather a special offering of thanks to the Lord for his grace for the purpose of freeing resources for ministry by reducing debt. You'll hear a bit more about these opportunities following at the end of our service today.

The Lord Jesus encouraged his disciples to take advantage of the opportunities they had while he was with them saying; **“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.”** (John 9:4)

It's Time!

1. It's God's hour of judgment
2. It's God's hour of mercy and
3. It's God's hour of opportunity

Amen.