**Revelation 14:6–7** Then I saw another angel flying in the middle of the sky. He had the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people. 7He said with a loud voice: Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water.

Wow. Reformation Day. I will tell you that I still consider Reformation Day and its celebration the third most important Festival day of the Church. I am guessing that you know what I consider to be number one and two? The number one festival day of the church is Resurrection morning. The number two festival day of the Church is the celebration of the birth of our Savior. Now did you notice how I told you about them?

I did it in that way because if I said, “Why Easter is the most important,” there are just too many people out there who only think Easter is about rabbits, eggs, candy baskets, and the new life of spring. The same with the second day. If I only call it Christmas there are just too many people out there who think Christmas is about trees, lights, gifts, Santa and the spirit of goodness. And seriously, the only reason that I can simply tell you that Reformation day is important without qualifying it is because that day got labeled by the world with a totally different name. Because most people only know Reformation day by the name Halloween and they think that day is about ghost, ghouls, witches, death, trick or treating, and haunted houses.

And why doesn’t it seem to bother us Christians that every important holiday to our faith is cluttered and jammed up with secular counterpoints that often obscure and overshadow the heart of what those days are truly about! Ah yes, such is the sad estate of our very own Christian Church. We don’t even protect the sacred days of our faith but jump in and join the world in undercutting our faith. Kind of sad, don’t you think? And as we are getting ready to hold our 38th annual Reformation Party, parents ask yourself this. “What did you encourage? Are my now grown children showing that Jesus is number one in their life?” Just asking, because I am aware that decisions and attitudes we showed our children often have long term effects that we don’t believe could be.

Let’s you and I contemplate the absolute joy of this Day of Reformation under the theme: **LET THE GOSPEL BE PROCLAIMED.**

Now because this is the book of Revelation, we need to address a few things of importance. First, Revelation is not some sort of crystal ball where we can read it, then see specific events that are going to happen so that we can predict the future. If your church uses Revelation in that way, then recognize that somewhere there is a serious doctrinal problem in your church. In fact, Revelation is a book that gives general events, events that will occur and happen during the entire span of the New Testament Era. That era started with the day of Jesus’ Ascension into heaven and that era will end with the return of Jesus on Judgment Day. In the meantime, we can expect certain things to be true and factual, things that the Holy Christian Church will have to deal with in order to stay healthy and focused on Jesus.

Our particular verses are actually a part of the 4th great vision about this Era. The fourth vision is actually composed of seven separate visions. Those visions tell us what to expect as God’s children. The first vision of this section shows how Satan tried to destroy and stop the Christ child from bringing his salvation. The second vision tells us how the Christ won the battle and claimed the victory against Satan. The third vision shows how Satan, turns his attention to the Church. He will and has tried to destroy the Holy Christian Church. Yet God will protect his Church and watch over it so that as Jesus promised, **“The gates of hell will not overpower it.”** At the end of this third vision it is clear that Satan begins his attack against the children of the church, that is, against those who are true believers in Jesus.

The next two visions are scary. Satan raises up the Beast from the Sea and the Beast from the Earth to work at destroying God’s children. The Beast from the sea is understood to be godless secular governments who will work against the church in order to destroy believers. Seriously, just think over the centuries how so many governments in the world have worked against the message of Jesus. The Beast from the Earth is understood to be the false Christian church. Yes, churches, in God’s name, will work to undermine and destroy the message of Jesus. Just look at today’s churches and you will see that the truth of this vision is still being carried out to the destruction of souls.

Now, don’t panic. It is true that the Lord paints a pretty grim picture of what true believers in Jesus will have to endure and yet we are assured that God’s children, by keeping the focus on Jesus will prevail. So the fifth vision. This vision shows the Church triumphant. It shows the believers with Christ in heaven, surrounded by God’s grace and love found in Jesus. The vision simply reminds us that keeping the truth of Jesus in our lives leads to eternal life and salvation where we will never again have a worry or care as we are enjoying the perfect, eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior.

It is in this vision that we find our verses for today. Our verses show us what will be the key factor in this battle and how God’s children will win in this battle. Our verses open by redirecting our attention from the victorious children in heaven to an angel flying above. Our verse says, **“Then I saw another angel flying in the middle of the heavens. He had the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people.”**

There are a number of things of importance revealed in this battle for souls. First, the winning factor in the battle is going to be the gospel. This gospel is going to be proclaimed to all the earth. Notice this gospel is proclaimed by an angel, the vision’s way of pointing out the messengers of all the gospel. Fact is, Luther was one of the angels who proclaimed the Gospel. That’s what the Reformation is all about. It is about the restoration of the Gospel to the church after the Gospel for almost one thousand years had been suppressed and bent by the Catholic Church. Every time a preacher gets in his pulpit and proclaims the gospel of Jesus, that too, is a fulfillment of these words. The proclamation of the Gospel is the command of God for all the world. That we hear and believe this message, this good news of Jesus.

Now if you would let’s just take a moment and discuss exactly what “the gospel” is! It is not just preaching from the Bible. It is not just the mention of Jesus’ name or saying that Jesus forgives or that Jesus this or that. It is certainly not a message like: Jesus did this…you should too! The Gospel is something specific and important and it is my contention that many of today’s churches are simply missing the Gospel because they have been led astray by the beasts of the sea and earth.

When it comes to the gospel I take the simple position of our Lutheran Catechism. In the Kuske Catechism (NPH, 98) you find question 16. *“What does God teach us by the gospel?”* There is a two-fold answer given. *“A: By the gospel God teaches us the good news that in his love he sent Jesus to take away the sins of all people.”*  And then comes answer B: *“By the gospel God teaches us that everyone who believes in Jesus has eternal life and salvation.”* As far as I am concerned you have not heard the gospel if all you hear is a mention of Jesus’ name or a mention that Jesus is your Savior or that Jesus is love. You have not heard the gospel until you are told specifically that Jesus, God’s Son, came to live the perfect life you could not. Then in a pure act of love, Jesus went to the cross to take upon himself the punishment of all the sins for all the world and this in accord with his Father. Jesus paid for our sins. And when we simply believe that message of Jesus we, by God’s grace, are considered forgiven heirs of eternal life and salvation. The gospel is about how my Lord and Savior bought and paid for my soul by his sacrifice for me and how that sacrifice of Jesus is the only payment that God the Father will ever accept. Nothing less than what I just told you is the gospel. Telling you about the Jesus in you is not the gospel message of what Jesus has done for you! Pastors, you need to be sure that you are preaching the Gospel of Jesus and not the false message of works in the name of Jesus.

And please note that our verse tells us this Gospel message is for all the earth: **to every nation, tribe, language and people.** If you are a human being you do not need another form of the Gospel. You do not need a different Jesus or God to appear as you want him to be. God is God. Jesus is His Son. Jesus died on the cross for every single human soul. Jesus rose from the dead that every soul who believes has eternal life. The true Gospel is color blind, language blind, etc. It is for all people of all time. Don’t be fooled by some sort of “well, here is the God you need” message. Each one of us needs Jesus and his pure Gospel. It is the only saving message.

Then comes our next verse. This verse does not tell us what the message of the Gospel is but rather the impact of the Gospel message. It says, **“He said with a loud voice: Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the sky, the earth, the sea, and the springs of water**”The end result of the proclamation of the Gospel will be the Judgment Day of the Lord and what it will bring.

I believe these words are spoken the way they are because they have deep meaning for us in today’s world. We are called upon to fear God. In Philippians we are told that on the Judgment Day **“every knee will bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** When you understand that passage correctly you will grasp that it is telling you that whether you are a believer or not you will bow the knee in glory and honor to Jesus. You will do that from the torments of hell or the glories of heaven, but you will do it. Jesus is and will be the Lord of lords and the King of kings. That’s the call here. Fear God! You can either tremble in your boots at the name of Jesus or be filled with awe and marvel at the name of Jesus. Both ideas are found in the word “fear.” Clearly the second is better. God is letting us know there is a judgment. If you have Jesus you get judged by the Gospel and grace. If you have rejected Jesus you will face the law and its certain condemnation.

Just a word to the wise. Jesus isn’t what you say he is, he is what He says he is. If Jesus tells you that such and such is the way things are, you can’t decide they will be different for you and then still claim you follow Jesus. Again, we don’t get to determine God’s truth, God does and he has in his Bible, this wonderful, clear, precise revelation of salvation God has given.

There is then that last call of this verse: Worship Him. Worship is an interesting word. It is a word that implies bending the knee or prostrating oneself before another. In other words, worship is truly an act of humility on our part. To give God worship and praise even though we are not worthy to do that. God is awesome and great and the most powerful ever and we are but sinners and the lost. Just marvel at what a privilege God gives us when we have the chance to worship him.

As I contemplated this command of God to worship I immediately gave thought to one of the latest memes found on social media. It says something like, ”If you don’t worship God here, what makes you think you will get to spend eternity worshipping Him?” I think the point is well taken. The command of God is to worship him. That command does not just exist at the Judgment Day but really is the everyday command of God for the souls of the world. God is worthy of worship. He deserves our worship. Truthfully we owe him our worship. This is the God whose Son Jesus came to be our Savior. This is the God who when Adam and Eve brought the destruction and horror of sin, yes the darkness of death to our world, He does not retaliate and destroy but promises deliverance, compassion and the hope of grace. Truly God is worthy of worship.

And also note that God is clearly defined. He is the Creator God. He is the one who made the sky, the earth, the sea and the springs of water. God is the creator of all. Give some thought to what it means when you deny that God is the creator. Is that really the true God you have or just an idol you have invented to suit your needs? God is the God of Creation as this passage makes clear.

Let me also comment on the last phrase. It is actually two plurals. It should read: springs of waters. Some would say the words “sea” and “water” is a simple way of saying God gave salt and fresh water. But I believe it is more. I believe it denotes actual water and then spiritual waters. How was Noah saved? How was Moses saved? How was Pharaoh’s army destroyed at the Exodus? What came from the rock? What was every sacrifice at the Temple washed with? What caused you to enter the kingdom of heaven? Answer to all of these: water. God acted with water. Jesus tells us he is the living water. We are saved in the water of baptism. In our Psalm you heard of **“the river whose steams make glad the city of God.”** In heaven we are told that flowing from the throne of God is the river of the water of life. I believe these words are a reminder that our salvation rests in the hands of God and what He has done, never in our hands.

It is Reformation. It is a reminder of the importance of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus. As Lutherans today, let’s resolve to let the gospel of Jesus shine in our services, our homes and our lives. Let’s help the world see the wonder of Jesus and the grace of God, that all may have the victory of salvation because of the gift of faith given in Jesus. Amen.