**Notes for Next Sunday**

Reformation Sunday

FIRST READING – Revelation 14:6-7

**6﻿ 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.”**

The first angel, “flying in mid-heaven” has “the eternal Gospel to proclaim” to all the inhabitants of the earth (14:6). At first glance “Gospel” and the verb “to proclaim [Good News, the Gospel]” seem to be incongruous in this context. “Good News” usually brings joy, specifically the forgiveness of sins through faith in the work of Christ. But here is found the somber news of judgment, for the angel’s loud cry calls for all to “fear God … because the moment of His judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). However, since this “eternal Gospel” includes also the purpose of moving people to “worship” God as the Creator of all life. This eternal news includes then not only the announcement of judgment (Law) but also the gracious call and invitation to such worship (the Gospel). The surrounding context is explicitly Christ-centered, with 14:1–5 depicting the victorious Lamb and the victory song of the saints. In particular John most likely had in mind the concluding content of the “eternal Gospel”: the announcement of the judgment in view of the Lord Christ’s second coming at the End. This return of the Lord would also be the final deliverance of God’s people from the dragon (devil), his two beasts (worldly powers and false leaders in the church), and their hosts (19:1–16). This aspect of the “eternal Gospel” is pointedly suggested in 14:13 when a *blessing* is pronounced upon those who have died and are dying “in the Lord.” The “eternal Gospel” is proclaimed to all the nations for the purpose of moving people to “fear God” (14:7) because of their sins and His coming judgment, such proclamation has as its *goal* the repentance and salvation of all through the announcement of Christ’s forgiveness. Thus the “eternal Gospel” is the eternal message of God—of both judgment and grace—based on the person and saving work of Jesus Christ. And this eternal message has as a reference point the second coming of Christ, when He will both judge the unbelievers and deliver his believing followers. (CC - Brighton)

EPISTLE – Romans 3:19-28

**19﻿ Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ﻿20﻿ Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.**

This section contains the picture of a defendant in a court of law. He is given the opportunity to speak in his own defense but is speechless because of the weight of evidence that has been brought against him.

**21﻿ But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ﻿22﻿ This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ﻿23﻿ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ﻿24﻿ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ﻿25﻿ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement,﻿a﻿ through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— ﻿26﻿ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. ﻿27﻿ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ﻿28﻿ For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.**

In verses 21-24 the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, . . . through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” Drastically different from God’s Law, wherein all mankind is revealed to be the same in its sin, is God’s Gospel of the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which we have through faith. This distinguishes us before God from unbelievers because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

In verses 25-26 God distinguishes Christ Jesus as the righteous and just justifier, by the atoning sacrifice of his sin-free lifeblood on the cross. By faith in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin, we are righteous and have been justified.

Verse 28 is the key verse for Luther and the Reformation. When Luther translated this passage, he added the word “alone,” which, though not in the Greek, accurately reflects the meaning.

GOSPEL – John 8:31-36

**31﻿ To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ﻿32﻿ Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ﻿33﻿ They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants﻿ and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?” ﻿34﻿ Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ﻿35﻿ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ﻿36﻿ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ﻿**

From verse 21 to the end of the chapter is one uninterrupted narration. The persons participating are the same throughout, Jesus and a crowd of Jews. At first all are hostile to Jesus, but by the time we reach verse 29, a goodly number are actually won to believe in Him not through miracles, but through the words of warning coupled with grace which these men had just head. In the same way or other, not indicated by John, these believers manifest their change of heart. At once Jesus has a word for them in particular. No sooner does He utter it than the hostile crowd of Jews raises further objection. They act just as they did from the start: they pick at some point to which to object. John does not need to say in verse 33 who these objectors are, for we have heard them from very start, and their objection is of the same type as before. Jesus answers them in verse 34, etc. But they go on. The clash becomes more and more intense until these Jews take up stones and Jesus leaves them.

Jesus is speaking within the context of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn 7:2–8:59), which commemorated Israel’s sojourn in the wilderness after having been freed from the slavery of Egypt. During this sojourn, God gave to Israel the way of the Law. This section continues the theme of John’s Gospel that Jesus is Himself the true Torah of God, the Word of God who is the way of discipleship that leads to the Father. Jesus has just indicated that He does nothing “on [His] own” but does only that which the Father teaches Him, and so He pleases the Father “always” (Jn 8:28–29). The Jews understand their identity as grounded in Abraham and in their loyalty to Moses (cf. Jn 9:28). True discipleship, however, is found in Jesus, who is the way to the Father.