

Notes for Next Sunday

Reformation Sunday

The Point of this Week's Readings

First Reading (Revelation 14:6-7). This is the first of three angels and speaks of *the eternal gospel*. This is not a new gospel but the good news of our redemption through the blood of the Lamb. It is eternal in that it will be preached to the end of time. This assures the church that false teachers will never silence the preaching of the gospel. This was especially comforting to Luther as the religious leaders in his day had covered the gospel with one law after another.

Epistle (Romans 3:19-28). The last verse in this text (v. 28) sums up this entire reading with it says: *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law*. Luther had been beating himself up trying to earn salvation. This passage was a great light going off in his head when he read it. It eliminates any ups-man-ship by any race or religion as well as any favoritism because of wealth. The Law was not to be feared anymore because man was made righteous by grace through faith.

Gospel (John 8:31-36). 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. Now He is preaching to them a message with would free them spiritually. Some of these people believed Him and some were skeptical. Even some of the crowd who had believed Him were now having second thoughts. Many difficulties would come into their lives and they might waver. Jesus reminds them that they are to continue to have faith in the truth which has preached to them. Then, they will spiritually free and inherit eternal life.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

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.”

14:6 eternal gospel.† The content of this “good news” is not found in v. 7, which is a summary of the purpose for which the gospel is proclaimed. The gospel is the good news of our redemption through the blood of the Lamb. (CSB)

14:7 give him glory. The stated purpose of proclaiming the “eternal Gospel” is to move people to “fear God” and “give to him glory” and “worship him,” all in view of his coming judgment. (CC)

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. 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, 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.

8:19 those who are under the law. Jews. “Those who are under the law” refers to “both Jews and Greeks [that is, Gentiles]” (3:9), in other words, all mankind. All mankind is under the damning burden and curse of sin. Everyone is guilty in God’s sight.

3:20 declared righteous. Here the purpose for God giving His Law is that it would show us our sin. The Law was never intended by God to serve as the basis for one to prove his own righteousness standing before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

3:23 glory of God. What God intended man to be. The glory that man had before the fall the believer will again have through Christ. (CSB)

3:24 justified. Legal justice can recognize the fact that man is righteous; it cannot make him righteous. God makes man a gift of His acquittal, gives him, effectively, the status of righteousness, lets him stand and count as righteous in His eyes. The acquitting and restoring grace is lavish, generous, without reserve. (Franzmann)

3:25b–26. The sins of God’s people, punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the OT period, would be totally punished in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (CSB)

3:27-28 We are distinguished (passively) by faith. That is why we have nothing to boast of that would distinguish us (active). Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law of God for us (active). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

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.

This chapter is something of a heavyweight in John’s Gospel. First, Jesus is challenged to render judgment in the case of the adulterous woman; the accusers obviously expected Jesus to fail and be embarrassed regarding that situation. Then Jesus’ “light of the world” message beats the Pharisees with their own words regarding proper application of the Law. Thereafter the Savior uncovers sin and works faith in the hearts of some of the listeners. The verses following our text explicate the question not of religious liberty but of spiritual freedom. This is followed by Jesus’ charge that some of his hearers are beholden to Satan—no sweet little Jesus here!

8:31 if you hold. This encounter with those “Jews who had [once upon a time?] believed him” takes us beyond the Reformation reality of how we are justified into the realm of how we live out that relationship daily. God has declared us righteous. Now what? Live it out! Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples” (v 31)—and you will know a liberating truth. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 4)

8:31 my teaching. God’s Word, the Scriptures. Words that would have the substance of doctrine from God but not necessarily always direct quotes.

8:33 *Abraham's descendants*. Of course, the Jews insist that they are “offspring of Abraham [belonging to the covenant] and have never been enslaved to anyone.” How ironic, since they were at that moment subject to Roman occupation! But that’s not the half of it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 4)

8:34-35 Even when a slave does not wear handcuffs, he is still captive when sin rules his life. As such, he is not fully part of the family. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 4)

8:34 *I tell you the truth*. Jesus once again stressed the solemn truth of His message – amen, amen. (PBC)

8:35-36 A slave can never be sure of present or future status. Only the Son, Jesus Christ, can bring genuine freedom and make us children of God through faith. (TLSB)

8:36 Son sets you free. It is only the Son of God that is able to bring freedom, emancipation from sin and its service. He has earned freedom from sin for all men by paying the price, the redemption for their sin, His holy blood. That is the only true freedom, which the Son has thus earned and is offering to the whole world, which He wants also these Jews to accept. (Kretzmann)