

## Proclaim the Eternal Gospel

✦ Fear God and give Him glory.

✦ Worship the great Creator.

In the name of Christ alone – by grace, through faith, in Scripture alone, dear heirs of the Reformation:

Did you hear about the man God gave thirty hours in every day? Me either, but let's pretend. He didn't have to commute through busy traffic; that's an extra hour or two. He could do most of his work from home with a capable administrative assistant in the office – another couple hours a day. Add a part-time associate, there's a total of five or six hours extra time. Wait a minute! That's my life. Those are God's gifts to me. Know what happens? Other duties fill in; you're still busy with twenty-four hours. And I've always been amazed how easy it is to get distracted, more time for this or that. Yet we really have one task in life, one thing for which God leaves us on this earth. **Proclaim the Eternal Gospel:**

✦ Fear God and give Him glory.

You can tell this is first priority because the angel with the eternal gospel was flying “*in midair*,” right at the zenith, high noon, the brightest light. Reminds me of a manhunt when we first moved to Lino Lakes. A helicopter was flying around with a spotlight shining on the ground below. I wondered how they could see anyone hiding in the marshes or in under the trees – unless they were right above him.

Isn't that where we all are by nature? Trying to hide from that bright light above? Afraid our evil deeds and sinful thoughts might be exposed? In the tangled thickets of life there are always voices calling for people to follow them. But the way they show is broad and wide, easy with many travelers, all hiding from the light, all loving the darkness of work-righteousness in their bodies and souls. You see their sad faces chiseled in the cathedral walls of Italy where the Roman Church used guilt to terrorize consciences.

One man who tried to go their way had been training as a lawyer. His father was angry when he sold his law books and took an oath of poverty. Who would take care of the old man if his son owned nothing at all? In the gathering darkness the Augustinian monk became a priest. But when he stood before the altar of God to offer up what the Roman Church said was the resacrificing of God's own Son, the guilty priest trembled in terror. He barely made it through his first mass. All his efforts to get right with God, his self-whipping, hours and hours of prayers, did nothing to dispel the darkness in his soul. Martin Luther was drowning in guilt. He believed God's Word that damns every sinner.

But God's manhunt was on, to tell the rest of the story of life. The angel with **the Eternal Gospel** flew over in the person of John Staupitz, Luther's father confessor. At least once Luther confessed all the sins he could think of for six hours. Staupitz kept shining the Good News. He led Luther to the cross, comforted him with Word and sacrament. He finally sent Luther to the new university at Wittenberg to study God's Word and teach **the Eternal Gospel**. God found Martin Luther with His all-forgiving grace.

**Fear God and give Him glory**, that is the heart of God's message Luther found in the Psalms as he lectured to throngs of students coming for his classes from all over Europe. Time was of the essence. What comes first? How do you manage when you're so busy? Sometimes you don't have to decide. Christ's self-proclaimed substitute, the Pope, demanded Luther go to Worms, Germany, to stand trial for his 95 Theses, debate statements nailed to the church door at Wittenberg four years before.

As Jesus said in today's Gospel, “*On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.*” (Mark 13:9f NIV84) Two

questions were demanded of Luther, no debate. “Are these your books?” in the pile on the table in the center of the room? No denying that. “Yes, these are my books,” Luther answered. Second question: “Do you recant?” **“Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.”** What do you answer? Luther asked for time and spent the night in prayer.

When **“that hour”** came the following day, he could finally say: *“I am only a man, not God. My only defense is what my Lord Jesus Christ said of His teaching. When questioned and slapped on trial, Jesus answered, ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.’ If the Lord Himself, who knew that He could not err, did not refuse to listen to witness against His teaching, even from a worthless slave, how much more ought I, scum that I am, capable of naught but error, to seek and to wait for any who may wish to bear witness against my teaching.*

*“And so, through the mercy of God, I ask Your Imperial Majesty, and Your Illustrious Lordships, or anyone of any degree, to defeat them by the writings of the Prophets or by the Gospels; for I shall be most ready, if I be better instructed, to recant any error, and I shall be the first in casting my writings into the fire. . . .”*

*Thereupon the Orator of the Empire, in a tone of upbraiding, said that [Luther's] answer was not to the point, and that there should be no calling into question of matters on which condemnations and decisions had before been passed by Councils. He was being asked for a plain reply, without subtlety or sophistry, to this question: Was he prepared to recant, or no?*

*Luther then replied: “Your Imperial Majesty and Your Lordships demand a simple answer. Here it is, plain and unvarnished. Unless I am convicted of error by the testimony of Scripture or (since I put no trust in the unsupported authority of Pope or councils as it is plain they have often erred and contradicted themselves) [or unless I am convinced] by manifest reasoning, I stand convicted [convinced] by the Scriptures to which I have appealed. My conscience is taken captive by God's word, I cannot and will not recant anything, for to act against our conscience is neither safe for us, nor open to us.*

*“On this I take my stand. I can do no other. God help me. Amen.”*<sup>1</sup>

God help us all to stand firm in the evil day. This we have promised at our Confirmation even in the face of death to stay faithful to our faithful God. Instead of man, **Fear God and give Him glory...**

### ✠ **Worship the great Creator.**

On this first day of the week when God said, **“Let there be light, there was light.”** Do you **Worship the Creator**? His light shone down on you, lighting that steep and narrow path through the wounds of Christ on the cross, past the empty tomb, to the glories of heaven. You stand forgiven as you **“follow the Lamb.”** He says you **“were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb.”** (14:4). Do you **Worship the great Creator** with your firstfruits, the first check in thanks to God who gives you everything? This simple act says, “I trust God’s grace for all I need and more.” Do your **Worship the great Creator** for the talents and time He gives by saying, “Yes!” when asked for help? Or do you act as if you’re the only busy person alive and treat God like a stingy miser?

Our **great Creator** came as God’s Son to wash us clean. Gather others from the darkness into His light. It’s our most important task, our greatest privilege of every breath and heartbeat God gives. Some will run back to hide in the darkness. But sometime you will see his eyes light up or notice such great peace has settled over her face. God’s grace is not just shining *on* them, but deep down inside their souls. You’ll wish as I do now for more time. My mountain climbing story the Catechism kids are asking for, could help illustrate our “Thank-you!” to God in lives of Christian service. But another time will have to tell. You are **“another angel flying in midair.”** As the Psalmist said, **“Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the LORD or fully declare his praise?”** (Psalm 106:2 NIV84) Indeed! **“Who can...?”** Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Adapted. [http://www-personal.ksu.edu/~lyman/english233/Luther-Diet\\_of\\_Worms.htm](http://www-personal.ksu.edu/~lyman/english233/Luther-Diet_of_Worms.htm)

For the study behind this sermon or for copies email [m.cordes@comast.net](mailto:m.cordes@comast.net) .

You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at [www.wels.us/newlife](http://www.wels.us/newlife) .

New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church  
180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126