**Revelation 14:6-7**

Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. **7** And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

**“Reformation 500!”**

“Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come,” Jesus Christ our blessed Lord and Savior Amen. What does celebrating the 500 anniversary of the Reformation mean? If we were to ask Luther on October 31st, 1517 when posting his 95- Thesis. The thirty-four old monk, pastor, and professor had no clue to the impact he would make upon the western world. Of course, plenty today have numerous reasons to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the reformation. Some do it out of nostalgia for their German heritage. Others note the benefits rendered to social classes, government, education and even family. Protestants in all spheres invoke Luther’s name, while Roman Catholics still wonder about his conservative reformation.

Let us be clear, though, we do not worship Martin Luther. Even the first Lutherans never did such a thing. Matter a fact, the official motto was not “Martin Luther”, but “*Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum”* or “The Word of the Lord Endures Forever.” This motto arose about a year after Luther famously said at his trial in Worms, “I will not and shall not recant.” The Word of the Lord Endures Forever became a logo using the Latin letters, “VDMA.” Engraved on buildings, sown on clothes, and even put on armor. This symbol united, “Lutheran laity who struggled to defend their beliefs, communities, families, and lives against those who were intent on destroying them.”[[1]](#footnote-1) The Word of the Lord endures and Luther confirms this fact having said, “The church does not make the Word, but it is made by the Word.”

As we now come to 500 years, here is what finally made the Reformation relevant. The Word alone preached to Martin Luther how justification had nothing to do with me or my works but faith in Jesus and everything of His work for me. This was not an innovation of man or something new, but the gracious work of God that had always been present for a sinful world. The eternal Gospel is that heaven-sent Word proclaiming Jesus Christ for all times, places, and peoples to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him alone.

1. **Fear God for the Law’s judgment is frank.**
2. In Luther’s time, there was a whole system set up for dealing with sin.

* Confession was all about penance.
* Relics became treasured possessions.
* Indulgences were payment for purgatory.
* The first point of Luther’s 95-Thesis concerned the Law stating, “When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ``Repent'' (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”

1. In our time, a whole other system now directs us away from dealing with sin.

* Denial or trying to be a better person buries any need to confess, “I am a sinner.”
* Possessions have replaced relics as evidence of what the Law demands.
* Rather than purgatory, payment can go to seductive idols to indulge the present life.
* St. Paul tells us to fear God, “For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

1. **Give God glory for salvation from Christ saves.**
2. Works were a plague of guilt and shame until Scripture showed giving glorying to God was faith in Jesus and His work to justify us.

* His first sermon after discovery of the Gospel in 1518 said, “Therefore everything which Christ has is ours, graciously bestowed on us unworthy men out of God’s sheer mercy, although we have rather deserved wrath and condemnation, and hell also…Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours” (AE 31:298).
* Later in debating Rome Lutherans in 1531 confessed, “Christ’s glory becomes brighter when we teach men to make use of him as mediator and propitiator…They are taught to believe and to rely on the sure fact that they have a reconciled Father because of Christ…” (Tappert 153:299).

1. Giving God glory is ultimately to receive His justifying work given for you through Jesus.

* This salvation is forgiveness shared not as information, but God’s heaven-sent Word He keeps proclaiming to sinners.
* Hidden in the Word and Sacrament is the glory of Jesus abiding with His promise, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”
* Our works and love are no substitute for the better righteousness God puts forward again today that grabs hold of you by faith in Jesus.
* This eternal Gospel is God’s faithfulness to save as the disciples confessed, “we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

1. **Worship God alone for His Word does endure forever.**
2. This is what fueled the reformation rather than Luther worshiping his efforts.

* Hopefulness in the Word is what allowed him to translate the Bible for the eyes and ears of the common person.
* Thankfulness to Christ made Luther turn monotone singing of monks into hymnody for the whole congregation.
* Worship went beyond Sundays for Jesus entered Christian’s lives as we sang, “He’s by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit.”
* Luther by the catechism ordered God’s Word for the home and the daily callings each person had toward others.

1. There is only one source for worship and we dare not let it rest upon our raw excitement.

* The word for “worship” used by St. John actually means to bow down, kneel, or even adore.
* This is not about gloominess, but how the Lord’s Supper joins us with angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven who already worship God!
* There is no rest on earth from our labors, but Christ goes before us with peace, forgiveness, and trust to worship Him.
* This is love in acts of kindness, but also how each of our homes are a small chapel and the catechism still helps to order them rightly.

500 years is a big thing. Maybe not like God dying on the cross. Yet, for over a millennium cloudiness distorted the justifying work of Jesus. The reformation was about living upon promising letters VDMA, “The Word of the Lord endures forever.” The eternal Gospel is that heaven-sent Word proclaiming Jesus Christ for all times, places, and peoples to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him alone. Amen. Now the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. https://lutheranreformation.org/history/the-motto-of-the-reformation/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)