

Revelation 14:6-7

For a long time that angel which is flying overhead was hidden from view. The eternal Gospel was obscured. A different one, a false gospel, had taken its place. The simple, clear, and yet profound truth that sinners are saved by grace alone, by faith alone, by Christ alone, was buried away in a dark corner of the church.

It appeared that angel had lost his wings. Sinners were directed to their own efforts; to their own works and not the works of Christ for them. Forgiveness was not freely given. Assurance and the certainty of salvation was denied to poor sinners.

But by the mercy and the work of God, 500 years ago that angel once again took flight. Loudly he proclaimed what Christ and His apostles had proclaimed - the truth which alone sets sinners free. And people listened. This is why the Reformation took flight. Not because of a man, Martin Luther, but because through the eternal Gospel he, and then others with him, proclaimed, the Holy Spirit turned the ears of sinners to hear and opened their hearts to receive.

Where is that angel today? Is he still flying overhead 500 years later? Or has he lost his wings? If we look at the world around us; at all the moral decay, at the disrespect for authority, at the arrogance, abusiveness, and lack of love, at the onslaught against the Christian Faith, and the apathy of so many who are Christians, we may think that angel has been grounded.

If we look within our own hearts; at the sinful pride we see there, at the spiritual laziness and the resistance to the will of God, we are tempted to believe that angel is no longer flying overhead.

Perhaps these words of our text have come to pass: *“The hour of (God’s) judgment has come.”* God knows that we deserve it. Our world and our nation deserve judgment. We’re begging for it by opposing what God has commanded. But if they out there deserve to be judged, so do we in here. For we are no better. We dare not forget that we also are poor sinners like everyone else in our world, and we deserve God’s judgment. Has the hour of His judgment come? Is this why the angel who flew overhead for our ancestors appears to have crashed to the ground?

My friends, the hour of God’s judgment has come, but we must train our eyes to see where it has come. Martin Luther was terrified of that judgment, for he knew that he deserved it. His eyes were on his own sinfulness. But God the Holy Spirit, in His mercy, turned his eyes to the cross of Jesus. There Luther finally understood. There within the holy wounds of Christ is where we see the judgment of God.

Jesus was judged in your place. Jesus, who is God in the flesh, took upon Himself the curse we deserve. He became our substitute. God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. God’s eyes were trained upon Christ. He punished His own Son for what you and I have done.

What does this mean for us? Everyone of us is forgiven. You have a gracious God for the sake of Christ. He is not planning your judgment within His heart. He is at peace with you in His heart. None of you is excluded. Everyone of you is fully pardoned. Whatever you have done in your past; however you have behaved and lived, turn your eyes to the cross of the Lord. He is your

Lord and Savior. There is nothing that God holds against you. Christ paid the price for all of it, for each and every one of you.

That angel is flying, my friend. Today, right now, he is proclaiming the eternal Gospel into your ears. He is flying directly overhead; flying over you. For that Gospel is for you. It is eternal. *The eternal Gospel*, says our text. It has never changed. It is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

That angel was flying over our first parents, Adam and Eve, when they disobeyed God, and to them the Gospel of forgiveness was proclaimed. That angel flew over King David after he sinned with Bathsheba, and David heard the word of forgiveness. That angel was flying as Zaccheus, the sinful tax collector, climbed the tree, as Peter mourned over his sin of denial, as Paul was traveling to Damascus to put Christians in prison, and all of these heard God's word of forgiveness to them.

And that angel's message has not changed. *God is merciful to sinners* is the good news he proclaims. That message is for you, my fellow sinner. You know those sins that are lurking in the dark corners of your past. You try to bury them away, as do I. But they keep reappearing. And they keep haunting. No hideous Halloween mask can ever compare to the grotesque disobedience you and I have worn in days gone by.

And that disobedience deep within our heart is shouting at us. "Guilty!" it cries; "You cannot ever be forgiven for what you have done!" But that word which cries out from within us is not the final word, for it is not from the mouth of God. Look away from your heart. Look to the cross. Look to your baptism into Christ. Look at the holy body and blood of your Lord given and shed for you. And listen to the angel. He is the one who is speaking the word of God. And he is flying directly over you. "*By grace you are saved!*" he cries. Your God does not listen to your heart. He listens to the cry of His Son from the cross. "*Father, forgive them,*" He prays. And He does. He forgives you.

When you leave here today that angel goes with you. He flies over your head when you return to your home, when you go to work and attend classes, when you lie down to sleep. The word of forgiveness never leaves you because your baptism never leaves you. What Christ did for you can never be undone. It can be buried away in a dark corner of your life. And maybe that's where it has been for a little, or even a long time.

But no more. Friend, that angel is flying overhead. It's time for his message to shout forth in your life. It's time to let your light shine; to be Christ to those in your family and your community. That eternal Gospel is for you and it is for everyone in your life.

Wherever you go may it be clear to all that the angel has not lost his wings, but is soaring beautifully over you as you carry the same Christ to others who has loved you, forgiven you, and saved you. Amen.