The Reformation Mark 13:5-11
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The Reformation – It's All About the Gospel!
I. So watch out for false prophets.
II. So be bold in sharing the gospel.

Dear Christian friends,

It's an old, standard Lutheran question. It echoes through the CHIEF PARTS of the catechism – the 10 Commandments – the Apostles' Creed – the Lord's Prayer, etc. The question – "WHAT does this mean?"

We can also ask that question this morning. The Reformation – WHAT does this mean? Is the **Reformation simply** an annual opportunity to **bash** the pope – to chant, "**My church** is right, yours is wrong!"? IF that's the case then we've totally misunderstood the Reformation. Is the Reformation about priests not being allowed to marry - about praying to Mary and the saints – about indulgences and **purgatory**? IF that's the case then we've missed the point of the Reformation. Those things were all PART of the Reformation but NOT the heart – the soul – of the Reformation.

So again we ask, "WHAT does this mean?" Let's be so very clear about this – "**The Reformation** – It's ALL ABOUT THE GOSPEL!" Because the Reformation is **all about the gospel** 1)watch out for false prophets and 2)be bold in **sharing** the gospel.

I. Watch out for false prophets.

The Reformation IS ALL ABOUT the gospel. Ah, but **gospel** – "What does THAT mean?" The gospel deals with what is the MOST PERSONAL part of a person's life – even more personal than their **money** or their **marriage**. The gospel deals with what should be the MOST IMPORTANT PART of a person's life. The **gospel** is ALL ABOUT a person's personal relationship with God. The gospel deals with the QUESTIONS – "**How** can I be sure everything is OK between God and me? Does God really love me? What will happen to me when I die?"

In these verses Jesus talks about the signs of the **coming end** of the world – of **Judgment Day**. We'll be looking at them **more closely** in the next couple of sermons so we won't dwell on them now. But, **yes**, the gospel deals with Judgment Day. WHAT will happen to me **when I stand** before the ***"righteous Judge"*** of all? What will I SAY TO GOD? **What** will I hear FROM GOD? ***"Depart from Me"*** or ***"Come, inherit the kingdom"***?

Luther was looking for **answers** to those questions. He wanted to BE SURE of **where he stood** with God. He wanted real peace for his soul. But becoming a **monk** and priest – vowing poverty and celibacy – fasting and **denying** himself – turning to Mary and the saints for their help – NONE of that **gave Luther** real peace or **comfort** – no assurance of forgiveness.

Luther was assigned to teach theology at the **new university** in Wittenberg, Germany. He had to study the Bible and studying the Bible Luther learned – he **rediscovered** – the gospel. The word **"gospel"** means "good news. Boy is the gospel GOOD NEWS for **crushed, guilty** sinners!

The gospel is the **good news** that WE DO NOTHING to save ourselves – our salvation is ALL GOD'S DOING. Praise God that we hear the **simple facts** of the gospel in **every** service! Imagine hearing them for the **very first** time! The good news that the eternal Son of God Himself took on our human flesh and blood – our Creator was born our **brother** – to be our Savior BY TAKING our place before God. **In our place** – TO OUR CREDIT – Jesus actually perfectly obeyed every commandment His whole life through. Bearing the sins of the whole world the **sinless Lord Jesus** was punished in our place. Jesus endured the hell we had coming – He sacrificed His holy life – to PERSONALLY PAY for

every one of our sins. Jesus gave His body into death – shed His precious blood – ***"for the forgiveness"*** of ALL our sins. Jesus conquered death and the grave **when He rose** triumphant from the dead on Easter morning. Jesus has taken care of **everything** for us! For Jesus' sake God HAS FORGIVEN all our sins. Trusting in Jesus – relying on what Jesus has all done for us and promised to us – we are the redeemed, beloved children of God – we can BE ABSOLUTELY SURE that we're going straight to heaven when we die. We are saved by God's GRACE **alone** through faith **alone** in Jesus. THAT GOSPEL is what the Reformation is **all about**!

Because that gospel is OUR EVERYTHING heed Jesus' warning, ***"Be careful that no one deceives you."*** We are to CONTINUALLY be on our toes – be EVER SO CAREFUL – that nothing comes between Jesus and us – that nothing perverts that **priceless** gospel.

Jesus isn't warning here about FALSE RELIGIONS like Islam, Mormonism, etc. This threat is INSIDE the **visible church** – among those who **claim the name** Christian. ***"Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am he,' and will deceive many."*** Jesus doesn't say SOME but ***"MANY"*** false prophets and ***"MANY"*** deceived by them. They may LOOK GOOD – sound good – be personable and **likeable** – they may be very popular and **successful** – but they are in fact ***"leading many astray"*** - AWAY FROM God's Word and the certainty of the **gospel**.

How can we recognize these false prophets and keep ourselves from being ***"deceived"***? There's another question that **echoes through** the catechism - "WHERE is this written?" God's Word alone determines what we are to believe. God's **Word alone determines** our morals and values. SOLA SCRIPTURA – the Scriptures alone – is a **rallying cry** for real Lutherans. The **Reformation** is an URGENT CALL for each one of us to **diligently study** and **know well** what God's Word says. The Reformation shows that when people DON'T KNOW their Bibles – when people are content with "MY CHURCH **teaches**" instead of "the BIBLE SAYS" – then it's really easy to ***"deceive"*** those people and lead them away from the **gospel**.

The Reformation is ALL ABOUT the gospel. So ***"be careful that no one deceives you"*** AND…

II. Be bold in sharing the gospel.

Jesus is here talking ABOUT LIFE in the **last days** of the world. He doesn't paint a **pretty picture**. Life won't be easy – ESPECIALLY **for the Christian** who wants to be faithful to God's Word. But among all the DREARY SIGNS Jesus also says, ***"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations."*** We saw that pictured in that vision from Revelation. John ***"saw another angel flying in the middle of the sky. He had the everlasting gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth, to every nation, tribe, language, and people."***

BE BOLD in **sharing that gospel** because all need to hear the gospel. Ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin we're all BORN SINFUL. We don't start out as **little angels** but LITTLE HEATHEN – ***"dead in sin"*** God says. ALL people – Christians and **unbelievers** – have a sinful nature that is ***"hostile to God"*** – that sees God as the **enemy** and the **problem** – that only wants to sin. We all have our PET SINS and **weaknesses** – some more obvious or more disgusting than others. FEW people are mass murderers or **serial rapists**. But IN GOD'S EYES screwed-up priorities in life – **gossiping** - occasionally drinking too much – looking at porn on the internet – NOT TAKING THINGS **"in the kindest possible way"** – grumbling and **not being content** with what God gives us – those are ALL DAMNING sins too. Hell is REAL and real people **really do** go to hell. People's parents – children – spouses – neighbors – friends. Everybody in hell HAS A NAME and **face**.

Be bold in **sharing** the gospel for not only do ALL NEED Jesus – Jesus came **for all** people. John reminds us that Jesus ***"is the atoning sacrifice not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world."*** Jesus came for all people and He is the ONLY WAY anyone will get to heaven. ***"Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned."*** The ONLY

WAY anyone can believe in Jesus is by FIRST HEARING about Jesus – **hearing the gospel**. We have been so blessed by God to have the gospel **in all** its truth and purity. God help us to BE BOLD in **sharing** it with our family and friends – our country and the **world**!

ALL need to hear the gospel but NOT ALL are glad to hear it. Jesus is blunt. ***"Be on your guard! People will hand you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues. You will stand in the presence of rulers and kings for My sake as a witness to them."*** We had the example of the three men in the fiery furnace in the OT reading. You know what happened to Jesus. Read again the **Book of Acts** and what all happened to the apostles and Paul and the first Christians. Read up on Luther and the Reformation in Germany, Poland, Bohemia, France, England, the Netherlands, etc. They didn't enjoy the **religious freedom** that we have today! **So many** paid dearly – even paid WITH THEIR LIVES! – to have the gospel in its truth and purity.

But don't think it's GOTTEN ANY EASIER in this 21st century. **Christianity** – the **gospel** – is not welcome in Islamic countries – in India, China, etc. It's MORE AND MORE becoming that way even here in America. Go ahead and ridicule Christianity and mock Christians – but DON'T YOU DARE upset or **offend** a Moslem – a homosexual – by calling them to **repent** and **to trust** in Jesus as their Savior. The faithful young Christian in the **public college classroom** can feel like those three men in the OT reading or Daniel in the lion's den. The Christian parents who try to ***"bring up their children"*** in the Christian faith and with Christian morals – who while loving their children won't approve of their living in **unrepentant sin** – it's a REAL CHALLENGE! How the devil wants to INTIMIDATE us – **get us** to shut up and not share God's **powerful gospel** with others!

But we are not fighting **on our own**. We have the promised help of the Holy Spirit. ***"Do not worry beforehand what you should say. Say whatever is given to you in that hour, because you will not be the ones speaking; instead it will be the Holy Spirit."*** Jesus calls us to BOLDLY share Word with others. The rest – the results – are **up to** the Holy Spirit. So BE BOLD in **sharing** the gospel. Oh, we face plenty of STIFF COMPETITION from ***"many"*** false religions and false prophets ***"deceiving MANY."*** But the gospel is still ***"the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes."***

The gospel – the **good news** of Jesus our perfect Savior – that's what we're celebrating today. The **gospel** – that's what the Reformation is ALL ABOUT. Amen.

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