



***Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum!***  
**The Word of the Lord Endures Forever!**



How difficult it is to live in a day and age when almost everything is considered temporary and “disposable”... disposable razors, printers that last a year, or microwaves that quite after two... Manufacturers expect you to simply toss it into the trash and move on to bigger and better. Afterall, they say, “nothing lasts forever.” *They* are wrong.

Our Latin-speaking forefathers beautifully and succinctly expressed the truth that there is one thing which endures forever with for simple letters: V, D, M, A = *Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum* = **The Word of the Lord endures forever!** How fitting are these letters for our Celebration of the Lutheran Reformation because there was a time when sound Biblical teaching was tossed aside, discarded, rejected in favor of the notions and ideas of man. The church had moved on – but the Word of God remained. And although it was hidden and obscured for some time, its truths remained unchanged. And when God raised up faithful leaders, the Word of God began to shine, because of a promise that Jesus spoke just days before his crucifixion, “The Gospel Will be Preached to All Nations!”

As we hear these unchanging words of our Savior, and as we consider the times we are living in, let us not take it for granted that The Word of the Lord Endures Forever. Let us rejoice that this is a promise that we can always count on – and recognize that this is a promise that we are always part of. <sup>5</sup> *Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.*

### **I. That’s a Promise We Can Always Count On**

As our Savior was leaving Jerusalem for the last time during Holy Week, he had a very serious message to share with them about what was coming their way. Physically, mentally and emotionally life was going to get very challenging. Wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, beatings, arrests, standing trial... all these things were going to happen; they must happen... for they are birth pains before the end comes. They are vivid real reminders to believers and unbelievers that something serious is coming! Judgment Day IS coming! Those who believe will be taken to heaven, those who do not will be judged and condemned to hell forever.

Nestled in these shocking words, however, is an incredibly comforting promise that we dare not let be overshadowed by all those horrific signs. Verse 10 powerfully pronounces, <sup>10</sup> ***And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.*** Imagine sitting with Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives as he speaks of this world-wide proclamation of His Gospel. Jesus knew that the world cannot end until the gospel, in spite of all kinds of persecution, reaches the uttermost parts of the earth. And it’s not just to the parts – but more precisely to the ears and hearts of people across the globe. THIS WILL HAPPEN because it is God’s Will. God will see to it without fail.

There may be times when the song of the Gospel is less audible, but that does not mean it has failed. There may be times when it’s gone from one location – but only for a season, until Christians bring it back to a new generation of hearts and ears. In the closing words of Mark 13, Jesus underscores this promise by saying, <sup>31</sup> ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*** This a promise you and I can and must always rely on – and there’s one more thing you can be sure of; that Satan will always do his very best to draw you and me and all people away from God’s saving Gospel.

He will use wars and famines, earthquakes and turmoil... but he also uses more cunning and deceitful ways, which our Savior points out for us. <sup>5</sup> *Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many.* To “watch out” literally means to keep your eyes wide open. Be alert so that no one tricks you into believing things which do not line up with Scripture. The Greek word for this “deceiving” is the word, “planeo” like our word planets. The Greeks called the planets “wanderers” because they didn’t follow the regular pattern of the stars, they did their own thing. Jesus warns us to keep our eyes open for those who wander from the truth for they will try to get us to wander away with them and follow other paths, other ways of salvation. Those wandering “other ways” lead only to one place: hell.

For many years, the church was teaching people other ways of salvation, offering indulgences. They claimed that if you purchased a piece of paper you, or a relative, would gain forgiveness of sins and freedom from purgatory – another example of wandering from the Scriptures. It was these false teachings along with all the wars going on that

grabbed Luther's attention and drove him back into the Unchanging Word of God. As he studied God's Word, and he dug into the Eternal Gospel, he learned that forgiveness could not be purchased or earned, but that it had already been accomplished in Christ. There he learned that the very righteousness the holy God demanded is the very righteousness Jesus won for all people. There he learned that this righteousness was God's gift to mankind, not through strict observance of the Law – but through faith. This Eternal Gospel message filled his heart with a joy and peace he had never known before. This Eternal Gospel message was one the world needed to hear. This Eternal Gospel needed to be proclaimed – and proclaim it he did! And for it, he received what Jesus spoke about to his disciples on the Mt. of Olives.

<sup>9</sup> “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. <sup>11</sup> Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

## II. That's a Promise We Are Always Part Of

All these things happened to the disciples. There were all persecuted by their own people as well as by Gentiles. They were arrested, they were flogged, they were made to stand trial – yet even then the Eternal Gospel shone brightly. Jesus gave them a promise about what they would say at such a point... “Don't Worry!” The Holy Spirit will be speaking through you. He will give you the words to speak. The Gospel will be proclaimed even to the ears and hearts of civic authorities!

This very same pattern continued throughout the centuries. Near the end of the Dark Ages, the Lord raised up more faithful followers, ones who began to challenge those who had wandered from the Scriptures.

- In the late 1100's – **Peter Waldo**, a Frenchman, began to advocate a strict adherence to the Scriptures as he pointed out some of the abuses and false teachings in Rome.
- In the 1300's - **John Wycliffe**, an Englishman, advocated that the Bible be in the vernacular, the language of the people, so the common folk could read the Scriptures. This got him in deep trouble. He was one of the first to warn against the sale of indulgences and his writing had a profound impact on a Czech man.
- **Jan Hus**, in the early 1400's, picked right up where Wycliffe left off and for it he was burned at the stake downtown Prague in 1415. His followers, now more emboldened in their conviction of God's Word, withstood 5 consecutive Papal Crusades between 1420 and 1431.
- In the late 1400's - an Italian Dominican Friar, **Savonarola**, called for similar reforms, until he was condemned, hanged and burned in Florence.
- All these men set the stage for **Martin Luther** and many more reformers to boldly and clearly spoke the Eternal Gospel. For it, Luther was outlawed, excommunicated, and could be shot on site, if he left the projection of Duke Fredrick. Yet still the Gospel message continued.

The same story continues to this day as Christians across the globe are mocked, ridiculed, made fun of... as they are persecuted, tortured and even put to death as they shared the Eternal Gospel. You see, this promise of Jesus is not just one we rejoice in – but it's one that we are part of. And as we are part of this we can expect what Jesus says, “*All men will hate you because of me*” (Mt 10:22). Yet what does Jesus call this hatred, these troubles and challenges for those who speak the Gospel – birth pains.

The emphasis isn't on the pain aspect of it – but on the outcome... on the **New Life** that is to come for all Christians who faithfully hold to and boldly proclaim the Gospel. This **New Life** in heaven is one that Satan or this world cannot steal from us, they can only try to lure us away from it. Without a doubt, the believer who remains faithful to the Lord in all this will be saved. This is the comfort we as children of God have as we face of the end of the world: “*Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life*” (Rev 2:10). In spite of everything else, the Jesus' Eternal Gospel promise will prove victorious! It will because he who gave it, Jesus himself, has conquered sin, Satan and death.

It is good for us to take time and commemorate the Reformation and what God accomplished through it and still does to this day. Through it, God raised up and continues to raise up “flying midair messengers” of which the reading from Revelation 14 spoke. Rejoice that you have heard and believed this message. Rejoice that you are part of this generation of messengers. Go then, and boldly hold and proclaim this Eternal Gospel, knowing that God is with and he will continue to send you the Holy Spirit so that you and I speak His Gospel to the next generation until Christ comes again in glory. Amen.