

Revelation 14:6-20 The Final Gospel Call

A sermon delivered at Calvary Chapel DC Metro
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We're going through the last book of the Bible – reading the words of John, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, and he's telling us about the visions and experiences Jesus revealed to him – things he was told to tell us. And it's been some pretty crazy stuff.

This morning, as we draw closer and closer to the end of the book, and closer and closer to the end of the Bible, closer and closer to the end of life on earth as we know it, we see the contrast between salvation through the gospel and experiencing God's judgment on sin.

We begin this morning in Revelation 14, verse 6, where we find the very last mention of the word 'gospel' in the entire Bible:

6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

This is a very important moment – the gospel is finally going out to all men. Missionaries and evangelists have been trying to reach the nations and tribes, learning tongues, or languages, so that they can communicate the gospel and reach people since the very first century. As a church, we support missionaries who are trying to reach new tribes, missionaries who are learning new languages so that no one has to wait until this moment to hear.

But when the end finally comes, notice God gives one last call – one final opportunity for people to respond to the gospel. And for the first time ever that we know of – God uses an angel.

That's unique. Normally, God uses people to share the gospel. That's what happened to almost all of us, right? We heard about Christ and forgiveness through a person – on the radio, or in the living room, or at school, or at church – someone invited us, or talked to us, and told us all about God. And that's the way Jesus said it should be.

Before He ascended to Heaven, Jesus gathered His disciples together and issued the Great Commission:

Matt 28:18 "...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things

that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even to the end of the age.*" Amen.

So this has always been part of the Christian's incredible privilege – the chance to share with others the good news that we have experienced – making disciples of people, seeing them baptized, and teaching them. It's an opportunity that every single Christian has. Some of us are doing it at home, telling the little people that live with us about Jesus, and some of us are doing it at work, or on the streets, or with our friends, but we all have the chance to do it.

Paul asked: Rom 10:14 *How shall ... they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

Friends, all the way until the last days – all the way up until this moment when angel takes over – this is our job – sharing the good news with others just like someone shared it with us.

Now, there's something else I want to point out here. In the Great Commission, Jesus tells us to make disciples of *all* nations, and John says the angel preached the everlasting gospel "*to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.*" The point is: the *everlasting* gospel is for *everyone*.

It turns out sin is a global problem. Many of you know that because you've either travelled overseas or you study issues overseas, and you know – red and yellow, black and white, we're all sinners day and night.

There is no holy culture, no perfect tribe, or utopian nation. People everywhere deal with lust, drunkenness, pride, envy, anger and violence. In jungle villages, on mountain peaks, in desert tents, on tiny islands, in megacities, rich and poor, sick and healthy, wherever you have people, you find sin. And therefore, everyone needs the everlasting gospel.

In the past three weeks Doug and Rose have been on three different continents – they went to do ministry in Nigeria, in Italy and here in America – and they shared the same gospel in each location. It didn't change depending on whether there was electricity or not, or whether people could read or not, or what kind of jobs people had or what language they spoke, or whether you bought petrol by liter or gas by the gallon – this one gospel applies to every man, woman, and child on earth.

And, not only does it apply to everyone, it applies forever – it is *everlasting*. The gospel doesn't change with time. It doesn't get re-launched. It doesn't get rebranded. It doesn't fade or wear out or become obsolete. The *everlasting* gospel is for *every* one that *ever* has lived, is living, or will live. The methods and means we use to communicate it may change, but the message itself never does – we need to turn from living for ourselves, receive forgiveness in Christ, and start living for God.

And the angel tells us two important pieces of what that turnaround will look like. He says (vs7): “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.” So here are the two pieces: Fear God and worship Him.

Let’s look at both of those. First, fear God.

Proverbs 9:10 “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.

This is something we’ve lost sight of in our day. We don’t often talk about fearing the Lord. We talk more about a God who answers our prayers and gives us what we need. But all throughout the Bible we also find this idea of people fearing God, but in a very healthy way.

On Mount Moriah, God told Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac, He said (Gen 22:12), “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

We’re told that Job feared God (Job 1:9) and therefore walked in righteousness.

Solomon gives us a long philosophical search for the meaning of life in the book of Ecclesiastes, and in the end he says (Eccl 12:13)

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:

Fear God and keep His commandments,
For this is man's all.

Peter says (1 Peter 2:17) Honor all *people*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

So let me ask: do you fear God? Would you ever describe your relationship with Him that way? Does it ever enter your mind? One of the things we’ve discussed as we move through Revelation is that we’re seeing what it’s like to be on God’s bad side, to receive His wrath. And that has helped us appreciate all the more what Christ has done for us.

Friends, it’s healthy for your soul to have an appropriate fear of God. He is good, He is loving and gracious and merciful, but He is also awesome and terrible in judgment – it’s not one or the other, it’s both. The Lamb of God is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Somehow, we have to keep that distinction alive and well in our minds because if we loose it, we loose something important in our understanding of God.

The second thing we notice is that the angel calls people to give glory to God. One of the ways we do that is by worshipping Him as Creator, for making “heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

Now, that's something we're probably a lot better at in the church. We have hymns like "This is My Father's World" and modern worship songs like Cannons and You're Beautiful by Phil Wickham that talk about the way creation points us back to the Creator with lyrics like:

I see Your power in the moonlit night
Where planets are in motion and galaxies are bright
We are amazed in the light of the stars
It's all proclaiming who You are
You're beautiful

(Maybe someone could write some songs about the proper fear of the Lord – about trembling in His sight, about falling down and covering our eyes, about what it's like to see our Abba Father in His royal splendor.)

But again - we're told to worship God as Creator. And yet, this is one of the areas where's God's glory is constantly under attack as some who refuse to accept the idea of a God, insist that everything around us just 'banged' into existence and continues to evolve all by itself without any external guidance, intelligence, or meaning. So, the angel proclaims the everlasting gospel and calls people to worship God for His creation.

Now here's what I find fascinating – you see an angel flying across the sky – shouting out the gospel so it can be received by every tribe and tongue and nation. And what's the response? Crickets.

There is no massive revival associated with this miraculous crusade.

Have you ever wondered why people don't respond to the gospel when you share with them or bring them to church? Have you ever thought it was your fault? That somehow, you didn't have all the answers, or didn't say things right? That if you had just prayed harder, fasted longer, lived better, or studied more, then whoever you're sharing with would have crumpled right then and there and received Christ?

Well, here we see an angel sent by God declaring the everlasting gospel and people still don't repent. Why is that?

It's because people consciously choose and at the end of the day, they love their sin more than they love God. They love the life they have or the life they're trying to build. They love the way they look at the world and the story they've come up with for why things are the way they are and where it's all headed. So, even when they're confronted with the truth, they insist on clinging to a lie.

And so, in that sense, everyone who goes to hell chooses it for themselves. That's sobering friends, but it's true.

And now, the next thing we see, are the consequences for making that choice.

8 And another angel followed, saying, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.”

We’ll talk more about this city in a few weeks in Chapters 17 and 18, but here’s what you need to know for now. The idea is that people were coming to Babylon to receive the things they wanted. Instead of establishing a relationship with God, they were establishing a relationship with the city and with the beast which we see next. And in both cases it’s a relationship of loyalty and intimacy – just like what we are offered from God, but this is an imitation, a surrogate – a store brand knock-off. And now judgment against it is coming.

9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

There are horrible consequences for those who reject or ignore God, and we all need to keep that in mind. Sometimes our lives as Christians can be difficult, painful, oppressed or persecuted, but our future is secure. The ungodly don’t share that same hope. All they have is a terrifying despair as the things they once thought they had, the things that once seemed so secure, the things they thought they had controlled, manipulated, or gotten away with, are stripped away in a single stroke of God’s tiny finger.

Friends, let me ask: are you fornicating with this city, with DC – are you becoming intimately involved with it? Crossing boundaries that you had set? Going further and further for the sake of getting what you’re looking for? Fornication is any kind of sexual activity outside the bounds of marriage. Adultery is a married person getting involved with someone other than their spouse. Fornication can be committed by anyone, married or not.

So let me ask again – are you being intimate with city when you should be conducting yourself as the honorable bride of Christ?

I’ve told you before, I’ve watched this city seduce too many people not to say something. Believers and non-believers, I’ve watched their lives or listened to their stories as they gave more and more of themselves away to the search for approval, acceptance, affirmation, or position or power or promotion, or romantic love in this city.

Now, I’m not saying DC is Babylon, but the idea is the same. People come to the city hoping to find what they can’t find back home. And if the city will give it to them, they’ll give themselves to the city.

And friends, right now, our city is increasing in power and pull. Think of how many people you know who are moving in closer and closer to the center of the city – and why do they go? For the hope and promise of something more, something better. Every desire they have could be, and should be, fulfilled by Christ, but they go in search of something more. And for some of them, it will be their downfall or at the very least, it will be the source of their scars.

Now hear me clearly – I’m not anti-urban, I’m only saying there is a temptation to make the city your god – to look to it for all your needs and to give yourself to it in the process.

Of course, there’s also the temptation to give yourself to the power of men. To be identified with a human being – to take their mark. We know that will happen literally one day, as people take an actual mark that you will have to have in order to buy and sell. But it happens today in a smaller sense as we look to bosses, or superiors, or celebrities to give us direction for our lives. And we loyally follow them – we retweet their thoughts or articles, we look to them for cues on how to dress, what to drive, where to live, what to say and instead of being conformed to the image of Christ, we’re conformed to the image of man.

And for all those who do these things, we need to clearly understand; God will one day pour out His wrath. God is a jealous God – verse 10 says He is “indignant” that we would refuse to follow, and worship, and serve Him but we will so willingly and so cheaply give ourselves away to others. And so, He promises to wipe out the things that people give themselves too and that people will suffer in the process.

Fortunately, Christians have been spared from all this, because Jesus has already absorbed the wrath that would have been poured out on us. And so John offers a word of encouragement to suffering Christians in the middle of this description of judgment:

12 Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’”

Those who give themselves to the city and the beast will be destroyed because the city and the beast are destroyed, but on the hand, those who give themselves to Christ will be counted righteous and blessed because Jesus is righteous and blessed. We’re all affected by what’s going on upstream.

“Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.”

Didn’t Jesus say time and time again in the letters to the churches in Revelation Chapters Two and Three: “I know your works”? The things you do for God, even the smallest choices you make, intentionally made to please Him, will be honored and you will be rewarded.

Life is difficult and the opposition now is fierce at times, the work feels hard. It's hard to be a Christian in the workplace – it's hard to stick out from the rest of the guys. It's hard to love your kids like Christ does and do it all the time. It's hard to keep the home. It's hard to maintain your physical, emotional, and mental purity – it's hard work! It takes labor to live for Christ here and now, and we're not even physically persecuted. But one day, you will be rewarded for every single thing you've done for God. And at that moment, you'll say, "it was no big deal. I'm just an unworthy servant, I've only done my duty." (Luke 17:10).

While you wait for this rest to come, give attention to God's word, and let it renew your mind (Rom 12:1) so that you find yourself naturally and joyfully fulfilling His commandments. And, remember Jesus' faithfulness to you – overcome by your testimony.

The secret to endurance is trust and obedience – take little steps and one by one you'll travel great distances.

But those who insist on living their own life, pursuing their own desires, those who at times might seem like they have it so easy on this earth, are heading toward an inescapable judgment.

14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat *One* like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe."

19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw *it* into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

That's a flow of blood around four and a half feet deep that stretches for about 175 miles. It's inconceivable carnage and it's most likely a description of the final battle of Armageddon.

One commentator wrote: "What strength have grapes against the weight and power of a man when he comes to set his feet upon them? And the riper they are, the more helpless ... The heel of Omnipotence is upon them, and they can only break and sink beneath it." (Seiss)

And we actually do have a worship song for this – the old Battle Hymn of the Republic.

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,
He is trampling out the vineyard where the grapes of wrath are stored
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword
His truth is marching on!*

God is "Trampling out the vineyard where the grapes of wrath are stored."

Revelation says it is "The great winepress of the wrath of God."

Those who take the mark of the beast will be "Tormented with fire and brimstone...And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night."

We're told to "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."

Friends, what do we make of these things? Did you know God is like this? Did you know that God will judge sin? When you say Jesus has saved you, do you understand what He has saved you from?

Jesus said a day of judgment is coming for all men, and He'll tell the unrighteous:

- Matt 25:41 "...Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'

44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

Paul says in Romans 2:3 And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil

For all the Bible says about love, mercy, and kindness, we need to remember that it also speaks of judgment, wrath, and suffering. I know that seems harsh at times, but I cannot soften God's word for you. God is not just going to leave people alone and let them do their own thing. There will be consequences for all of our choices and actions and people need to know that. They need to hear it from us, before it's too late.

I got an email from another pastor this week – a man down in North Carolina I had never met. And so, like many of you would, I went and checked out the website to get a feel for what's going on at the church and I discovered his current sermon series was based on popular movies. He was encouraging people to watch a particular movie each week and then come to church on Sunday and he would talk about the themes of that movie from a Christian perspective.

Now, I'm not against movies, but friends, we need to know what the Bible says, first and foremost, because this judgment from God, is permanent and irreversible, and the Bible you're holding tells you quite plainly, it is coming.

And still, right up to the moment of judgment, we see the call going out – the everlasting gospel. For as much as we offend God, He is still merciful to us. We're this far into the Tribulation and the message is still going out.

Ezekiel 33:11 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways!...

Have you turned? Will you turn? If so, we saw in verse 13 – there is a promise for rest. You will rest in Heaven forever. Judgment is forever, but so is salvation.

Which one lies ahead for you? Friends, we haven't heard the everlasting gospel from the angel, but we've heard it from God through the men and women He has sent into our lives. We've heard the call to fear God and worship Him, and we've been warned that the people and places we might be looking to for fulfillment are one day going to be judged themselves. So what will you do?

My hope and prayer is that you will seriously and soberly consider these things today – if God is speaking to you about any changes that need to be made in your life – any sins that need to be confessed or any thing that needs to be done – that you would do it. Right here and right now, or as soon as is humanly possible – that if anything stands between you and God, you would talk to Him about it and take action on it before another day passes.

Let's pray.