

Theme: Fear God and Give Him Glory

I. He alone has the power to judge.

II. He alone comes with the power to save.

Introduction: Have you ever seen an angel? This last week in Youth Bible School one of the teen helpers mentioned that their teacher was trying to disprove angels using the scientific method. If I understood the person I was talking to, the teacher said that angels couldn't be observed or measured or quantified in any way. So they must not be real, right?

Many people in the Bible saw angels. When those "ministering SPIRITS," as the Bible calls them, chose to be seen, they were seen. And through the pages of Scripture, when they chose to be revealed, you have seen those angels too.

Have you ever heard an angel? If you were listening to the Scripture lessons, then you did today. John writes that he, "saw another angel flying in midair." John also writes, "He had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth." And this gospel message isn't the exclusive news to Christians, but it was for "every nation, tribe, language and people."

Then the angel proclaims that gospel message in a nutshell, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Today is Reformation Sunday, you know, Martin Luther, God's Word is Our Great Heritage, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, and all that stuff. This is also the first Sunday in the season of End Times. Did you notice the bulletin's invitation to worship? Our Lord is Coming Soon, Let Us Worship Him!

What message does that angel flying in midair have for us. When we see him in the pages of Scripture, and when we hear his loud voice, what does he have to say on this Reformation Weekend? Fear God and Give Him Glory. As we approach the End Times, this angel proclaims to you and me who live on this earth, Fear God and Give Him Glory.

In our sermon we are going to explore what it means to "fear God," and what it means to "give him glory." Yet not only what it means to Fear God and Give Him Glory, but also why we do those things. Why Fear God? Why Give Him Glory? Because first He alone has the power to judge. Why Fear God? Why Give Him Glory? Secondly, because He alone comes with the power to save.

Please give your attention to this angel in our text as we look at and listen to his words. Give heed as we hear the eternal gospel proclaimed through the pages of Scripture. Prepare your heart to Fear God and Give Him Glory.

I. He alone has the power to judge.

Whenever I lead a study of the Ten Commandments, I have to explain something right up front. In Luther's meaning to each of the Commandments, he begins, "We should fear and love God." I always have to explain what it means to "fear God." To "fear God" is to reverence him, respect him, even worship him. I'm always quick to add that it doesn't mean that we are to be afraid of God. I qualify that by talking about Jesus who shows us God's love and mercy. Because of Jesus, we have no reason to be afraid of God.

But what if you didn't know Jesus? What if you didn't know about God's love and mercy? What if you grew up like Martin Luther? Martin Luther was born and grew up in a time when teaching about Jesus was everywhere and yet nowhere at the same time. The church was a vital part of everyday living for nearly every person. But the church wasn't teaching about God's love and mercy through Jesus.

Instead, what Luther knew was a church that taught that God was an angry judge. Luther was taught to fear God, to be afraid of him. And Luther himself admits that he trembled and shuddered at even the thought of God as the judge of all.

Luther thought he had to somehow make God happy. Luther thought that maybe he could do good works in order to please God. Luther, in fact, nearly worked himself to death trying to earn God's favor and forgiveness. Luther became a monk, then a priest, both vain attempts to make God the angry judge less angry at Luther.

The angel in this text says that we are to Fear God and Give Him Glory because He alone has power to judge. Luther and the medieval church were half right. God is an angry judge.

There is no judge to be feared more than God Almighty. The reason is simple: He knows our hearts. God doesn't rely on what you say or do to judge you. That is what we have to go by - what a person says and does - but not God.

God the one "who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water," sees what no human being can. He sees right into your heart and soul. How you and I should tremble in fear. God sees your indiscretions, your lies, and your darkest desires. Fear God, He alone has the power to judge. And if he judged you based on your heart, what would his judgment be? "Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point, is guilty of breaking all of it." "There is no one righteous, not even one." "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." God would find us guilty.

And we would have to Give God Glory because his judgment would be right on the mark.

Transition: But remember I said that Luther in his younger years and the medieval church were only half right? God also is worthy to be feared and glorified because He alone comes with the power to save.

## II. He alone comes with the power to save.

Luther tried in vain to appease God's anger. The head of the monastery saw Luther's grave concern over sin. He tried to distract Luther. He told Luther to read the Bible. He also gave Luther a job teaching the Psalms at the local university.

During his studies, Luther grappled with the expression, "the righteousness of God." Luther always assumed that this was God's anger. "God's righteous, holy anger is going to get me for the sins I've committed," Luther thought.

During his studies, the Holy Spirit led Luther into the book of Romans, chapter three. There the same expression "the righteousness of God" is found. But in Romans chapter three it says that this righteousness is a gift from God. Romans 3:21-24, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

The Bible says that through Jesus' sacrifice, God gives us the very righteousness he demands. God saves us.

The angel in this part of Revelation tells us to Fear God and Give him Glory because He alone comes with the power to save.

You could compare God to a two-sided coin. On one side is his holy, righteous anger directed at our sins. On the other side is God's mercy and love and forgiveness in Christ to all who believe. "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

God not only is merciful, but he comes with his mercy to you and me. He tells us about his mercy. He shows us what mercy is through Jesus His Son, our Savior and brother.

I suppose some science teacher could say the you can't measure mercy. You can't observe it in a test tube. You can't quantify it in any way, so it must not be real. But in Jesus, who loved us and gave himself for us, we see God's power to save. And our hearts Fear God, that is love and reverence and worship him because of his love for us. We Give God Glory with our hearts and lives and voices, because he doesn't count our sins against us, but on account of Jesus he uses his power to save us.

That angel proclaims "the eternal gospel ... to those who live on the earth - to every nation, tribe, language and people." He's proclaimed it to us once again today. So that we might respond with hearts touched by God's mercy and love, so that we "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." Amen.