

Reformation Day October 28, 2018

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

22th Sunday after the Trinity Proper 25 (30)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

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<http://www.deliveredbygrace.com/hymn-mighty-fortress-god/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 656/657 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 262

“A mighty fortress is our God”

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (German: "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott") is one of the best known [hymns](#) by the [reformer Martin Luther](#), a prolific [hymnodist](#). Luther wrote the words and composed the [melody](#) sometime between 1527 and 1529.^[1] It has been translated into English at least seventy times and also into many other languages.^{[1][2]} The words are a paraphrase of [Psalm 46](#).^[3] "This Wikipedia article is a good place to read about the history of this hymn.

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Mighty_Fortress_Is_Our_God

Two traditional presentations followed by three that you may not have heard before.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0tMcfvirv9s> "...played on pipe organ at historic All Saints' Church (Castle Church), Wittenberg, Germany. Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the doors of this church in 1517..."
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swwMiWWhA84> Trumpet & Pipe organ
[Timothy Moke](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWL8SHNCgWY> C. H. Mason Memorial Choir - 110th COGIC Holy Convocation
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBhVuCcz9GI> A Mighty Fortress filmed by Fountainview Academy as part of The Great Controversy in Rome, Italy.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ztqvb4vA5P8> Castillo Fuerte (A Mighty Fortress is Our God) - Imanuel Orchestra

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Reformation Day: Revelation 14:6-7; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 25 (30), Jeremiah 31:7-9 or Job 42:1-6, 10-17 (Next week: All Saint's Day: Revelation 7:2-8) 9-17; RCL, Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-9 or Isaiah 25:6-9)

Like the beginning of a great meal, Revelation 14:6–7 goes well with the psalm for this Sunday (Psalm 46) for the celebration of the Reformation. They are excellent companions because both express unshaking vision to see the presence and activity of God, even in the midst of great trial and calamity, even in the midst of terrible natural and human caused trauma. They both speak dramatically and forcefully to those who suffer calamity and suffering. Though "the earth be shaken and mountains quake to the depth of the sea," we do not fear (Ps 46: 3). Why? Because "God is our refuge and our strength, an ever present help in distress" (Ps 46:1) and because this God, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob" (Ps 46:7)...

As an endnote: this reading is assigned to the celebration of the Reformation. Perhaps that is because some Lutheran commentators identify Babylon with the papacy and the angel in verse 6 as a foretelling of Martin Luther.¹ I believe it is well to avoid this theme. Once we begin to turn a literary form such as Revelation into specific prophecy of historical people to come, we start getting into all kinds of problems (such as only 144,000 people will be saved). So it is simply good not to

start. Stay with the intention of the book of Revelation and the gospel that predominates all preaching.”

¹ Paul E. Kretzman, *Popular Commentary of the Bible – New Testament, Vol. 2*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), 631.

- <https://concordiatheology.org/2014/10/reformation-day-•-revelation-146-7-•-october-26-2014/> Posted October 14, 2014 by Bruce Hartung in Homiletical Helps

The Messages of the Three Angels

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

The pericope is commonly appointed for the festival of the Reformation. The assignment has less to do with the fact that Martin Luther was regarded by some of his contemporaries as the first (or even third) angel of the apocalypse and more to do with the Reformation’s emphasis on the good news of the person and work of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and on the distinction between law and gospel. The interpretation of the text should not be limited to Luther or the Reformation; more important than the reformer is the gospel message he proclaimed.

The text focuses on the appearance of the first angel and its message. Key to understanding the context here is to recall John’s vision of the dragon’s two beasts in chapter 13. The terrible beasts emerge from the sea and the earth respectively, and having been given the authority and power of the dragon, they make the earth their dwelling place. John’s vision continues in chapter 14 with the appearance of the lamb standing on Mount Zion together with the 144,000 who had been purchased from the earth. Then John sees the first angel flying in mid-heaven—between the sun and the earth—“having the eternal gospel to proclaim to those dwelling on the earth, people of every nation and tribe and language and people” (14:6).

The “eternal gospel” to be proclaimed is the good news that the angel, as God’s messenger, brings to all the inhabitants of the earth. But this good news is not limited to Christ’s work of saving the world from sin and death; it is a message speaking both law and gospel. In a mighty voice, the angel announces God’s imminent judgment, but also calls for the reverence of God as God and for a response to him as judge of the earth and as its creator. This preaching of the gospel to all nations is one of the signs of the end of the age as prophesied by Christ himself (cf. Mk 13:10). In Revelation, Christ’s work of salvation is completed, and now the work of judgment remains.

The content of the “eternal gospel” that the angel proclaims involves three aorist (*a reference to a Greek part of speech*) imperatives, all of which relate to God’s final judgment. Those dwelling on the earth— those of every nation, tribe, language, and people—are commanded to “*fear* God and *give* him glory ... and *worship* him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of water” (14:7). (The third imperative, προσκυνήσατε, can mean also “bow/ fall down and worship.”)...

- <https://concordiatheology.org/2010/08/reformation-day-•-revelation-146-7-•-october-31-2010/> Posted August 23, 2010 by Gerhard Bode in Homiletical Helps

Psalm 46; RCL, Psalm 126 or Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22) (Psalm 149; RCL, Psalm 24)

“It is said of Luther that, when he heard any discouraging news, he would say,
Come let us sing the forty-sixth psalm.”

https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/mhc/psa/psa_046.cfm

God Is Our Fortress

To the choirmaster. Of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamoth.^[a] A Song.

46 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present^[b] help in trouble.

² Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. **Selah**

⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.

⁵ God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.

⁶ The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

⁷ The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. **Selah**

⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.

⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.

¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!”

¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. **Selah**

- a. [Psalm 46:1](#) Probably a musical or liturgical term
- b. [Psalm 46:1](#) Or *well proved*

““A Mighty Fortress is Our God” -- the hymn, which according to Ulrich Leupold, “more than any other epitomizes Luther's thought and personal experience” -- is a rather free paraphrase of Psalm 46.

For that reason, the psalm is assigned for Reformation Sunday. But as Leupold notes, Luther “did not write [the hymn] to express his own feelings, but to interpret and apply the 46th Psalm to

the church of his own time and its struggles."¹ This is a fine summary of the preaching task -- to interpret and apply the biblical text to our own time and struggles. So why not preach this Reformation Day on Psalm 46?

The Text of the Psalm

The psalm is tightly composed, with three, three-verse-long stanzas and two refrains:

Stanza 1 (verses 1-3)

Stanza 2 (verses 4-6)

Refrain: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (verse 7)

Stanza 3 (verses 8-10)

Refrain: "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." (verse 11)

An important note about the text of the psalm is necessary, because some recent modern editions of the Book of Psalm "restored" (a fancy scholarly term meaning "fussed with") the text of the psalm to include the psalm's refrain after the first stanza, too. The *Lutheran Book of Worship* of 1978 and *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1977 both used a version of this psalm with the refrain so restored.²

More recently, however, postmodern sensibilities have rightfully undermined scholarly confidence in the ability to fuss with the biblical text in these ways. So here is the point: Just be aware of which text your congregation is using. The commentary here does not supply the supposed missing verse. If you are still using a version that "restores" the refrain after the first stanza, adjust your interpretation accordingly..."

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1110 **Rolf Jacobson** Professor of Old Testament and Alvin N. Rogness Chair in Scripture, Theology, and Ministry, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn (This is an expanded use of the 2016 lesson. See that lesson also for commentary on the sub title about "Alamoth": <http://bethlehemlutheranchurchparma.com/BibleStudies/29147/DownloadText>)

Romans 3:19-28; RCL, Hebrews 7:23-28 (1 John 3:1-3; RCL, Revelation 21:1-6a)

"Paul begins his letter to the Romans with a salutation (1:1-7) and a prayer of thanksgiving (1:8-15). It isn't until verse 16 that he finally gets to his main point.

- *Verses 16-17 constitute a thesis statement—the epistle in a nutshell. Paul begins by saying that the gospel "is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek" (v. 16).*

- *In 1:18—3:20, Paul establishes the scope of the problem—the reality of our guilt (1:18-32)—the righteousness of God's judgment (2:1-16)—the failure of those who rely on the law (2:17—3:8)—and the conclusion that none is righteous (3:9-20).*

- *Having established the problem, Paul returns to his thesis of vv. 16-17. In 3:21-31, he notes that we have all sinned, and can be justified only by God's grace as a gift (vv. 23-24). We therefore have no grounds for boasting (v. 27). Jews and Gentiles are in the same boat—both being justified by faith—not law (vv. 29-30)..."*

- <https://www.sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/romans-319-28/> "RICHARD NIELL DONOVAN publishes SermonWriter. Many years ago, he found himself over-extended and needing good resources, especially stories that fit well with the text. While the world is full of stories, it is not easy to find one that fits well with the scripture text." Read more about him and this website at <https://www.sermonwriter.com/our-story/>.

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being^[a] will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

The Righteousness of God Through Faith

²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.

- a. [Romans 3:20](#) Greek *flesh*

Celebrating The Reformation

Many churches will celebrate the Reformation this week.

Though Christians differ on some points of doctrine, most agree this is a great opportunity to lift up the biblical themes of God's grace and the liberating power of faith. A reading from Luther and a description of why he is important for the church would certainly be appropriate. Above all, it should be underlined that Luther and the other reformers did not claim to be saying something new.

Rather they believed they were recovering a teaching from the Bible (and especially Paul) that had been obscured or ignored by the church of that time. Moreover, they stressed that the core message of Romans is always relevant, no matter how many years separate us from the sixteenth century. The age-old tendency of humans to justify themselves means the church must always be reformed -- and this includes the congregations that claim Luther as a father in the faith. And now we turn to this rich passage from Paul and select some themes that connect with the life of Christians today.

Good Works Can Be Dangerous!

The opening verses in our passage summarize what Paul has been saying up to this point in chapters two and three. Paul stresses that humanity has no claim whatsoever on God. Both Greeks and Jews stand accused by the law. The former know the law as it is "written on their hearts" (2:15)

while the latter fall short of the law revealed to the people of Israel. Note carefully that the law is not the problem. Paul underlines that the law itself is good (7:12). But it is our tendency (sin) to use what is good to promote our own agenda that is the problem. In doing this we reveal the depth of our rebellion...

But Now

It is easy to pass over the small words of Scripture and count them as having little value. We prefer to unpack the big terms that are loaded with theological freight, like "justification" and "righteousness". However, Paul is making a big shift in our passage as he transitions from futility of the human situation to what God is doing to address the problem.

BUT NOW (3:21) says Paul, God is doing something new. That little word "now" deserves some attention. Paul is directing our attention to the present tense. This is echoed latter in the section when he says "...they are *now* justified by his grace" (3:24) and "it was to prove at the *present* time that he himself is righteous" (3:26, underlining mine)...

Now What?

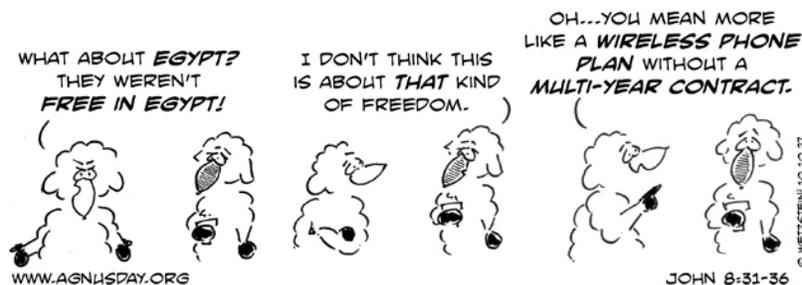
This brings us to the final and most important part of the comments on these verses. Just what does Paul say that God is now doing? Basically, he is making clear what kind of God he really is. If God's righteousness is only a standard for us to attain, then we are out of luck. As has been shown, we lack the power (our wills are bound to self-love) to follow the law and make ourselves righteous or whole.

But the picture changes completely if God's righteousness is something that is given to us. And this is the key point that must be grasped. Paul is saying that, in Christ, God shares (3:24) his righteousness with those who do not deserve it -- we "Greeks and Jews" who are so bent on doing things our way on our own terms...

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1350 Mark Tranvik
Professor of Religion, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN
- This link will connect you to nine other commentaries on this reading.
https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2246

John 8:31-36 or Matthew 11:12-19: RCL, Mark 10:46-52 (Matthew 5:1-12; RCL, John 11:32-44)

The Holy Gospel according to St. John the 8th Chapter or St. Matthew the 11th Chapter”



“On this day, we as Lutherans naturally think about Martin Luther and the birthday of the Lutheran church. While these are valid things to celebrate on this day, if that is all we do, we will miss out. There is really a lot more to this day than Martin Luther and the birth of the Lutheran church.

It is a day for celebrating true freedom. In today’s Gospel, *Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* This is not political freedom or social freedom. It is the freedom that Christ gives. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: ^[Galatians 5:1] *“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”* The message of the Scriptures uncovered by the Reformation is that by faith in Christ, before God we are free, saved by God the Father’s grace for God the Son’s sake through God the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith. This is the true freedom. In Jesus, we are free from the guilt of our sin, free from the power of death to destroy us, and free to live for Jesus and for others.

This freedom is a gift from God. He creates it and sustains it in us. Today’s Gospel is one of the many places in the Bible that tells us how He does this...”

- <http://lcmssermons.com/index.php?sn=1081> Rev. James T. Batchelor
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church; Hoopston, IL

John 8:31-36

The Truth Will Set You Free

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* ³³ They answered him, *“We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”*

³⁴ Jesus answered them, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave^[a] to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*

- a. [John 8:34](#) For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface; also verse [35](#)

“My two younger children tend to get these two men mixed up:

Of course, it's not the pictures that confuse them, but the names. Martin Luther King Jr. and simply Martin Luther. It's especially confusing in January when they hear a lot of talk about Martin Luther King Jr. at school. They associate with that name, since we go to St. John's Lutheran Church.

Now we could call both men freedom fighters. But they fought for very different kinds of freedom. Martin Luther King Jr. fought for the kind of freedom we call civil rights. In the 1950's and 60's, he wanted to make sure that African-Americans had the same rights in public that white Americans had. He wanted to free them from segregation and second-class citizenship.

Martin Luther, on the other hand, was concerned about slavery -- not physical slavery to human masters, like Israel in Egypt or the slaves in the South before the Civil War. He was concerned about a far worse slavery. For you see, physical slavery, even the worst kind filled with abuse and beatings, physical slavery ends at death, but not the slavery that troubled Martin Luther. Rather

than freeing a person from this slavery, death brought a whole new level of pain and torture, namely hell.

A. Free from slavery to sin

1) Who has been chained by slavery to sin?

What was this slavery that troubled Martin Luther? It was the same slavery that Jesus talks about in the text. Slavery to sin... Every one of us sins. This slavery chained us all.

2. What cannot free us from this slavery?

Now one of our greatest sins is to think that our sin isn't all that bad, at least not now anymore. That's why some in the crowd so strongly objected to Jesus saying that he would set them free...They knew that Jesus was talking about spiritual freedom. Abraham's descendants had often lost political freedom... But as descendants of Abraham, they claimed spiritual freedom as their own... And hadn't they meticulously kept the traditions handed down to them? So they were spiritually free, so they thought. How could Jesus claim to set them free?

That's when Jesus points out the truth: Everyone who sins is a slave to sin...For if you think you have set yourself free, then you cannot, *you cannot* have the freedom Jesus brings.

3. What must we confess about our own power and ability?

Rather like Martin Luther stand convicted that you cannot free yourself...But if freedom could not come to Martin Luther from his own works or from following church rules, how could he be freed? How could you or I be freed? Jesus gives the answer, "If you abide in My Word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free . . . If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed."...

B. Free through the word of truth from Jesus

1) How do you learn the truth that frees you from slavery to sin?

But truth, as Jesus' uses that word, truth that sets us free from the worst slavery of all, truth is what Jesus' teaches, namely his Word...The truth that sets us free from slavery to sin cannot be discovered by human searching and studying and living. It's revealed only in the Scriptures...

2) How do we stay in the Word?

How do we stay in the Word?...stay in the Word means to listen to that word and talk to God about it, to have that word alive in your heart, to inwardly digest what it says, to live it out in your daily interactions, to be at home in the Word... So we've seen what sets us free from slavery to sin. The truth. We've seen where to find the truth. God's Word, the Bible. We've seen what to do with the truth of God's Word. Stay and remain in it. But what is this truth that sets us free, this truth that God's Word reveals, this truth that we want to remain in? What is it?

3) What is the truth that God's Word reveals to set you free?

Consider Jesus last words in the text, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." The truth that sets you free is the truth that points you to the Son, Jesus Christ, our God and Savior.

That's the truth that set Martin Luther free -- set him from slavery to sin, free from the terror of death. That's the truth that sets you free. Cherish it. Remain in it. Shout out: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank Jesus Christ, I'm free at last!"

- http://hancocklutheran.org/sermons/Free_John8_31-36.html Pastor Gregg Bitter St John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hancock, MN

Or

Matthew 11:12-19

“John's question is really the question for hearers of every age. More clearly than perhaps any place in the gospel, the writer fairly leaps over the characters on the stage of the narrative and places the question smack-dab in our own laps. What will we make of this Jesus? Is he indeed the Messiah? For us? If not, how will we be opened to hear and see him as Messiah in such a way that he becomes the very reality of God's blessing in our lives?...”

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=12 **James Boyce** Emeritus Professor of New Testament and Greek, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Messengers from John the Baptist

11 When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.

2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” ⁴ And Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers^[a] are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them...

¹² From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence,^[a] and the violent take it by force. ¹³ For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, ¹⁴ and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. ¹⁵ He who has ears to hear,^[b] let him hear.

¹⁶ “But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their playmates,

¹⁷ “‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”^[c]

- a. [Matthew 11:12](#) Or *has been coming violently*
- b. [Matthew 11:15](#) Some manuscripts omit *to hear*
- c. [Matthew 11:19](#) Some manuscripts *children* (compare [Luke 7:35](#))

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” **“Praise to You, O Christ”**

“Matthew 11:12 is considered yet another difficult passage. Like verse 11, however, it is easy to get when we just let the Bible speak for itself. We read: *“And from the days of John the Baptist*

until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” What does Scripture mean “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence,” and “the violent take it by force?” Many consider that last phrase particularly mysterious. **Let us do some verse comparisons; the Bible will interpret itself.**

“AND FROM THE DAYS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST UNTIL NOW...”

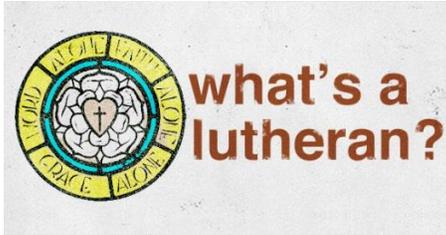
The best verse to compare Matthew 11:12 to is verse 13 (the next verse!). We read both verses: “[12] And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. [13] For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.” Prior to John the Baptist’s ministry (which began in Matthew chapter 3), the only revelation the nation Israel had from God was the Law and the Prophets. We call these writings the “Old Testament” (Genesis through Malachi). Moses and all the other prophets had predicted for centuries about a coming King and kingdom for Israel.

Beginning with John the Baptist, though, there was a major development in God’s program for the nation Israel. Matthew 3:1-2 comments: “[1] In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, [2] And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Now, Israel’s Messiah was in her midst. Jesus Christ had been born, He was to be water baptized of John, and (like John) He would soon preach the Gospel of the Kingdom Himself. The kingdom was not merely centuries away, but was now “at hand.” It was within Israel’s grasp, very close, as close as it had ever been...”

- <https://forwhatsaiththescriptures.org/2017/08/29/matthew-11-12/> “Shawn Brasseaux, the Bible teacher and web administrator of arC Ministries ('ambassadors for the Risen Christ ministries'). Located in Louisiana, southern United States of America, we are a nondenominational grace-oriented ministry and local assembly of Bible-believing Christians.” *He may not be Lutheran, but he does have a good approach to understanding Scripture.*



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“...**why do we call ourselves Lutherans?** I think there’s a section of the Bible that describes pretty well what a Lutheran is. It’s from Romans 3, starting at verse 19: A Lutheran is very simply, someone who knows sin, and someone who knows grace...

A true Lutheran, though, understands what Paul talks about in this text. Paul certainly doesn’t gloss over sin because it makes people feel bad. Actually, he says that God intends to make us feel bad about ourselves. He tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." He specifically excludes boasting, because we can’t be saved by what we do. He doesn’t allow any excuses for sin, because God gave the law "so that every mouth be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." This proper understanding of sin is critical to understanding anything else that God has told us. If we don’t think we are sinners, then we have no need for Christ. Without the law, there is no gospel. As Lutherans, it is important for us to be conscious of our sins...

But that cannot be all that we understand. For years, that was the condition Luther himself was in. He was well aware of his sin, painfully aware of his sin. He knew he was a sinner, he just didn’t know what to do about it...

This text makes it very clear what we have to do to be saved. "This righteousness from God comes through faith...all are justified freely by his grace that came through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus...A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." What do we have to do to be saved? Nothing. It’s a gift. We can’t do anything to earn it or deserve it, and we don’t have to. Jesus already did it all.

So what is a Lutheran?

It doesn’t have anything to do with what color you are, or where your grandparents came from. It doesn’t have anything to do with what type of music is in your church services, or whether or not you like coffee or potlucks.

It has everything to do with that you believe about God’s Word, because to be a Lutheran means that you believe God’s Word is the truth, period. It has to do with knowing sin, and what we deserve because of our sin. But it also has everything to do with knowing grace, and how God’s undeserved love has set us free. To be a Lutheran means to be a Christian, a believer in Christ. It means being able to say with confidence, "Heaven is my home. It is my gift from my Savior. Though I was a sinner, by his love and forgiveness, by his perfect life and sacrificial death, I am an eternal child of God." This is most certainly true.

Amen. -SDG

- <http://www.martinlutherneenah.org/home/140005310/140005310/140041117/Romans%203;19-28.%20What%20is%20a%20Lutheran.%20Reformation%20sermon.pdf>