



## Martin Luther

### Reformation

In the Lutheran Church we make a big deal of Martin Luther re-discovering the Gospel after it had been obscured by the addition of so many traditions in the Church that it was hard for people to actually find the central core of Christian teaching. This weekend we're looking at that rediscovery, so it makes sense for us in our Bible Study to talk about the Gospel. Just what is the Gospel, anyway?

Interestingly, the "Gospel in a Nutshell," John 3:16, doesn't actually use the word "Gospel." In fact, the Gospel of John doesn't use the word at all, nor do John's letter. Only once does the Apostle John use the word, and that's in Revelation 14:6, the First Lesson for Reformation Day. Look that up. Why do we use this in the place of an Old Testament Lesson for today? (Hint: who fits the description of the "angel?")

If you look up "gospel" on BibleGateway, using the English Standard Version, you'll find it used in 91 verses in the New Testament (and not at all in the Old, of course!).

The Bible uses the word "Gospel" in two senses, broad and narrow. Here are some occurrences of the broad sense (look them up!): Mark 1:1; Matthew 4:23; Luke 9:6; Romans 10:16; 1 Peter 4:17.

In these passages you see Gospel used to mean the whole teaching of Christ. In fact, both Law and Gospel are included when we use Gospel in the broad sense—otherwise, how would you find reference to "obeying the Gospel," as you saw above?

In the Old Testament we find the same thing in reverse—the word "Law" often refers to the whole teaching of God. Look up Psalm 1. How can you tell that the use of "Law" here (Torah in the Hebrew) must be more than just the rules, regulations, and punishments of the narrow sense of the word "Law"?

So if the Bible can use either the word Law or the word Gospel broadly to describe the whole teaching of God, what about the narrow sense?

Take a moment right now to write down your understanding of “Law” and “Gospel” in their narrow, restrictive sense. What is the Law, what does it do, and how do we react to it? Same with Gospel—what is it, what does it do, and how do we react to it?

Luther found the Gospel in Romans 1:16-17. Here he realized the contrast with the Law. Luther knew that he could not earn righteousness before God—he had tried and failed all his life! So he wrestled with the term “Righteousness of God” for years before he finally looked at this portion of Scripture and connected the righteousness of God not with the righteous demands of the Law but with the gift of faith, which trusts God to supply His righteousness to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Greek word “Euangelion” is the noun, and “Euangelizw” is the verb, which we find translated as “gospel” and “preach the Gospel” respectively in the ESV. The root meaning concerns “good news,” as “EU” is “good” and “ANGEL” is “messenger” in Greek. So the thing that a good messenger brings is good news, the Gospel.

Not only John 3:16, but other passages that actually detail the meaning of Gospel don’t actually use the word. Look at these passages, and then refine, if necessary, your definition of the narrow sense of “Gospel.”

Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 3:21-28; Galatians 3. These are some of the passages that flashed to Luther’s mind as soon as “the just shall live by faith” dawned on him from Romans 1!

### **Next Week: Martin Luther & All-Saints Day**

*Please Read*

1 Peter  
1 Corinthians 15  
Hebrews 11-12  
Revelation 4-7, 19-22