

King of Glory Lutheran Church

October 24/25, 2020

Year A: 21st Weekend after Pentecost: John 8:31-36

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Romans 3:19-28

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. 20 For "no human being will be justified in his sight" by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; 26 it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

John 8:31-36

31 Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." 33 They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. 35 The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. 36 So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

“Free indeed.” Jesus said, *“So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”*

Freedom is something we talk and think a lot about in the United States. We are proud of our fight for freedom from England hundreds of years ago. Proud of the freedoms we have as citizens of this country guaranteed to us by the Constitution. The Bill of Rights which contains the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution begins by guaranteeing freedom of religion, speech, the press, and the right to peaceably assemble.

It is also true that in this country it is impossible to reflect on freedom and not think of those who have not been free. Our history of slavery, the Civil War, of reservations and internment camps, and the fight for freedom from oppression, discrimination and injustice teaches us that freedom is hard won. Not everyone knows freedom, even in our own country.

And the idea of freedom has influenced and changed the lives of so many in this country and around the world in World Wars and in conflicts in so many countries and places beyond our borders. People have sacrificed their lives and treasure for freedom. And that fight continues.

So we know that freedom is not easy or simple. We know that in the United States.

But what does Jesus mean when he speaks to us, his followers, about freedom? Jesus wasn't talking about the Bill of Rights. And he wasn't addressing only Americans in our gospel reading today. So what does he mean when he says *“if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”*

These words from Jesus come to us as we celebrate Reformation Day. As we celebrate freedom in Christ and the reforming and renewal of the church.

Over 500 years ago Martin Luther; monk, priest and professor; realized that there were some things about the church that didn't fit with the teachings of Jesus and the Bible. So this young man began to ask questions about the church. Questions that made many men in positions of authority very nervous and angry.

Martin Luther wrestled with his faith, was unafraid to question authority and tradition, and knew people who needed to know and hear the good news of

love and forgiveness that Jesus proclaimed. And because of all these things, Martin Luther with his questions, writings, sermons and determination set into motion the Reformation and the beginning of the Protestant church in the early 1500's.

As Lutheran Christians we come from an intense and passionate tradition. Martin Luther was passionate about the gospel. He disagreed with many people and didn't hold back from telling them so. He was a professor who knew many languages and was a gifted teacher. He was a priest and pastor who proclaimed the gospel, wrote hymns for his congregation to sing, buried the dead and baptized children and adults. He taught people how to pray, how to listen and read the word of God, and how to live in the world as a Christian.

This year 2020 is the 500th anniversary of a treatise Martin Luther wrote called "The Freedom of a Christian" in which Luther writes, "The Christian is a completely free lord of all, subject to none. The Christian is a completely dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

What? How can a person be free and a servant all at the same time?

To answer that question we look to Jesus. Our gospel reading today includes the people saying to Jesus, "*We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free'?" Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."*

We might also say today that we are already free. And yet, the truth is that we are bound up in sin. No matter what we do we cannot free ourselves. It is Jesus who has freed us from sin and death.

In his letter to the Romans 3 Paul writes, "*For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."*

Jesus has given us the gift of freedom from sin. Forgiveness for all that we done wrong or left undone. Freedom from all has a hold on us, all that is broken in us and all that keeps us separated from God.

You have been made free through the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this gift, by this freedom, how can we do anything except choose to respond with love? We have been freed to care for our neighbor, not only ourselves. Freed to be faithful and to listen and look for God in all things. Freed to be good stewards of God's gracious gifts.

When Luther wrote that Christians are free and servants all at the same time this is what he was talking about. We are free in Christ from sin. And we are free to serve our neighbor in response to this great gift of forgiveness and love we have been given by God.

When we celebrate the Reformation and remember Luther's passion for the gospel and the church we have the opportunity to once again consider what needs to be reformed in our own church and in our own hearts. We have the chance to consider what we have been freed from and what we have been freed for.

The Reformation was not simply a movement that occurred 500 years ago. It is at the heart of our church, of who we are, of how we understand God. Our God who is alive in our hearts and in our world today. Our God who continues to move among us and stir us up. Our God who calls us to reform ourselves and serve one another as Christ in this world.

The question for us today is how will God's gift of freedom reform your life this day and every day? How is God calling you to reform this church, this community, this world?

We have been given an amazing gift of freedom. Freedom from sin. Freedom to live a new life. Freedom to read the Bible, to ask questions, to pray, to listen for the Holy Spirit, to worship, to share the good news of Jesus and to serve and love your neighbor. Freedom to live a life of service, a life of love, a life of faith. Do not take the freedom you have been given by Jesus for granted.

Let us give thanks for the freedom we have been given by Jesus and live as freed people called to serve one another.

Amen.