

“The *Truth* will set you *Free*”

Reflections on John 8:31-34

submitted as an at-home devotion, due to the church power outage on 7.22.2018

John 8:31-34

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.

We have been this month in a sermon series entitled *Freedom-in-Christ: Breaking the Bonds*. And so, this week we arrive at a *Word* that equips us in the breaking of such bonds. This week we turn to the original scriptural source of the well known saying: “The truth will set you free.”

In our last few weeks, we have been reminded *freedom* means honoring each other’s freedom as dearly as our own. We have together proclaimed our commitment to relieving the impediments to freedom such as the burdens of anxiety and debt. But we have yet to look within ourselves and consider what might be the bindings which keep our own hearts and souls - ‘all stoved up!’

So this week we ask ourselves: where are the places within us which yearn to be remade by Christ’s Word? Where are those places we keep the pain of loss or the heartache of estrangement or the yearning of addiction or need of compulsion? Where are the emotional bonds which hold onto to fear or anger or resentment or disdain to our spiritual detriment? Where does the guilt tie us up, or the shame weigh us down, or the terror of being suddenly revealed restrict us from any experience of real *freedom* - to accept grace and pursue joy and explore love and grow deeper in faith?

Freedom is ultimately a *promise* of the Spirit. We might have more civic notions of what freedom is, a right to liberty, but this is not the freedom we are considering - not the freedom of which Jesus speaks. To be Free-in-Christ is to know God intimately and completely and more fully with each step taken on the path that Jesus has taught. True freedom is a realization of the pervasive Holy which surrounds us. Freedom is a gift of the Spirit, but one which we must keep accepting moment to moment. From one thought to the next, from one relationship to the next, from one prayer to the next. Always asking ourselves, how is God working in my life now? and now? and now?

God is so near that each decision we make is a choice to move towards God’s calling or away from it. Every moment. Every consideration. Every word spoken. Every emotion felt. Every person we meet. Moving with the current of God’s love, or resisting that current’s natural direction.

Jesus, in his day at least, represented a new paradigm of faith - a new way of experiencing life. One in which God becomes so near, so close with us, that we cannot but be awash in the Holy. Surrounded in Spirit which yearns to lead us - if we will have ears to hear. *That* is the gospel.

The presence of God in our midst. The Spirit of God in Christ, always accompanying us on our journey. This is the *Truth* of which Jesus speaks. It metaphysical. Its spiritual. Its biblical. Its transformational. It's real, thank God. It's the *Truth* we all can share as followers of Jesus. God is near and within and among us and at-hand, and when that knowing - that submission to the presence of the Holy - is the lens with which we see the whole rest of our lives - *then* we will know *Freedom*.

Jesus says anyone who *sins* is a *slave* to sin. That is to say, whenever we act against the will of the Spirit we are choosing darkness. Whenever we embrace a lie, we are submitting to a false reality. Whenever we give over authority to some worldly power, we are offering our worship to an idol.

If you listen carefully to this text, you will hear the implication that almost everyone is living as if we hold some false authority over our lives. That we are in charge. That the better we are, the better it will be. That we earn every bit of our fortunes. This is a *sin* of perspective.

Instead of realizing everything we have and love and enjoy is a blessing from God, we somehow claim the credit. We all sin in this way, a false sense of sovereign control over our own lives. But when we are subject to God's will and blessing, the very world around us begins to reflect the glory of the presence of God.

The road of blessing is the path God is leading you down. All other paths forward are into the darkness of a future without hope. God lives ahead of us, in the light, luring us into the future that is of our highest blessing, our greatest hope - a future that is recalibrated by grace from moment to moment.

The truth that you are God's own precious creation, *that Truth, that Word of the Lord, that spiritual reality, that metaphysical assertion, that powerful testament of witness - that FAITH...* is the kind of Truth that *will* set you free. Free from the burden of perfection, and humbly open to the Spirit of God calling you towards glory.

Give up the need to be your own hero, because Jesus already was.

May the *Word* on our heart calibrate our journeying towards you, O Lord. Amen.

Will you join me in prayer?

O Holy and merciful God, we ask this day - your sacred day of worship - that you might be at work in our communities. Many of us are faced with clean up and rebuilding in the wake of a mighty lightning storm. Be a sense of peace and calming as order is restored. Encourage your people to reach out if help is needed, and to respond if called upon to lend a hand of support. May we each have the opportunity this week to be reflections of your presence in our midst. And, may all God's children be well and have what they need. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.