

I.N.I.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 1, 2012

John 8:31-36

In Christ Jesus, who came to set all people free, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Truth, Freedom, Liberty. That is what the 4th of July is all about. The celebration of our freedom, our liberty. This year we are celebrating 236 years of freedom.

How often do we think about and really appreciate the freedoms that we enjoy? Our freedom is a most precious gift. Hundreds of thousands have died for this freedom to be possible. Not only for our American freedom, but countless millions have died to secure freedom all over the world in many other nations. Since the beginning of time man has desired and has been determined to be free. Patrick Henry thought so much of freedom that he was moved to bravely declare, **“IS LIFE SO DEAR OR PEACE SO SWEET, AS TO BE PURCHASED AT THE PRICE OF CHAINS AND SLAVERY? FORBID IT, ALMIGHTY GOD! I KNOW NOT WHAT COURSE OTHERS MAY TAKE, BUT AS FOR ME, GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH.”**

Millions of people have fought and struggled so that we may be able to exercise that freedom that we so richly enjoy. We are free to live where we want, travel where we desire, work at whatever job we are able to do, free to vote, free to speak, free to write, and most importantly free to worship as we choose. Yes, we in America have been so greatly blessed by our God. We are a free nation, and for that freedom we should indeed thank and praise our God.

But there is a far **GREATER FREEDOM** that we enjoy and that we are speaking about in our text this morning. The **FREEDOM** that comes only from Jesus Christ. A Frenchman Jacques Rousseau, unknowingly never spoke truer words when he said this about freedom and mankind, **MAN IS BORN FREE AND EVERYWHERE HE IS IN CHAINS.** He may have been talking about physical bondage and slavery, but these words aptly apply to natural man. Everyone of us is conceived and born in sin. We may be born physically free, but we are spiritual slaves, in spiritual chains and bondage to sin and Satan.

In our text Jesus is talking about this **GREATER FREEDOM** that all people need. Freedom that **COMES THROUGH THE WORD.** We read vs. 31-32 **THEN JESUS SAID TO THOSE JEWS WHO BELIEVED HIM, IF YOU ABIDE IN MY WORD, YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES INDEED. AND YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.**

What shapes the intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual philosophies of most people today? The MEDIA: news, television, movies, songs, magazines, books--these are the things which we absorb everyday. They promote the culture which produces them and our culture is humanism, i.e. man is the measure of all things, man determines one's philosophy of life. All real learning and knowledge must come from man. This is the culture that preaches evolution as **FACT** and creation as **FOOLISHNESS**---the culture that proclaims immorality is one's right and morality is imposing one's rights on someone else.

A multitude of human-based values have become the overriding influence in the lives of many today. A recent study of high school seniors shows that most young people do not feel that if they marry they will remain married for a lifetime. One reporter said that many of the young people he interviewed have never seen or known anyone with a happy marriage in their life's experiences. They have no good example to follow. Couples living together outside of marriage in 1960 was

430,000. Today it is 6 million. One person said that people aren't as willing to share what they have with someone else. They don't want the lifelong commitment.

40% of all babies born are born to unmarried women. Almost 60% of the young girls interviewed said that having a baby out of wedlock was a very acceptable lifestyle. Others said that living together without marriage was far better.

How important it is for us that the **WORD OF GOD** alone remains the basis of our faith and life. Jesus said, **IF YOU ABIDE IN MY WORD...** Abiding in Jesus' Word means that we will "**HEAR, READ, MARK, LEARN AND INWARDLY DIGEST**" the Word of God on a regular, yes, daily basis. There is a very real danger that Christians today hold more to the values of our culture as expressed through the media and worldly philosophy than to God's Word. That is because they daily hear or read the media blaring at them, but they do not daily continue in the Word. New believers can fall away unless they become grounded in the Word. Those of us who have watched new converts and young confirmands gradually stray away from the Lord and His Word back into the world and its morals are painfully aware of that possibility. It can happen also to lifelong Christians if they do not **ABIDE IN JESUS' WORD!**

When a "raw recruit" becomes so fixed in the Word of God that it becomes a way of life for him, then he is really a disciple of Jesus. Then God's Word becomes the governing force of his life. When Jesus' Word is in our hearts, then Jesus is in our hearts. The written Word always points us to the Living Word. Through faith, Jesus lives in us and we live in Him. That is true discipleship. It is a relationship in which we live each day conscious of our Lord in our actions, thoughts and words.

When we know His Word, we know the **TRUTH!** And it is this **TRUTH of God's Word** that gives us the **GREATER FREEDOM!** Jesus, although He does not clearly say it, is referring to the freedom from the power of sin. Freedom is not being able to do whatever we want to do. That is, in fact, slavery---slavery to our sinful natures and the sin that infects us. Real freedom means that we are now able to do what God wants us to do and what we want to do it as Christians. We are now free to live our lives as God intends. Sin no longer dominates us. Now, empowered by the **TRUTH of the Gospel**, the Good News of Jesus' great sacrificial love for us, His death and resurrection, we live our lives for God. Paul wrote in II Cor. 5:14-15 **FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS (COMPELS) US, BECAUSE WE JUDGE THUS: THAT IF ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEN ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THOSE WHO LIVE SHOULD NO LONGER LIVE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM AND ROSE AGAIN.** Now that is **TRUTH!**

We read vs. 33-36 **THEY ANSWERED HIM, "WE ARE ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANTS, AND HAVE NEVER BEEN IN BONDAGE TO ANYONE. HOW CAN YOU SAY, YOU WILL BE MADE FREE'?" JESUS ANSWERED THEM, MOST ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU, WHOEVER COMMITS SIN IS A SLAVE TO SIN. AND A SLAVE DOES NOT ABIDE IN THE HOUSE FOREVER, BUT A SON ABIDES FOREVER. THEREFORE IF THE SON MAKES YOU FREE, YOU SHALL BE FREE INDEED.**

Unfortunately the Jews to whom Jesus was speaking objected. "Slaves! Us? How can you say that? How dare you say that!"

They appealed to the fact that they are Abraham's descendants. Their argument is something like this: "We are in a unique religious standing. We know the one true God. We already have the truth. We are heirs of the covenant of Abraham. Children of Abraham are not slaves, but sons of God! The heathen are the ones in bondage. They serve idols and are ignorant of the truth."

To this Jesus replies, **MOST ASSUREDLY, I SAY TO YOU...** Jesus is claiming divine authority with these words. "I am telling you the truth." And the truth is, **WHOEVER COMMITS**

**SIN IS A SLAVE OF SIN.** Jesus is speaking of all of us. We are all enslaved in sin from the moment of conception. Our original sin condemns us all. Sin is not just doing wrong deeds, but a wrong condition of the heart. Man disobeys God because his heart is evil by nature, it is an evil that envelopes him, that enslaves him. By nature he can do nothing else.

The church father Augustine once said that of all the slavery's that exist, slavery to sin is the worst because we take it with us wherever we go.

What a condemnatory statement from the lips of our Savior. **WHOEVER COMMITS SIN IS A SLAVE OF SIN.** It is a statement made to lead us to acknowledge our sins so that we despair of ourselves and then gladly listen to His Gospel truth that in Him and in Him alone we are set free.

We read again vs. 36 **THEREFORE IF THE SON MAKES YOU FREE, YOU SHALL BE FREE INDEED.** If Jesus frees us, we are really free, free from the power and slavery of sin, free from Satan's control, free from the guilt of our sins and from the fear of death and hell, free to serve God as His loving children.

This freedom is not just for Americans, it is for all people. It is a freedom far **GREATER** than the one we enjoy as citizens of the U.S.A. This freedom comes from the truth of God's Word. The truth that again tells us that we are all miserable lost condemned sinners by nature. We deserve nothing but damnation in hell, but God so loved us sinners that He sent His only begotten Son to take our place, to live the life we could not and die the death we deserved. The truth that declares that Jesus rose again from the dead and gives us the resurrection power to live for him and conquer sin's temptations through our risen Lord and Savior living in us. All this freedom is ours through faith in the truth, faith in Jesus' word and clinging to Christ, abiding in Christ.

Today many people speak about freedom, many cry out for freedom: freedom from political oppression; freedom from racism; freedom of sexual equality; freedom of self-expression; freedom to choose their own sexual lifestyle; freedom to print or produce pornography; freedom to have abortions. Some of these freedoms may be worthwhile goals, while others are merely a license to sin, freedom to do what mankind wants no matter what God says, which in reality is slavery to sin.

We have learned; Jesus has clearly told us, that **REAL FREEDOM COMES FROM HIM.**

Amen.