

I.N.I.

20th Sunday after Pentecost
October 14, 2012
Isaiah 58:13-14

In Christ Jesus, who has both freed us from the curse of the law and freed us to delight in Him,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Early in my ministry—in the 70's and 80's---in my confirmation classes, I would use the example of the Berlin Wall to picture the division between us sinners and our holy God. One day there was free access between East and West Berlin and then suddenly a wall was built to separate the two. Families were cut off from each other, workers couldn't get to their jobs, friends were separated.

So also Adam and Eve once walked and talked with God. There was a perfect relationship, until suddenly one day they sinned and a wall was put between the righteous, holy God and sinful human beings. They were separated, cut off from God.

Then in 1989 the Berlin wall was torn down. I remember sitting at home watching the news as people from East Berlin, with tears streaming down their faces overcome with emotion, walked peacefully and joyfully through that barrier that had stood for 28 years and that cost the lives of some 70 people who tried to dig under it, scale over it or ram through it over the years. What a profound effect this new freedom had on the people.

What a great picture! One could see the similarity in the freedom of the East Berliners with the freedom we as Christians have. A wall separated the east from the west. The wall of sin had separated us from God. The people lived under the bondage of communism, in slavery to the government. We too lived under the bondage of sin, in slavery to Satan.

When the wall was torn down the people were not only free from the slavery of their past they were free to enjoy the blessings of the present; free to delight in the blessings of deliverance, free to walk and travel where they could not just a day earlier, free to do things they were forbidden to do.

So also the freedom we have in Christ has not only set us free from the curse of the law and the slavery of sin in the past, but it has set us free to delight in the liberty of the Gospel; free to enjoy the blessings of the present, to delight in the blessings of our deliverance.

I don't use that example much anymore since many of our young confirmands don't know about the Berlin Wall. It is ancient history to them. That happened 23 years ago.

But as I was studying for this morning's sermon, that example and picture came back to mind. And so our theme this morning is:

CHRIST HAS FREED US TO DELIGHT IN HIM!

These words of Isaiah of course were first written for the people of his day. Before, during and after their captivity there were Sabbath abuses. The prophet Jeremiah reports of abuses in his day when the people refused to obey the LORD and looked upon the Sabbath just like any other day. Other abuses were listed in the verses just prior to our text where the LORD through Isaiah condemned the people for their hypocrisy. They were simply going through the motions of fasting and praying and Sabbath worship but it was not from the heart.

Their motives were completely wrong. There was no love in their hearts either for God or for their fellow man. In our text the LORD says the people were **DOING AS THEY PLEASED, GOING THEIR OWN WAY AND SPEAKING THEIR OWN WORDS.**

Love for the LORD involves a commitment to obey His Words. The people were doing just the opposite. They were doing what they wanted, they were following their own desires and listening to no one but themselves. But the Sabbath Day was the LORD'S Day, not theirs. They had no right to change it to fit their whims and desires.

So the LORD came to His rebellious people and said in essence: **Don't trample all over My Sabbath. Instead call it your delight, honor this special holy day of Mine by doing what I command, obeying what I decree, following what I say. THEN YOU WILL DELIGHT IN ME AND I WILL CAUSE YOU TO RIDE ON THE HIGH HILLS OF THE EARTH AND FEED YOU WITH THE HERITAGE OF JACOB YOUR FATHER.** Here God is not only promising them the physical blessings of living in the promised land but also the spiritual heritage of the

Gospel promise given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

What had God said to Abraham: **IN YOU SHALL ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED.** Why? Because from Abraham and his seed would come the **ONE SEED of the woman** who would crush the serpents head: Jesus. Abraham became the Father of all believers because of his Ancestor, Jesus, the Savior of the world.

And that heritage of Jacob has come to pass. Christ has come, the **SEED OF THE WOMAN, THE OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM.** Jesus came into this world as one of us, a real human being. He allowed Himself to be taken captive so that we would be set free. He died so that we might live forever. In His death and resurrection He led captivity captive, that is, He took up the battle against Satan who held the whole human race in captivity and bondage of sin and defeated him. By His suffering and death on the cross and resurrection from the dead Jesus won the victory that had been foretold in the Garden of Eden. Paul tells us in Col. 2:15 **HAVING DISARMED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, HE (JESUS) MADE A PUBLIC SPECTACLE OF THEM, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM BY THE CROSS.**

Jesus was put to death and damned to pay for our sins, but this imprisonment was only temporary, for He rose from the dead, breaking death's bonds so that we might also rise and live. Jesus suffered hell so that we might enjoy heaven forever.

Contrast the supposed joy found in sin-bondage today with the quiet delight and happiness of the Christian. The world not only promotes sin-bondage as **FREEDOM:** the freedom to choose what **I** want, to do what **I** desire, to say what **I** think; but also promotes sin-bondage as the ultimate in fun. To many people fun and having a good time equals sin. You have to be doing something beyond the accepted norm, something that is shocking or forbidden in order to really enjoy life. You have to do something that the flesh enjoys in order to have real fun. But that lie of Satan, that **sin is fun** quickly leads to a captivity that burdens consciences and lays a heavy load of guilt upon the heart.

The flesh's definition of freedom is the right to be allowed to do whatever one wants: freedom to be indecent, immoral, ungodly, selfish, self-centered. Freedom to have sexual relations with whomever, freedom to live together outside of the bond of marriage, freedom to get drunk, to gamble, to take drugs, to curse and swear, to abort their babies, and the list goes on and on.

But the real freedom that Christ gives is the freedom **FROM** guilt, freedom **FROM** sin and its curse of death and hell, not the freedom to sin. In Christ we have the freedom **FROM** a burdened conscience, freedom **FROM** the law's demands and a freedom **TO DELIGHT IN THE LORD.** A freedom to serve the Lord with our whole heart, body and soul.

How do we today honor the Sabbath, the Lord's Day? It is not any longer by not working on a certain day. It is not by going through the motions of worship and praise. It certainly is not by going our own way and doing our own thing. It is not by speaking and listening to our own words. But it is by listening to, believing in and living according to His Word day by day.

Humanism declares that we are answerable to no one but ourselves, we are free to do what we want and no one has the right to impose any other standards upon us. But God's freedom declares that we in Christ have been set free from the world's teaching and philosophy and find our pleasure, joy, our delight and true freedom in Him and in His Word.

Do we call coming to hear God's Word a **DELIGHT?** Is our **REST** in Christ and His Word something which we long for, desire, eagerly look forward to? Is it the best time of the day and week when we spend time with our Lord in His Word at home or at church?

Or is it an hour or a time to be endured, bored with and suffered through? Do we as Christians gladly hear and learn God's Word and not despise it being preached? When we realize what it cost Jesus to give us freedom; when we realize all that Jesus had to do in order to tear down that wall of sin that separated us from our Father; when we are truly led to appreciate Jesus' sacrifice for us then we **WILL BE LED TO DELIGHT OURSELVES IN HIM AND CALL HIS WORD OUR DELIGHT AND JOY!**

Then in Christ we will have the assurance of riding on the high hills and receiving the inheritance of Jacob. That means being children of God and heirs of eternal life. Surely the Gospel lifts us up above the mundane daily existence of a life without meaning or purpose; raises us up above the simple routine of eating, sleeping, going to work, recreation and then doing it all over again day after day. The Good News of our salvation through Jesus gives purpose and joy to our worship and to our

lives by leading us to put our confidence and trust alone in Christ who assures us that we have been created for Him, created to bring forth good works to the glory of His name. The Apostle Paul put it this way, that we have been **SET FREE IN ORDER TO BECOME SLAVES FOR CHRIST**. We have been freed from the slavery of sin which leads to death to become willing slaves to Jesus which leads to righteousness.

In a few moments we will be given a most blessed opportunity to show our delight in the Lord by giving of our offerings to our Savior. Giving of the gifts that God has already given to us through our work and employment. The opportunity is great and the need is great.

Why should we give? Because we have to? Not at all! But because of Christ's great giving for us. He gave everything He had for us. He gave Himself into death and hell for us. His love is immeasurable. His love will move us to love and thanksgiving so that we will, in return, give of our love to Him in our offerings.

It is because we want to!

You Voters have the opportunity to serve your Lord in our Voter's meeting and as church officers. Yesterday we had the blessed opportunity to serve the Lord willingly in our fall cleanup day. We have the blessed opportunity to serve our Lord by singing in the choir, attending Hannah's Helping Hands, coming to our Wednesday evening Bible class, praising God in our special upcoming joint Reformation Service, individually telling others of our freedom in Christ, inviting friends and neighbors to our Creation Study and that is just the beginning.

Every one of us, **men, women and children** have been set free by Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, set free from sin, death, Satan and a deserved hell to **DELIGHT** in the Lord. May the Holy Spirit lead us to show our delight, our joy, our peace, our freedom in the Lord in our everyday life of service to Him in His Kingdom wherever we are and in whatever way we can.

Amen.