**John 8:31-36**

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, **32** and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” **33** They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?” **34** Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. **35**  The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

**“The Truth Sets Free”**

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for, “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Amen. As much as we wonder about our times, God has seen fit for us to be in them. One remarkable blessing then is how this Sunday begins a yearlong countdown toward celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017. Oct. 31st, 1517 marked that event where Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses and unknowingly struck a chord centered on the Gospel. The message alone from Scripture is that God does save by grace alone through faith alone and it is all because of Jesus. This freedom once buried under the works of man was to see again that before God we are free by His work for us.

Of course, with any anniversary we can expect plenty of hype. Prices for traveling to Germany will rise, because even a secular culture in Europe knows the heritage of Martin Luther is good for business. Likewise, people will have plenty of questions ranging from, “What is the big deal about the Reformation?” to also, “Does what Luther teach even matter for us today?” Finally, there will be all kinds of claims about freedom of the individual, the rejection of traditions and institutional church, and how Luther only started what other reformers later finished. So we note, celebrating the Reformation makes no one free, nostalgia never lasts, but this does. Jesus is the truth and His Word still sets us free.

1. **What opposes the Word of truth is error that enslaves to sin.**
2. The Jews that had believed in Jesus became offended at His Word saying, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

* They considered commitment to the Law’s demands a sufficient freedom.
* Yet, such “soundness” to the law made them into liars. (Relation to Abraham and to Roman occupation.)
* Jesus took slavery to the fullest depth, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.”

1. Those at the time of Luther were to have solace more than in the Law, but the authority of Rome.

* This commitment to pope, councils, and tradition offered a kind of freedom.
* Yet, no authority of man could silence what Luther heard God saying, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it” (James 2:10).
* This slavery was a darkness of judgment worse than a bad feeling, but the depths of hell itself and where God has no mercy to sinners.

1. Today in our time, the error that enslaves is to the self.

* It is a commitment less than the Law to those things pleasing to my standards.
* It is a corrupt authority worse than what Luther faced, but where I create my own peace with God.
* Freedom to self finds offense that, “everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.” You sin, you are a slave. Who can escape this master?

1. **What the Word offers is the truth that Jesus freely is our Savior**.
2. God always knew the Law was a curse to Israel so Jesus says, “The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

* Being free was to see that the Scriptures were centered on God’s faithfulness to sinners more than a checklist.
* Being free was to trust that the Gospel rests only on Jesus earning freedom by His perfect life and sacrifice that slaves could never achieve.
* Being free was to be a true offspring of Abraham where baptism promised, “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”

1. For Luther the authority of God and His Word did not fail to deliver Christ to sinners.

* In the midst of personal conflict and the mess of works righteous, the Scripture proved God kept salvation centered on forgiveness in His Son.
* Rather than fiddling with suppressive powers of man, it was to go to Christ for His authority stands over sin, death, and the Devil.
* As Luther states, “For anything that is not God’s Son will not make me free. This is what we must preach again and again, in the hope that one day it will find acceptance through the grace of God.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. Today where the self takes center stage, freedom means to repent and believe in Jesus.

* His standard is the cross showing a commitment to love you beyond the Law and what sinners cannot ever make for ourselves.
* The authority of Christ rescues you from your own self-made slavery to be served with the peace of God given by His Word and Sacrament.
* Our Lutheran Fathers shows God’s freedom is alone in Christ, “…It means a faith that believes, not merely the history, but also the effect of the history. In other words, it believes this article: the forgiveness of sin.” (Concordia 43).

1. **What we have from the Word is freedom to live in Christ and for others.**
2. To abide in the Word sustains true disciples.

* Freed from sin is now to breathe-in God’s faithfulness.
* Not merely over what is good, but how Jesus goes with us.

1. To abide in the Word promises we are sons and daughters of a true household.

* Jesus slams no door in our face saying, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).
* Dying with Christ by baptism freed us from death so His kingdom is not for slaves, but saints.

1. To abide in the Word treasures the truth to be true.

* Nothing will silence this victory that stands how, “God disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Christ” (Col 2:15).
* Freed from despair by the Devil, we dare to believe, teach, and confess the truth failures are fit for salvation in Jesus.

The Reformation is more than historical marker or about a celebrity figure 500 years ago. It is how the Word of God interacts with our lives today for Jesus addresses our hearts to give us faith in Him. This freedom is beyond our modern views of what it means to be free, because God does it all for you. We are so much concerned about becoming slaves to something today, when Christ has broken the power of slavery at the deepest level for sinners. Here the promise that abides in His Word, “if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” Jesus is the truth and His Word still sets us free. Amen. Now the peace of Christ, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. Luther, M. (1999, c1959). *Vol. 23*: *Luther's works, vol. 23 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Jn 8:39). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)