

The title for today's message is: **"True Freedom"**

Jesus said: ***So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen

Since this is reformation Sunday, the Sunday we celebrate the reforms of the church and honor the life of Martin Luther.

I think it is appropriate that I begin my sermon this morning with a quote from Luther.

Luther says in his little book, *"Christian Liberty" the following: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.*

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Here Luther is saying we are free and at the same time we are slaves.

Okay you may ask, how can that be? Well, maybe the following story might help shed some light on this confusing subject.. "

there was a pastor who was riding with a coachman one day turned and asked the coachman "Friend, if your team were running away with you.

After you had done your best to stop them what would you do if you suddenly learned that a person sitting beside you knew exactly how to control your team and save you from disaster!.

"The coachman replied, "I'd instantly hand over the reins to him!!" Then replied the pastor.

"Why haven't you handed over the reins of your life to Christ, since he is the one who can save you' from eternal disaster."

This is what Martin Luther is saying. Yes, we are free because of the freedom we have in Christ Jesus.

Yet, at the same time we are slaves, slaves to Christ Jesus and to the people we serve in Christ's name.

In our gospel lesson this morning Jesus is talking about this same subject. He says we are slaves to sin, but at the same time he is telling us we can be free in and through him.

Luther's famous saying that "*we are saint and sinner at the same time*" comes to mind here.

We are saints, believers in Christ because of Christ's action in our lives through Baptism.

But at the same time we are sinners, never having fully arrived at our sainthood until we come into the glorious presence of Christ at the gates of heaven.

Our lives are an ongoing process of becoming what Christ wants us to be. He is constantly molding, shaping, forming, developing, guiding us so that we can be free in Him to serve Him and our neighbor.

So there is a paradox to the Christian life. We are free in Christ to become what God truly created us for, in His image.

But at the same time we are slaves to sin, because that nature is always with us until through Christ, at the gates of heaven it is finally removed.

Paul says in Romans chapter 7 "***For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me.***"

Look, some people don't realize the state of sin they are in, because everything seems to be going so good in their lives.

They don't see their need for Christ because they feel they are really handling their own salvation quite well by themselves.

But the apostle Paul said; ***it is only through Christ Jesus that we can be free from sin death and the power of the devil.***

And Martin Luther said; *not my work but the work of Christ in me that sets me free.*

Jesus said in our gospel lesson, ***'So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.'***

As we continue to surrender our sinful selves to Christ, we will become free in Him to live the kind of life he has called us to live.

There is that daily surrender, that daily drowning of our sinful self in the waters of our baptism and then letting Christ raise us as a new and cleansed person.

There is for us, a conscious decision of asking for Christ to drown our sins daily and raise us up anew.

You and I can and should participate in this figurative daily baptism. Because we are born again each and every day in Christ Jesus.

Look, we have an active part to play in that process. We need' to bring and surrender our sins to Christ, it's our sins that separate us from Christ and from those around us.

But it seems to me we Lutherans have not taken as seriously this part of our understanding of Baptism.

We simply don't see the daily consequence of Baptism for our pilgrimage on this earth.

It is not an act with no consequence for the future, yes it is an act that happens only once, but we live in the consequence of it each day.

Each day we surrender our sins to Christ, He grabs us, pushing us down into the water of our Baptism, cleansing us, and rising us to a new life so that we might serve Him and our neighbors.

We must surrender to Him daily. We must acknowledge our sinful self daily. Yet, a lot of us like to straddle the fence on this surrendering stuff.

We don't really see that daily we need to do this, or we don't like to admit to ourselves that we are really sinners in daily need of Christ's forgiveness.

So we are like a little boy who wanted to ride a horse' but seeing that the horse was bigger close up than he thought, he decided to proceed cautiously.

He climbed a wooden fence where the horse was standing and mounted him from there.

With one foot on the left side of the top fence rail, he threw the other leg over the horse who was on the right side.

Immediately the horse began to walk slowly away from the fence. The boy hadn't planned on that and he needed to make a hasty decision.

He said he wanted to both ride the horse, and to hold on to the security of the fence at the same time.

Needless to say, after his legs had stretched as far as they would go, he fell face down on the ground."

We like to straddle the fence of admitting to ourselves that daily we need to return to the waters of our Baptism and drown our sinful self and allow Christ to raise us up anew.

Yes, there is freedom in Christ, but at the same time, a struggle to remain captive by Christ.

True freedom in life only comes when we are captive by Christ, when we are as Luther said, "*A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.*"

Subject to all, subject to Christ, and subject to our neighbors. There is freedom and life in our willingness to be captive by Christ and in Christ.

We have a freedom to live, a freedom to risk, a freedom to be, and use all the potential God has created in us.

So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.