

John 8:31-36

Reformation; November 2 & 3, 2014

In Christ Alone, We Are Set Free!

A man was flying from Seattle to San Francisco and the plane had layover in Sacramento. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft, the plane would re-board in one hour. Everybody got off the plane except one gentleman. Another man had noticed him as he walked by and could tell the gentleman was blind because his Seeing Eye dog lay quietly underneath the seats in front of him throughout the entire flight.

He could also tell that he had flown this very flight before because the pilot approached him, and calling him by name, said, "Keith, we're in Sacramento for an hour, would you like to get off and stretch your legs?" The blind man replied, "No thanks, but maybe my dog would like to stretch his legs." Now picture this: All the people in the gate area came to a complete standstill when they looked up and saw the pilot walk off the plane with a Seeing Eye dog! The pilot was even wearing sunglasses. People scattered. They not only tried to change planes, but they were trying to change airlines! Things are not as they always seem to be.

Look around you here this morning. What do you see? I see people wearing nice clothes. I see people who are kind and gentle. I see families. I see people both young and old. I see newer faces. I see faces that I have known a long time. But what happens if we peel back on our layers? If we were able to look at what is inside of each of us, what would we see? What would we find deep down in our hearts? We would find a whole bunch of ugly sin. Things are not as they always seem to be. That sin makes us slaves to sin. There is only one way that we will be set free. It is found: **"In Christ Alone!"**

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?'" The Jews to whom Jesus was talking did not think of themselves as being slaves. Yes, they were under the political rule of the Romans, but they still had their promises from God. After all, God had assured them that they were his **chosen people**. They trusted their heritage to save them.

That "heritage" wasn't going to save them any more than someone just attaching a name like "Lutheran" to them. It doesn't matter how long we have been members of this congregation, without Christ, we are still slaves to sin. We may think that we are free, but without Christ, we are not. These Jews didn't see it. Satan is good at getting us not to see that we are slaves to sin. He wants us to think that we can have real freedom outside of God.

The shackles of sin have always been disguised as freedom. Adam and Eve were convinced to rebel against God in the Garden of Eden so that they could be free. The children of Israel were convinced that they didn't need God to lead them anymore. All they needed was a king! When that didn't work out so well, they were taken captive. All they needed was to return back to their homeland. Then everything would be okay. When they do, they are still slaves to sin. They tried to kill God's prophets. They followed other gods. Satan is really good at convincing human beings that we can be free from the slavery of sin by ourselves. It doesn't work. It will never work.

"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.'" It is like a convict who escapes from a prison and runs free. He may feel free for a short time, but he will always be trapped in the paranoia of constantly looking over his shoulder, constantly on the run, constantly avoiding people he might know. He is not in control. He hasn't chosen his own freedom. He will never be free unless someone in authority declares him free. Only when he has been pardoned, is he really free. The Truth is that we cannot free ourselves.

Two thousand years ago, Pilate asked Jesus: **"What is truth?"** Perhaps, that is a question that is being asked by many today. *What is truth?* Perhaps, that is the question we need to ask ourselves. In my mind, I still feel like a twenty year old kid. The truth is, I'm not. In my mind, I look the same that I did 20 years ago. Maybe, from the back, but not the front. I want to think of myself as being relatively tech savvy. 15 years ago, that may have been the truth, but not always today. Our minds like to distort and twist the truth to fit our needs. Our perceptions may seem like reality to us, but they really

are not true. If we think that our sins can be forgiven outside of Christ, we are so far from the truth. If we think that we can be good enough to get into heaven by what we do, we are so wrong.

Jesus says that there is only one way to be freed from the guilt and power of sin. **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** Take all that guilt that eats you up and weighs you down, and carry it to the cross. It is there that Jesus that your sins are paid in full. The punishment for sin is finished. That is the truth that truly sets us free.

A woman once was asked: *"Suppose you were standing at the gates of heaven and God said, 'Why should I let you into heaven? And you said, 'Because I've been a good wife and mother. I'm not a bad person. What do you think God would say?' She replied, 'He would say, 'Go away, you're not good enough for heaven?' She was then asked: 'What would you do then?' 'I would hide behind Jesus, so that God wouldn't see me. He would only see Jesus.'"* The only way to be set free is in Christ alone.

Look around here this morning. What do you see? I see sinner who have been set free in Christ Alone. May all of us take comfort in Jesus' words: **"So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."** Amen.