

John 8:31-36

Reformation; October 31 & November 1, 2021

"You will not surely die." It's been thousands of years since the devil spoke those words in Eden. He lied to Adam and Eve and convinced them that God was somehow holding out on them, restricting them. He told them that if they disobeyed God and ate the fruit he told them not to, then they would be happy; then they would be free. Ever since that time, the Devil has continued to speak those words. Sometimes he shouts it. Sometimes he whispers it. Yet, the result is the same. The lie is the same: **"For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** *"You don't need God because God is not telling you the truth."*

Through all his lies, his purpose is the same: He wants to rip out from our hearts God's message of Grace. He wants us to think that we must do something more to earn our salvation; he tries to convince us that the promise that Jesus gives us in our text this morning is not truth. **"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

Today the Lutheran Church across the world celebrates the festival of the Reformation. Even though we remember how God used a man named, Martin Luther, in the early 1500's to bring God's truth back to the Church, the Lutheran Reformation is really about Grace. That message of grace had been lost. Satan had once again convinced people of that lie he used in the Garden of Eden: *"You will not surely die. God is not telling you the truth."* The Devil thought he could erase that message of Grace from people's hearts. Yet, God would not let that happen. He wanted this message that Jesus spoke in our text, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** Satan can stomp and scream as loud as he wants, but he cannot take away the Grace that God the Father showed upon this world in sending his Son to pay for sin with his very own life.

God's Word is true. Right after sin entered into the world in the Garden of Eden, God promised to send a Savior to fix it – and that was true. God made more promises. The Savior would live for us. He would die for us. Yet, he would not see decay. He promised he would pay our punishment. He would take on our sin and guilt. And it's all true. Because God's Word is true, I can trust it when it promises: **"the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7). You are pure and forgiven in Jesus.

Yet that does not stop the Devil from trying to convince us that that this truth is not true. 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. Sin has always enslaved people.

So, what's the escape plan? How do we pull a Harry Houdini and escape these chains? How do we get freedom? You've heard the old saying, *"It's not so much what you know, but whom you know."* The key to freedom is knowing the One who holds the key to release your chains. That one person, that key person, is Jesus. As the Son of God, he has established eternal residency in heaven. He holds in his hands the keys to eternal life. **"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."**

This teaching of Jesus is the key that Jesus uses to unlock the shackles of sin. This teaching shows a Jesus who didn't hand us a checklist of dos and don'ts so that we could live a perfect life free from sin, but a Jesus who did all the dos and don'ts and lived a perfect life for us. This teaching shows us a Jesus who didn't just feel sorry for us when he saw us

getting beaten and whipped by our slave master, sin, but a Jesus who stepped in and took the beating for us. This teaching shows a Jesus who didn't get knocked out by sin when he stepped in our place, but a Jesus who stormed back from the grave. This teaching, which tells us the truth of Jesus, sets us free.

The Psalmist describes what this truth gives us. **"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us"** (Psalm 103:12). You have been set free and are part of God's family. That's freedom. You are members of God's family. And there's no qualifiers or adjectives added to being a Christian. You are sons and daughters of God. And he sees you as that – purified in Jesus.

So you have been set free. Set free to serve. The Apostle Paul once said: **"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery"** (Galatians 5:1). To the world, a life of serving Jesus is not freedom. But you have seen differently. Forgiven by Jesus, you are now free to choose to serve Jesus. You are free to say no to sin and yes to Jesus. You are free to live with him forever. When the Son says to you, **"You will not die,"** he tells you the truth. Amen.