

They are free whom the Son declares Free.

John 8:31-36

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John 8:31-36 ³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* you say, 'You will be made free'?" ³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

If you continue in my word . . .

We often translate this as "if you abide (or live) in my word." It could also be translated, "if you continue in my word." This is what the original King James has here.

Jesus is speaking to "those Jews who [had so far] believed in Him." He encourages them to continue in faith. So far it has

been an easy thing to follow Jesus, but it is about to become much harder. As you began, so continue, don't give up now.

It doesn't do any good to start something if you don't continue. It doesn't do any good to plant a field if you don't weed and harvest it. It doesn't do any good to start a diet if you give up on it. So also, Jesus encourages, not to give up on the path you have started, but rather to continue in the word which you have received.

Matthew 24:13 But he who endures (continues) to the end shall be saved.

There are many who think that they have made a good start and that is enough. They were baptized. They went to Sunday School. They finished confirmation class. What good does it do to go to SS and confirmation class, to learn the commandments and bible stories, if you then set them aside? There are plenty of people who know God's word. Jesus says don't just know my word but continue in it.

James 1:22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only

Jesus says it is good that you started but now continue.

You will know the truth

What reward does Jesus offer for continuing in his word? Only the truth. There are many like Pilate who scoff at the idea of the truth. To others like the people of Athens the truth may seem like a very great thing, a thing to be desired. The reality is that no one really wants to hear the truth.

Hearing God's truth is even worse than hearing our own voice. It is not something we like to hear. Our epistle reading next Sunday will remind us that there is no distinction between people. All have sinned.

Romans 3:22-23 For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

God promises us the truth, but that truth is not something we don't like to hear. With reformation approaching we like to tell ourselves that we are different. We are not like those Catholics. We do not worship Mary. We do not buy indulgences. We are Lutherans. God's word tells us, that is good that you don't worship Mary, but don't believe that makes you different. You may have avoided that sin but there are plenty of others that you have fallen into.

"All have sinned."

Before the Law there is no difference. This is the truth which we are led to when we continue in God's word. It is not a truth to which we are apathetic, nor is it a truth that we love. It is a truth which we hate. That is not a very good reward or encouragement to continue in the truth, But thankfully for us it is not the only truth we are led to.

For Jesus continues: **"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."**

Jesus explains this below when he tells us **John 8:36 "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"**

The truth which sets us free is Jesus himself. If you continue in his word you will learn to understand the truth. The truth of the law. The truth of your sin. You will have to listen to your own voice. But also, the truth of Jesus, the truth of his forgiveness, that is the truth that will set you free.

There is no distinction before the Law but there is also no distinction before the grace of God. All are condemned before the Law. You do not win any points over the Catholics or the ELCA. All are saved before the cross of Christ. You just as much as them.

This is the truth that sets you free.

When the Jews hear this, they responded with anger. Remember these are the Jews "who believe in him." We are not talking about his enemies but his disciples. When the disciples hear this, they respond with indignation.

"We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, `You will be made free '?"

Here Jesus is giving them freedom. He is giving them salvation. All they care about is his implication. They are indignant that he would suggest that they don't already have it.

Jesus makes them equal to the gentiles. Jesus makes them equal to the Jews who did not believe. Jesus declares that they just like everyone else are in slavery to sin and need to be set free.

The fact that they don't worship Zeus did not set them free. The fact that they did go to the temple and offer sacrifices to the Lord did not set them free. It is not their works which set them free, but the declaration of the son which sets them free.

John 8:36 "if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed"

Jesus makes you also equal to the Catholics. Jesus makes you equal to the Muslim and the Shiekh and the Hindu. Jesus makes you equal to that annoying person you dislike so much. The fact that you are Lutheran and that you go to church at a Lutheran church does not make free. You are equal in condemnation before the Law, but you are also equally freed from sin by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son has made you free, therefore you are free. Continue steadfast in his word. That word will give you truth: the ugly truth concerning your sin, but also the glorious truth that he has set you free through his proclamation. Amen