

DATE: November 8, 2009

TEXT: John 8: 31-41

TITLE: "John XXIII: Freedom"



This morning we are looking at a difficult topic. We are looking at the topic of freedom.

Freedom is one of those words that we use fairly often but is almost impossible to define. We often describe our country as the "land of the free." But what does that mean? Does it mean we can do anything we want? Of course not... that would be chaos and dangerous.

Frank Sinatra sang the famous song "I Did It My Way." Here are the lyrics

**And Now the end is here, and so I face the final curtain
My friend, I'll say it clear, I'll state my case of which I'm certain
I've lived a life that's full, I've traveled each and every highway
And more, much more than this, I did it my way**

**Regrets, I've had a few, but then again too few to mention
I did what I had to do and saw it through without exemption
I planned each charted course, each careful step along the byway
And more, much more than this, I did it my way**

We may love the song... but look at the life of Frank Sinatra. He may have no regrets but look at his divorced wives, his unhappy children and destroyed friends and we see that he may have done it his way... but it was the wrong way... it was a very sinful, selfish way. And can you imagine standing before the judgement seat of God and saying... "I did it my way."

Freedom is not “doing it my way.” What is freedom. Good news... once again The word of God gives us a definition. I will make 4 lesson of Freedom.

Lesson # 1 Freedom is discovered only in obedience. *John 8: 31-32 states...*

31To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Notice first Jesus is now speaking to who believe him. But Jesus does not than go into a nice comfortable lesson on following him.... no, he immediately launches into a discussion on the struggles of following Him. Jesus says freedom is not doing your own thing... freedom is found in obedience. I grew up in the 60's. It was a decade of revolution. Woodstock. Height Ashberry, Flower Children, War protests, Civil Rights protests, riots, freer morality, experimentation with drugs, The Rolling Stones. But this “revolution” did not last long. Truthfully, it could not. The anarchy would have ripped this country apart... and in many ways we have never recovered from the immorality.

Freedom is not and can not be freedom from authority and purpose. Jesus is saying freedom is the ability to find our purpose and live our purpose. Allow me to use this guitar string

as an example. Now you could use this string for a number of purposes. It could tie things up.

It could be used as a belt. You could hit someone with it. But now of these is its purpose... only

when you get a guitar and stretch it out can you allow this string to be a musical instrument.

Here is good news.... you were created by God for a purpose. Our purpose is to love God.

Our purpose is to be in relationship with God. Our purpose is to worship God. Our purpose is

to obey God. Freedom is discovered in discovering and living our purpose.

Lesson # 2 Freedom is discovered in Truth. Again allow me to read *John 8: 31-32*

31To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

In *John 18:35* we read this dialogue...

37"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

38"What is truth?" Pilate asked.

We know this.... Pilate never discovered the truth. The result of his ignorance was the no moral convictions and the crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus says (*In John 15*)

6Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus is the truth. Jesus is the source of freedom. . Many, many colleges put this saying in their slogan or carve it on stone on their buildings... "The Truth Shall Set you free." But they totally miss the meaning of this text. We are not talking about intellectual assent about truth. We are not talking about "book knowledge." As a matter of fact "book knowledge" can drive us away from the truth. *The New American Commentary* states this...

The meaning here involves knowing Jesus as truth. , who brings transforming sense of freedom to human life. This verse is a statement neither advocating nor disparaging academics. Moreover, it is not a statement advocating attachment to mere information or doctrine about Jesus. It is instead a statement about a living relationship with the Son of God, the "truth" who gives freedom to human beings."

Truth is not knowing about Jesus... it is knowing Jesus

Lesson # 3 Sin leads to slavery and away from freedom. *John 8:33-34 states...*

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?"

34Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.....37I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word.

Understand the context of this teaching. Jesus is teaching on the steps of the Temple. He states that he is the source of freedom... and the listeners take great offense. What do you mean

we are slaves! We are jews... we are free.” Do you understand why this is a very sensitive issue? In reality they were a conquered people. Rome had conquered them. They were not free.

Jesus is saying they are indeed slaves... they are slaves to sin.

Allow me to share with you one of the great lies of Satan. Satan whispers in our ears...

“The pursuit of happiness, which is your right, is your path to joy and freedom.”REPEAT

This is a lie. This is a tragic, tragic lie that has swept over our society and caused great, great misery. Understand this... the pursuit of happiness is the path of selfishness

- It will destroy marriages
- it will destroy child/ parent relationships
- it will destroy any possibility of joy
- it will destroy lives
- it will destroy societies

Nowhere in the bible does it say we are to pursue happiness. Our purpose is to pursue Jesus Christ. The Good news is this. Jesus Christ lives us. Jesus Christ gives to us joy and peace and love. This often brings happiness.... not always... but often.

Jesus is very clear... sin entraps us. Sin always leads to more sin. The # 1 reason for struggles in marriage is selfishness. It is the husband and the wife pursuing their “rights.” Let

me say this... once this path is chosen... it is almost impossible to get of this path. It becomes a pattern... it becomes a habit.

The same is true in parenting. Have you noticed it is easy to establish reactions to our children and when we establish a sinful reaction it is almost impossible to break that habit. If we establish a reaction of anger have you noticed it becomes easier and easier to become angry with our children. It can get to the point that almost every interaction is marked by anger. Sin is destructive and habit-forming.

Freedom is being able to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to avoid and even break these habits of sin. I noticed this in my life. As I have shared a number of times I grew up in a very, very dysfunctional family. My parents fought each other from the time I was 7 or 8 until they finally divorced in my 20's. It was my understanding of interaction. But then I got married. I will tell you it was very, very easy for me to fall into the pattern that I had seen my entire life in my parents. I would take Kim for granted. I would act in a selfish manner. I would yell at her. Praise God for Kim's patience and love. By the power of God I discovered the ability to love

her... as Christ loved the church. To sacrifice for her... to place her emotions and desires above mine. I discovered the power to break my upbringing. By the truth and the power of God. And let me tell you... this is the path of joy. This is the path of peace. This is the path of love. This is the path of freedom.

Here is the amazing truth... freedom is only discovered by surrender. Freedom isn't only discovered by enslavement. Surrender to Christ. Surrender to your spouse. Surrender to your loving parents.

Finally, Lesson # 4 Jesus accepts us, not as slaves, but as sons and daughters. *John 8:35-36*

34Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. **35**Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. **36**So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

When Erin and Adam lived at home they had chores. They would help with the dishes... do some sweeping, mow the lawn and on and on. To be honest upon occasion they failed to do their chores. I must admit, at times I got angry. ... but let me tell you... I never fired them. They were not maids. They were not slaves... they were children. I loved them. When they made mistakes.... I may have punished them... but, of course I never stopped loving them.

Our Lord adopts us as children. If we are honest with ourselves we must admit... at times we are not very good children. Often we chose selfishness. Often we chose disobedience.

Good News! We are children. Jesus loves us. Jesus teaches us. Jesus guides us. We are not slaves... we are free!

Freedom is being a child of God. Freedom is being surrendered to Jesus Christ. Freedom is resting in His love.

The truth has set us free and therefore we are free indeed.

AMEN