Reformation Day
"True Freedom"
John 8:31-32
October 25, 2026
Rev. Ed Weber

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for this Sunday celebrating the Reformation is from our Gospel reading, John 8:.31-32.

**"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."**

So far our text:

Our national anthem closes with the climactic phrases, "land of the free", "home of the brave". As we sing it or hear it, when the World Series begins or at another sporting event, the anthem stirs nationalistic pride in the country that God has graciously bestowed on its citizens. The price of freedom comes with the sacrifices made for the defense of its land from all enemies within and without.

Thanks be to God we do enjoy many freedoms that other countries may not enjoy. We enjoy freedom of religion, free speech, free press, the right to assembly, the right to bear arms… to name a few.

On a personal level, people make it their goal to have financial freedom…strive to be free from debt. Sometimes people say that they want to be free from distractions, free from the clock, free to do what I want to do without someone telling me how to live my life. Freedom to travel…free of obligations…

Yes, there are many types of freedoms that people pursue and value. The Jews with whom Jesus was speaking with were very much believing that they were living a privileged life of freedom because of their earthly descendance from Abraham.

Jesus tells the Jews and all of us, that there is a greater truth that gives true freedom. So Jesus said to them:

**“23 And He said to them, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”**

True freedom comes from above…above this world. True freedom comes from outside of this world that is filled with sin. This truth is believing in Jesus. This truth is believing in Jesus as the Son of God, as your Saviour from sin.

Though we enjoy many temporal earthly freedoms in this life, true freedom is living this life free from the captivity of sin, death and the devil.

There is only One person that can give this freedom, who wants all people to have this freedom, invites all people to have this freedom, have it now in all its fullness… and He is the One who says: **“Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”**

Oh, the Jewish pharisees did not see Jesus as anything more than a man. They believed, and those Jews who still believe that Jesus was no more than a prophet, that their freedom comes from their earthly connection to Abraham.

**“We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”**

Yet, Jesus says very plainly that anyone who sins is a slave of sin.

**“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.”**

And that puts everyone in the world in the same awful predicament. For we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We are born into this world, conceived in sin. And that makes us slaves to sin. We are unable to emancipate ourselves, try as we may.

And people have tried and tried to not die in sin. Martin Luther tried and failed. It didn’t matter how many pilgrimages or good works, or penitence, or floggings or offerings to the church he made. He couldn’t free his conscience from the debt of sin.

We heard this truth in our epistle reading from Romans 3.

**“19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

That Word of truth from God, that Word of the law, is truly humbling. It brought Martin Luther to his knees and it must do so for every person that wants to be set free from sin. The Law brings a person’s heart to repent. Yes, I am truly guilty and can do nothing on my own to set myself free and live eternally in the house of God, not as a slave, but as a child of God!

But the Law is not the only part of God’s truth. It brings us to the most glorious truth – the Gospel!

**“21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”**

There is a righteousness that is from God alone, above this earth, that came to our earth and gave Himself freely to the world so that all who believe in Him have His righteousness that sets one free! It is the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ!

Jesus told the Jews in the verse right before our Gospel text that they would be the ones who would kill Him and that this was God’s plan for the salvation of the world.

**“28 Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.”**

And Jesus death, lifted up on the cross, pleased the Father. It paid for the sins of all people.

**“For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,**

**25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness,**

What must you do to receive this redemption of your soul? What must you pay? And the answer is the Gospel, the Word of Truth. Nothing. You are justified freely by grace through what Jesus did for you and all people on the cross. His propitiation, His sacrifice was enough. More than enough. It makes you righteous through faith in Christ Jesus.

And God gives you this gift of faith through the hearing of His Word, through the sacrament of baptism. Faith alone, grace alone, the Word alone in Christ alone – that gives true freedom from all enemies of sin, death and the devil. The Triune God receives all the credit and glory for His saving work.
**"He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."**

Martin Luther heard this Word of truth that set him free when he read in Romans 1:

**"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."**

And this Word of truth is inviting you also to believe in Jesus. This true freedom is for everyone, Jew and Greek. And having this freedom makes this life truly joyful and full of peace in whatever country one lives in. It is your spiritual Bill of Rights. Your right to be called a child of God. Your right to live in God's house, not as a slave or servant, but as His own family. It is yours through Jesus Christ alone.

**"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."**

**Amen.**

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**