

Reformation Sunday  
October 30, 2022  
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church  
John 8:31-36  
**The Truth Will Set You Free**

### **John 8:31-36 (EHV)**

*So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free." "We are Abraham's descendants," they answered, "and we have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say, 'You will be set free'?" Jesus answered, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Everyone who keeps committing sin is a slave to sin. But a slave does not remain in the family forever. A son does remain forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

The original Parks Library building at Iowa State University has an inscription on the outside which reads, "'AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE.'" I did not spend much time in the library, but I think I know why the architect would have that put on the outside of a library. The library is supposed to contain books, magazines, research articles and so on that contain the truth. I am not as clear on what it means to be free by such truth. Maybe it is knowing the truth of history that frees us from completely repeating it. Maybe the truth discovered and applied in science, technology and agriculture free us from hunger by feeding the world, free us from tedious tasks by inventions, and free us to pursue the mysteries of the atom and outer space. "AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE" has not only been used by the Iowa State Library but also by many universities as their motto. Those who do so have taken Jesus' words out of context and applied them to worldly knowledge, but I can at least see why they would do so.

A bigger stretch is when the same words were inscribed on the wall of the main lobby of the original CIA building. Yes, the CIA is tasked with discovering the truth of what foreign powers are up to. Yes, knowing what others in the world are doing can free us from attacks, invasions and so on. But I am confident Jesus did not mean for these words to be applied to the mission of the CIA or even that of a secular library.

As we know it from the King James: "AND YE SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH AND THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE" is about a different kind of truth and a different kind of freedom. This truth is through Scripture alone. This freedom is through Christ alone.

### **Truth Through Scripture Alone**

This is Reformation Sunday, so I have to include a little about Martin Luther and the Reformation. 505 years ago, Martin Luther asked for a debate on the teachings of the church. He posted 95 Theses on the door of the church so that these 95 statements could be debated among the educated in society. Luther wanted to know the truth and to have his church body teach the truth. In the next few years, Luther would write many books and pamphlets. He would get a chance to debate a little. In these exchanges, he said and wrote something that shocked the establishment. Luther dared to say that the pope and the church councils could be wrong. This kind of talk was reason enough for Luther to be arrested and

executed as many before him, like John Hus, had been. Luther survived and about four years after posting the 95 Theses, he stood before the Holy Roman Emperor and the rulers of Europe to answer for his teachings. Luther would not recant unless someone could show him from Scripture that he was wrong. Scripture was the only source of truth for Luther. Of course, Luther did not make this up. Jesus said it first.

*So, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

The truth is found in Jesus’ word. Where do we find Jesus’ words? If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, the words of Jesus are in red and easy to find. But the words of Jesus are also in black as well. The words of Jesus start with “In the beginning” of Genesis and end with the final “Amen” of Revelation. “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). All Scripture is from Jesus, the one and only Son of God.

Jesus was speaking to a group of Jews who believed in him. These believers were directed to continue to remain in Jesus’ word so that they would know the truth. We are to do the same. Christ’s truth is found in Scripture alone.

And what truths do we discover in the Scripture? There are plenty of historical facts – people, places and events. All of these are truth. God also reveals the truth about himself. He is holy and righteous, all powerful and all knowing, compassionate and gracious. The Scriptures reveal the truth about God’s will. He demands that we obey him perfectly by always loving him above all else and by always loving our neighbor as ourselves. Through the words of Jesus in the Bible, the truth about our sin is revealed. No one is righteous, no, not one. All have sinned. The wages of sin is death.

Sometimes we may not want to hear the truth about ourselves. It is not pleasant to have our failures and sins exposed by the word of Jesus. But it is necessary. The people listening to Jesus didn’t like it either. In fact, they denied that they even needed to be set free.

*“We are Abraham’s descendants,” they answered, “and we have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say, ‘You will be set free’?”*

They think Jesus is referring to physical and political freedom. They claim they have always been free, somehow forgetting the hundreds of years in Egypt as slaves and the 70 years in Babylon and the current situation as conquered people by the Romans. It is necessary for Jesus to tell them the truth so that they realize they are not truly free and then can be set free.

### **Freedom Through the Son Alone**

*Jesus answered, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: Everyone who keeps committing sin is a slave to sin. But a slave does not remain in the family forever. A son does remain forever. So, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.*

Jesus revealed to them the truth. Not only are these people not free, they are actually slaves to sin. The Scripture reveals the same to us. We too, were slaves to sin. Sin was our owner, our master. We could only do what our sinful nature wanted, only sin. We could not do anything to free ourselves from this spiritual slavery which would lead to eternal death. Remember that Jesus is not talking only to the wicked, unbelievers. He is also speaking to those who believed in him. We all need to watch out for and repent of some sin we keep committing. We are literally owned by such a sin.

Therefore we rejoice that the Scripture also reveals the truth of how we are set free. The Son sets us free. Jesus sets us free. Jesus did not give political freedom or physical freedom. He gives freedom from sin by paying the wages of sin in his own body on the cross. The Son of God gives us freedom from being a slave to sin by paying the ransom price in his own blood shed at the cross. The payment was too high for any sinner to pay so the Son of God paid it in our place. If anyone else had paid the ransom to free us, we might wonder if we are truly free. But the Son of God paid the ransom with his own life. There is no payment higher and no more payment needed. If the Son sets you free, you really will be free.

Much of Martin Luther's early life was spent in terror of God. Luther had no peace with God, no comfort from God's Word. Luther thought he was responsible to pay for his own sins, to make himself righteous before the holy God. He knew the facts that Jesus is God's Son. He knew that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. But Luther did not know the truth that Jesus did all that to forgive Martin Luther. What comfort Luther found in the truth of the Scriptures alone once God revealed his forgiveness in Christ alone to him! Jesus did all this to forgive you too...and me... and all the world. Continue to hold to the truth of Jesus' words. Take comfort in your free and full forgiveness. Rejoice in your freedom from sin and from eternal death. The truth has and will continue to set you free to live as a child of God now and forever.

Amen.