



Enough!! TouchPoint for October 21, 2020.

John 8:31-36 (NRSV) ³¹ Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

TOUCH POINT ³³ They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. ³⁶ So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Grace and peace from the Mystery in whom we live and move and have our being.

“You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free” and “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

This coming Sunday is called Reformation Sunday in the denomination I grew up in and was educated in: the Lutheran tradition. It's kind of a big Sunday for us because it gets us back to our roots and the insights of a guy named Martin Luther.

Now I know for some people, they don't get this whole denominational thing. In fact, I've been asked over and over again why are there so many denominations in Christianity. And in the past, I used to give all sorts of historical facts and information in response, and I could see the person's eyes glaze over – right before they closed them permanently and fell asleep.

Today I just ask them if they have any brothers or sisters and if they say yes, I ask them, “Are you all alike?” And they say, “Goodness, no.” And then I ask, “Would you like to be exactly like your brother or sister?” And they usually answer with an expletive...followed by the word “NO!”

Well, guess what? God has many children. Everyone God has ever created is in fact a child of God. So why should we expect us all to be the same and believe the same? Personally, I'm surprised there aren't more denominations and faiths.

Anyway, back to this tradition I was raised in called Lutheranism. People sometimes ask me what makes a Lutheran a Lutheran. Is it heritage? Is it style of worship? Is it the sign outside the building? What is it? And my reply is that it is none of that. It is about the place of the Divine – the Mystery in our lives.

It is about... Are you ready for this? I haven't talked about it in a couple of months...

It's about the subject-verb-object of the sentences of our lives. Lutheranism is a verb, not a noun. Who is the subject? Whose activity is the verb? And who is the object? ... Of the sentences of our lives. For Lutherans, as best I can understand it, God is the subject. God's activity is the verb... and we are the object.

So, the core for us Lutherans – the bottom line of our faith – is **not** a sentence that starts with “I believe” or “I accept” or “I've decided”. No, it's a sentence that starts with “God has” ... or “God is” ... or “God will”. God has claimed me. God is forgiving me. God will transform me. Or to use Jesus' words from our

passage today: God has set me free. So really, anyone can be a Lutheran....Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Buddhists, on and on... anyone who understands the Mystery as the Subject and Verb of life.

For Lutherans, Life is not an “If... then” sentence, but a “Because... therefore” sentence.

And any religion, culture, or relationship that begins with “If... then” is not a relationship of freedom but of bondage. Because it throws everything back on us. And if it all depends on us, how is that freedom? “If... then...” statements are conditional, and there is no freedom in a conditional life, society, or religion. Only an unconditional word can free us.

Or as my friend Henry Rojas likes to say, “It’s not an issue of “IF you behave and believe, THEN you can belong” but rather, “BECAUSE you already belong, THEREFORE you will believe and behave differently.” We have been brought up believing life is an “If... then” proposition. If I do this, then I am “ENOUGH”. If I do this, then I am “ACCEPTED”

But Jesus keeps flipping it. He keeps switching it. He keeps focusing on the doings of the Mystery, the Divine... and where the Divine is at work in the world. Accepting us, declaring us “enough”, He keeps trying to draw us into that kingdom... that reign of God.

Jesus constantly tries to free us from ourselves: our desire to be the subject and verb of the sentences of our lives... or our desire to live in an “If... then” world.

Now that's a different kind of freedom because usually we think of freedom as being freed from others, from outside events, things and people...

but what about freedom from ourselves? Can we as Americans even imagine such a thing?

Is there a word that can free us from trying to ‘be enough’?
Is there a world than can free us from our “If... then” world?

Could it be that our system of reward and punishment, is just another form of slavery – another form of bondage? Isn't anytime we make ourselves the subject of the sentences of our lives and our activity as the verb of our lives... aren't we just falling back into the slavery of narcissism and individualism?

Can we actually conceive of the bondage of individualism?

After all, isn't that what American Christianity is based on? Isn't that the point of American Christianity? The individual and individual salvation? YOU must DO something to save YOURSELF!!! And not just our Christianity but our whole culture is in bondage. And if you don't think our culture lives in the grip of the idolatry of the individual, then let me ask you this...

Why is the word “I”, that is, the word for me, “I” ... Why is that ALWAYS capitalized, but the words for **you** or **we** aren't? Could it be that our language is inherently narcissistic and self-centered, idolizing the individual, the “I”? What would happen if every time you wrote the word “I” you used a small “i” and every time you wrote the word “you”, you used a capital “Y”. Or “we”, a capital “W”. Would it make a difference?

Look, anytime we make ourselves the subject of the sentences of our lives, and our activity as the verb of our lives, aren't we just falling back into the slavery of individualism? But think about it, how free am I if it

all depends on me?

*“The **TRUTH** will set you free and the **SON** has set you free.” Not “**You** will free yourself.”*

The radical nature of the freedom of Jesus is that it is free...and it is freeing... even from yourself. Or to put it in other words, you don't have a free will, you have a FREED will.

*“The **TRUTH** will set you free and the **SON** has set you free.”*

It is free and you are free!!! Even from yourself... and having to be the subject and verb of the sentences of your life. Your life is a gift, not a test or a 'have to'. You are already enough, before you do or say anything.

*“The **TRUTH** will set you free and the **SON** has set you free.”*

Isn't that the first step of the 12-step program of AA? Admitting that I am not and cannot be the subject and verb of the sentences of my life. Isn't that the first step of the addict's freedom?

“But I'm not an addict” you say. Sounds like the Jews who responded to Jesus, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone.” So said the people who lived under Roman rule at the time and hadn't had their own King in over 700 years and wouldn't have their own nation for another 1948 years.

“But I am not an addict” we say...except to the belief that we are the Subject and Verb of the sentences of our lives... that we are the sole authors of our lives. Let's face it, we are addicted to ourselves and cannot free ourselves... and not just ourselves...but our tribe, our nation, our culture, economy and way of life. We are as blind to our own bondage as the Jews were to their bondage in Jesus' time.

The freedom Jesus is talking about here in John's gospel is the death of the bondage to self... of trying to be the subject and verb of the sentences of our lives... of trying to be enough... and being resurrected to the freedom of being the object of Mystery's grace, love and forgiveness.

This is where the Christ says life is found...abundant life is found...freedom is found...

You see...Because it is free, therefore you are free.

To live and move and have your being within Mystery's grace, love and forgiveness.

Or in other words,

BECAUSE you are already “**enough**” ...

THEREFORE, you are free to ...

Amen

Spirit in the Desert

Opening Song

Be Still

Be Still, know that I am God.

Children of the Heavenly Father

Children of the heavenly Father, safely in his bosom gather. Nestling bird nor star in heaven, such a refuge e're was given. God his own doth tend and nourish, in His Holy courts they flourish. From all evil things he spares them, in His mighty arms He bears them. Neither life nor death shall ever, from the Lord, His children sever. Unto them His grace he showeth and their sorrows all he knoweth. Though He giveth or He taketh, God His children ne're forsaketh. His the loving purpose solely, to preserve them pure and holy.

Bible Passage

(A passage takes us from one place to another)

Touchpoint

(Where God's story touches our life story)

The Lord's Prayer

The Meal

Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

Create in me a clean heart, O God. And renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free spirit.

Benediction

The Lord Bless You and Keep You

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you. And give you peace...The Lord make his face to shine upon you. And be gracious unto you. The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen