

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

One of my favorite movies is Robin hood Prince of Thieves. It's a classical good vs. evil storyline. That aside, at the very beginning of the film, Robin of Locksley is in prison along with many others. For one reason or another Robin was going to have his hand cut off. During this amputation of sorts, Robin takes the upper hand and escapes the prison along with his best friend Peter and a Muslim?. He couldn't be free anyone else. After Robin, Peter, and the Muslim left the prison they were chased by guards. Unfortunately Peter was killed during the attempted escape. Robin and the Muslim were finally safe. Robin told the Muslim that he could go his own way. The Muslim refuses. He tells Robin that he needs to save his life in return for setting him free.

I thought of this film when I read the gospel text for today. We are set free and have a responsibility because of our freedom. Jesus frees us from the powers of sin and death. The Judeans that Jesus was talking to didn't understand what he was telling them. Jesus told the Judeans that if they continued in his word they would truly be his disciples and they would know the truth and the truth would make them free.

At this point in the text, the Judeans seem to be a little agitated and defensive. They didn't understand what Jesus meant by being made free. The Judeans were descendants of Abraham and had never been slaves to anyone. The Judeans didn't think that they needed to be set free from anything.

Jesus responds to the Judeans by telling them that all who sin are slaves to sin. Anyone who follows the Son of God will know the truth and be set free.

To jump into this passage a little deeper we need to explore what it means to be free. Freedom has many different definitions. Douglas John Hall makes a distinction by looking at what we are saved from and what we are saved for. In other words...what have we been set free from and what have we been set free for?

What do we need to be set free from today? We are constantly on the go in today's world. We are pulled in many directions which creates a lot of anxiety for us. Anxiety fills us when we face death, guilt, condemnation, meaninglessness, and despair. The powers of sin and death are what we need to be set free from. We are all slaves to sin. Each and everyone of us. We all make mistakes. We are all tempted to do something that we know isn't right...maybe its going to a party where illegal substances are being used or maybe its taking something that isn't ours or maybe its hurting someone – physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually. We are all slaves to sin.

The good news for us is that we have hope and we are set free through Jesus' death and resurrection. Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead freeing us from the powers of sin and death. Out of great love and compassion we have been set free.

We have been set free. Now the question is what have we been set free for? We have been set free from sin and death to live life abundantly in God's grace. We have been set free for sharing God's love with others. Just as Jesus challenged the Judeans to continue in his word, he too challenges us to do the same.

We should try to continue in Jesus' word, be his disciples, know the truth and be set free to serve others.

We have been set free to love and serve others. We have been set free to help those who have no voice. We have been set free to provide food for those who don't have any. We have been set free to show God's love by being a friend to someone who is going through a rough time. We have been set free to share the gospel with others.

The Son of God makes us free. Jesus makes us free. He is the truth. We are set free from sin and death and we have been set free for God's ministry in the world.

Since today is reformation, I would feel I left something out if I didn't mention Martin Luther in some way. In Luther's letter, "The Freedom of a Christian" he wrote that "A Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none" and "A Christian is a perfect dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

Luther saw that we are set free from the powers of sin and death and because of God's love for us he gave his only Son so that we are free for serving others.

We have been set free for God's work in the world.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.