

The Truth Will Set You Free

Text: John 8:31-36

Doctrinal Locus: Third Article- One Holy, Christian church; the communion of saints

Purpose: That the hearers, after sifting through so-called “truths” will know that Jesus is the Truth that sets free.

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1. **Of all the many Bible passages that are simply thrown around with seemingly little understanding, the passage from the Gospel reading has to be near the top of the list!** You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free. There are hundreds if not thousands of claims out there of what the true “truth” is. All these claims state that if you believe in it, it will set you free! If we believe this, then there should be a lot of people out there who believe they are free. Oh, wait, we’re Americans so of course we are free! What was I thinking! We have a Bill of Rights, a constitution with amendments, and all kinds of other documents that proclaim just that: you are free! But what are you free from? Oppression? Tyranny? Taxation without representation? Certainly! And this is a good thing. But are you free? Have you been set free by the truth?

2. A dear friend of mine who believed he was told me about it. This friend was my favorite undergraduate professor at college. One day I was chatting with him in his office. I told him I was planning to attend seminary and become a Lutheran pastor. He told me had had similar plans long ago. He was signed up for a Presbyterian seminary and about ready to go. Then something happened that changed his direction. Some how he was exposed to sociology. I’ll never forget what he told me. He said, “I found sociology and left religion behind. I found the truth, and the truth set me free.” I was dumbfounded and confused. Quite honestly, I’m still a little confused by his statement. But what is clear to me is that he believed his scientific field of study explained things. That it provided truth. Not just truth, but the truth. This is a common scientific claim. If you can observe it, measure it, record it, predict it, then it is true. Ultimately what this truth works to set people free from is religion. **If you believe in science, you can dis-**

regard the supernatural events that God does in the world. You can simply ignore them.

And I think that's what my friend was doing.

3. **In our time, people are very feeling oriented.** You know the saying, "if it feels good, do it". Our society is buying into this. They believe we are set free by our feelings. This goes a long way into explaining why drugs and sex are so popular among people today. They temporarily take the pain away. They can momentarily set a person free from the hurt in their mind. But only briefly. Only for a fleeting moment worth of time. In the end, the pain and hurt comes rushing back in. The drugs and sex end up making the person into more of a slave. The so called freedom this "truth" promotes is no freedom at all. It is utter slavery. And the resulting addiction becomes more of a problem than the original pain and hurt. Lives are destroyed. Families are torn apart. Drugs and sex do not set us free!

4. So how about religion? Surely, if anything will set us completely free it will be our religious beliefs. This is exactly what the Jews in the Gospel reading believed. **They believed that their religion saved them.** That being a child of Abraham set them free. That in fact, because of their lineage, they were never slaves to begin with! Well that claim is a definite tweaking of the history books! The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for some 400 years! They wandered without a homeland for 40 years. They fought to claim their land for a generation. They were slaves to the sinful rule of many wicked and twisted kings. They were lead out in chains into exile. Theirs was a history of being slaves! Yet they couldn't remember this. They in fact claimed to have never been a slave! All that aside, Jesus was talking about their spiritual condition anyways! He was talking about the fact that anyone who sins is a slave to sin! Being a descendant of Abraham did not set the Jews free!

5. Many of you have probably seen the latest Luther movie. In this historically accurate biography of the life of Martin Luther, do you remember the early years of his religious life. The

years when he was a monk? Martin Luther knew about being a slave to sin. He completely disagreed with the Jews from our text. He knew he was a sinner. He knew he was a slave. So he sought to do something about this miserable condition. That's how he ended up in a monastery. The church told him this was the ultimate way he could appease God. By being a good monk, Luther believed he would be set free from the guilt of his sin. That God would look at him and the work of prayer and self denial he was doing and say, "now there's a good man whom I need to pay close attention to". To his utter despair, Luther found he was dead wrong. That he was misinformed. What Luther discovered as he attempted and succeeded at being one of the best monks who ever lived, was that God was still angry with him. That try as he did, he couldn't keep himself from sinning. The more he sinned, the angrier he knew God was with him. **Rather than being set free from his sins, Luther was becoming more and more a slave to them. This was not the freedom setting truth he was looking for.**

6. All these so-called "truths" do not lead to freedom. Science doesn't. The fleeting good feelings of drugs and sex don't. Being a descendant of Abraham doesn't. Being a really good person doesn't. None of these popular attempts at freedom work. None of them bring the desired result. Instead, they all bring the unwanted result of slavery. Slavery to a limiting way of seeing the world. Bondage to addiction. The burden of living with a false sense of security. Being encumbered with the complete weight of your sins. **The end result of these false truths are more pain and suffering.** What's more, they are unnecessarily driving themselves deeper and deeper to slavery.

7. **But the good news is that even in the pit of despair; the end of the rope; the place of pain; the blindness of self delusion; even in all these places, the truth comes to us!** In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells us without question exactly where the truth that sets you free comes from. It comes from being a disciple of Jesus Christ! Those who are Jesus disciples know the

truth! Those who know the truth are set free by the truth! You who know the truth are free! You who are disciples of Jesus Christ have become real sons and daughters of the Father. The Son has set you free and because it is He who sets you free, you are free indeed. Jesus Christ is the truth! And it is this truth, Jesus Christ, who has set you completely free. There are no strings attached to this freedom. It is a done deal. You dear brothers and sisters are free because the truth has set you free!

8. Truth was found restoring sight to the blind. Truth was found bringing people back to life. Truth was found praying for His Father's children. Truth was found feeding thousands of people with a couple loaves and fish. Truth was found offering His body and blood to His disciples. Truth was found standing right before Pontius Pilate who asked "what is truth?" Truth stood by as liars hurled insults at Him. Truth sacrificed Himself for the freedom of all people. Truth died in the place of sinners to assure them of their freedom. Truth has died for you and in so doing has set you free. **Jesus Christ who is truth came into this world to bring about restoration.** And you who were once a slave to sin, to the philosophies of this world; you have been set free!

9. **What false truth are you holding on to in your life?** Are you believing that money will set you free? That the latest fashion product will set you free? That the next relationship will set you free? The field of science will set you free? The new car will set you free? That divorcing your spouse will set you free? That a new husband or wife will set you free? What false truth are you looking to? Let go of it. Turn away from it.

10. Looking for freedom from anyone other than Christ will inevitably bring you deeper into slavery. These other things are not the truth that will set you free. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ and with this identity comes your freedom. You are free in Christ! You are not bound to your sins. They have no power over you. You have been forgiven for them. They do not con-

trol you. They do not determine your actions. You have been brought to faith. **Your faith strengthens you to do the right thing. To turn from the false truths of the world and look toward Christ alone, who is the truth!** Amen.