

Reformation Sunday

Synod Online Worship – 25 October 2020

John 8:31-36

Beloved: Grace, mercy and peace be yours and mine from God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

As we draw closer to Election Day, we are bombarded with messages from those seeking office about freedom. Politicians want us to vote with them in creating freedom here and abroad, by force or by sanction; to scare us away from the other and our neighbor by raising the threat that our freedom would be infringed upon or snatched from us. Year-round, but especially as Christmas approaches, advertisers try to convince us that we will be free with more time, more pleasure, better health, longer life if only we buy the newest gadget, gadget or widget. All around us, people promising us freedom of one sort or another.

Jesus had something else in mind. Freedom is a gift, a gift that can't be earned or bought, purchased or won, freedom is the knowledge of the Truth, the saving truth, the amazing grace, the lavish love of God come to us in Christ. Freedom is the truth that helps us meet today, tomorrow and all its challenges – physical, spiritual, financial, relational, vocational, political, individual, communal – with the sure knowledge that in Christ we are free to live and love our God who has been there, who knows our brokenness, who knows our needs and to our weaknesses is no stranger. Freedom not to do whatever we would please, but freedom to do what would please God. To live for Christ and love of neighbor in a world that calls us to live for ourselves first. Freedom, that when we sin and fall short of God's glory, that our lives are redeemed to be a glimpse of God's mercy and grace for us, and for others, too.

These verses often attributed to Maya Angelou, but actually penned by Pentecostal theologian Carol Wimmer, speak well to the freedom of such redeeming grace:

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I'm not shouting "I'm clean livin'."
I'm whispering "I was lost,
Now I'm found and forgiven."

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I don't speak of this with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble
and need Christ to be my guide.

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I'm not trying to be strong.
I'm professing that I'm weak
And I need His strength to carry on.

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I'm not bragging of success.

I'm admitting I have failed
And need God to clean my mess.

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I'm not claiming to be perfect,
My flaws are far too visible
But, God believes I am worth it.

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I still feel the sting of pain.
I have my share of heartaches
So I call upon His name.

When I say . . . "I am a Christian"
I'm not holier than thou
I'm just a simple sinner
Who received God's good grace, somehow!

"When I Say, 'I Am a Christian'" (1988)

Friends, real freedom isn't free; still freedom is not fought, it can't be bought, freedom has been won by the Son. That's the truth, the truth that promises true freedom for you, me and all the world. When the Son makes us free, we are free indeed. Amen.

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