

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

Pr. Lori Hope
St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls

” What would you do with freedom if you had it?”

27 October 2010

John 8:31-36

³¹Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples;
³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” ³³They 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’?”
³⁴Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. ³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

People are natural born legalists. People don't always know what I do for a living when I first meet them. I have stood in cow pastures, bars, concerts, wedding dances, rallies and people find out that I am a pastor. As I have sat on airplanes, buses, and around dining room tables people find out I am pastor. I married a man who has bartended much of his life and who is a musician and have talked to many of his friends who haven't set foot in a church since they were teenagers. In all of these situations when it is realized that I am a pastor people feel the need to tell me that although they don't go to church, or they drink, or they listen to rap music, or they dance, or they swear, or just fill in the blank, they are still good people. Or the dreaded question do you think God still loves my husband, my friend or me?

People it seems are natural born legalists. We want to feel justified.

Why not? If you don't pay your bills there are consequences, if you don't do keep your grades up you could lose your scholarship, and if you don't pay attention you can get hurt or yelled at.

Insurance companies will drop a policy holder if they exceed what is considered a reasonable amount of claims. As legalist we act as if the same could be true of God's love and grace. Imagine a letter coming out of the claims department of God.

Dear Mrs. Smith, I am writing in response to this morning's request for forgiveness. I'm sorry to inform you that you have reached your quota of sins. Our records show that since employing our services you have erred seven times in the area of greed, and your prayer life is substandard when compared to others of like age and circumstance. Further review reveals that your understanding of doctrine is in the lower 20th percentile and you have excessive tendencies to gossip. Because of your sins you are a high-risk candidate for the kingdom of God. You understand that grace has its limits. Jesus sends his regrets and kindest regards and hopes that you will find some other form of coverage.

The problem for us legalists is that we still live and act as if our actions could have any influence on our salvation. We also act as though salvation were a future event like if we play all our cards just right we will get a passing grade and then receive the golden ticket which gets us into heaven. Salvation in the New Testament is always about life right now. Salvation for Jesus is always about freedom. When we act and think like legalists we don't even know we need freedom. Like the hearers in today's gospel reading we say with pride, “We have never been slaves to anyone.” Jesus had a lot more self-control than I could ever muster, he didn't laugh or cry when they stated with confidence, “We have never been slaves to anyone.” The sarcastic pastor in me would

have said, "Oh, those 400 years in Egypt don't count as slavery." We have sometimes made faith, "Jesus loves you and you better act like it!" Freedom is only a gift if we know we are imprisoned.

MurdoEwen MacDonald, a prisoner of war in Germany and chaplain to American soldiers, told how he learned of the Normandy invasion. Early on D-Day, he was awakened and told that a Scotsman in the British prisoner-of-war camp wanted to see him. MacDonald ran to the barbed wire that separated the two camps. The Scot, who was in touch with the BBC by underground radio, spoke two words in Gaelic, meaning "They have come." MacDonald ran back to the American camp and spread the news: "They have come . . . They have come." And everyone knew the allied troops had landed at Normandy. The reaction was incredible. Men jumped and shouted, hugged each other, even rolled on the ground. Outwardly they were still captives, but inwardly they were free.

Jesus declares, "And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free." The truth is not a fact like $2 + 2=4$ or Beethoven wrote *Ode to Joy*. The truth which frees is the knowledge of God revealed through Jesus. That knowledge is not so much a fact we memorize but rather always about relationships and always about what God does. In Jesus Christ revealed through scripture we find one who enters into the pain and suffering of people. We find the one who breaks more rules and regulations than anyone else mentioned but always for the sake of the other. We find one who states over and over again that our sins or life circumstance or even our legalism can define us. We are declared justified and free.

When I was 11 my dad was lowering a shower stall over a second story balcony, the railing broke and my father landed on the sidewalk on his head. He lived through the nightmare by recovering the language and basic knowledge of people in his life. What he has never recovered is his long term memory. He cannot remember anything from 3 months ago and before. So if I were to say, "Dad, remember those terrible words I spoke to you at Easter?" His answer would be, "No." If I say, "Remember those horrible things I said to you when I was 16 years old?" Dad says, "No, I don't remember them, why would you? What good does your remembering them do for our relationship?" The new covenant God makes with the people in Jeremiah is a promise to not remember. Imagine, intentionally not remembering, why would you?

Jesus states, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed." AND YOU ARE! You are free. I don't hold your sins against. So the question becomes "What would you do with freedom if you had it?" AND YOU DO! Annie Dillard "Because how we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."

We are free to not be legalists. We are free to work for justice. We are free to love our neighbor who just might be our enemy. We are free to be whatever we want when we grow up. We are free to give money to charities. We are free to forgive one another and even ourselves.

Kathleen Norris says, "I have learned that prayer is not asking for what you think you want but asking to be changed in ways you can't imagine."

Robert Capon in *Between Noon and Three* If we are ever to enter fully into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, we are going to have to spend more time thinking about freedom than we do. The church, by and large, has had a poor record of encouraging freedom. She has spent so much time inculcating in us the fear of making mistakes that she had made us like ill-taught piano students; we play our songs, but we never really hear them, because our main concern is not to make music, but to avoid some flub that will get us in duff. She has been so afraid we will lose sight of the laws of our nature, that she made us care more about how we look than about who we are; made us act more like the subjects of a police state than fellow citizens of the saints.

You are free. What do you plan to do with it?

REFORMATION CELEBRATION!

Wednesday, October 27

Prelude

Welcome/announcements

Invocation

Confession and Forgiveness

Prayer of the Day

Gospel

John 8:31-36

Sermon

“What Would You Do With Freedom If You Had It?”

Pr. Lori Hope, St. Mark’s Lutheran Church

Hymn

“Christ Be Our Light”

ELW #715 vv 1, 2, 5

Holy Communion

Dialog

Words of Institution

Distribution

“Amazing Grace”

arr. Robert C. Jones

Clarinet Choir

Blessing & Benediction

Postlude

“Gigue”

by Yvonne Deportes

Clarinet Choir

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

GOING BLUE - “For All Who Are Thirsty”

We are looking for donations for a silent auction which will raise money for building wells in South Dakota and worldwide. If you would like to donate time, a meal, a gift certificate, or anything else (be creative!), please email Dillon DeBoer at djdeboer08@ole.augie.edu. The silent auction (6:30 pm) and concert (7:00 pm) will take place on Thursday, November 18.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Friday (29 th)	Worship, 10 am - Rollie Steck, Sr. Spkr.
Sunday (31 st)	Worship, 11 am - Pr. Paul
Monday (1 st)	Walking Worship, 10 am - meet at the World Map on Student Street by the Housing Office
Tuesday (2 nd)	Roman Catholic Mass, 10 am - Fr. Shane Stevens
Wednesday (3 rd)	All Saints Worship - Holy Communion, 10 am - Pr. Jon Halvorson, Augustana Luth.,; Augie Orchestra
Friday (5 th)	Worship, 10 am - Maren Peterson, Sr. Spkr.