**True Freedom**

*31So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” 33They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”*

*34Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. 35The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. 36So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:31-36)*

 If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Greetings dear brothers and sisters as we talk today about the subject of freedom, given that tomorrow the US commemorates an important preacher who worked for human rights, Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom as a concept can be understood in a few ways. In Scripture, it is the political and spiritual aspect that is often in view, generally the first rather than the second. Through this conversation with Jesus, however, we see that the Jewish leaders have a specific wrong understanding of what freedom is. Jesus was going to be the One to present the truth to them. This was a truth that every nation today needs to hear. This is why our theme statement in the beginning are Jesus’ words – because it is the Son that is going to save or free humanity, so that true freedom is experienced. Let’s talk, then, about this freedom that Jesus alludes to.

 True freedom only comes from Jesus Christ. There is a specific expression that Jesus uses in the presence of His interrogators. He says that they need to remain or abide in His “word”. In reality, that “word” was the term “*logos*” in Greek, which has more meanings than just the spoken word. It also refers to the being or person that gave meaning or drives the entire universe. It could also mean “subject” or general “teaching”. In other words, Jesus was saying that if they followed His life, His lifestyle which included His teaching and ministry, then they would be His disciples, and then they would know what truth was, which would free them from their previous spiritual bondage and prepare them for freedom in that life and also in eternity.

 However, the mistake of the Jewish leaders was that they had connected their spiritual freedom (i.e., salvation) to their forefathers. For them, it was enough that they were descendants of Abraham, which made them a part of God’s family. Jesus came to correct that exact error. True freedom, or salvation, could only exist as freedom from the rule of sin, and only through the Messiah. Without Jesus there was not and could never be salvation.

 This is like someone who thinks that because of their American citizenship, they can be freed from consequences when they commit a crime. They don’t understand that the judge will punish them (perhaps throwing them in prison for years) because what they did warrants a stiff sentence. One (the citizenship) has nothing to do with the other (the crime).

 If we’re truly going to be honest with ourselves, sometimes we lean on this wrong doctrine as well. Sometimes we inadvertently consider our forefathers’ or foremothers’ faith as saving for us. Sometimes we don’t realize that every human being is called to judgment before God individually. Freedom is the freedom from sin. Even the Jewish leaders knew that political freedom was a temporary and passing reality. Their memories were not failing them when they said, “we have never been enslaved”. They hadn’t forgotten their years of oppression under Egypt, Babylon, and Rome. But it was the spiritual freedom from the influence of sin that would have a lasting, eternal impact.

 Today, whenever you have an opportunity, examine your life for a moment – see as to whom you rely on for your freedom from sin’s effects. Could it be that you run to this or that friend? Or is it that you feel saved because you physically come to the church building? Yes, the church gathering is for us to continue to grow in the Lord and to practice loving each other. Even the church, however, as the people of God, needs to be “in” Jesus’ word and have freedom. Thus, true freedom can only come from Jesus Christ.

 May God purify our faith, and may we cling to our only Savior always. God bless you all. Amen.