



October 26 – Free

As I reflect on this text, I found myself thinking about some of the projects I have attempted out in our garage. Whether I try to fix something, or build something, I enjoy these projects. There is something about that feeling when completing a project. There is a sense of accomplishment. Even if the project did not turn out quite the way you imagined it, you still feel relief and a sense of accomplishment. In addition to that feeling of accomplishment, these projects give me an excuse to use various power tools. Sometimes, accomplishing things can be fun too.

In this text, Jesus says “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.” What does Jesus mean by that? Our internal response may sound a lot like the disciples. We have never been enslaved. We are in the US. We have freedom. We have always been free.

Yet, if we look more closely, there are things that bind us. Maybe it is technology...that nervous feeling when you or someone you care about will be without cell service. Maybe it is an addiction to social media. It may be a variety of temptations. It may be debt, and the work you have to do just to stay above water financially. It may not be like slaves, but there are many ways that we are still bound and yearning for freedom.

The answer Jesus gives to finding freedom is continuing in God’s word. So, is the answer Bible Study? Not exactly. The word used is the same word that is translated “abide” or “dwell” in other passages. The word translated as “my word” is “Logos.” In the gospel according to St. John, the “logos” is speaking of Jesus, the Christ. In short, Jesus is telling the disciples that their path to true freedom is about having a relationship with God, or more directly, making your home in Christ.

What does that look like? Throughout the gospel according to St. John, that answer is simple. The way that you abide in Christ is to remain connected with Christ. The text does not tell us how. This is likely because it looks different for everyone. For some, it is about centering prayer practices. For others it may be through acts of service or advocacy. For some it IS Bible Study. For others, it is about being part of a community of faith. The goal is to stay connected.

Back to the projects and power tools. If you use power tools you probably know this truth. You always need a backup battery...or more. These cordless tools can run on a battery for a while but then they need to be charged again. Meanwhile, the corded tools work tirelessly. You plug them in and they run. No batteries. No breaks needed.

This is the way that Jesus is talking about dwelling the word. When you are not connected to Christ, again, in whatever way works for you, we find the battery will wear down. Sometimes it wears down quickly. You recharge by plugging in the battery. Whether in a sense of recharging, or staying connected all the time, we find our true freedom in our connectedness to God. When we get out of balance, or disconnected, we start to question God. Usually, we either start to turn God into an extension of ourselves, or we start to believe God could never love us; we are too sinful.

When we stay connected to the love of God, we find that we are truly free. We know that we are loved and invited to share that love with those around us. It also helps us to see the presence of God in the darkest of times, because we have become trained to see God at all times.

Much like the celebration of Affirmation of Baptism, this is not a one-time event, or a graduation of sorts. It is a lifelong journey of faith. It is about finding ways to continue in your relationship with God. This is not freedom that will come sometime in the future. It is a reality now. God is here, among us and with us. Knowing God walks with us out of a deep and profound love for humanity frees us to share this love with the world around us. Amen.

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