

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Pride not only makes men blind, but it also makes men forgetful. This is as true today as it was at the time of our Gospel reading. The Jews assertion that, “they are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone” is as ridiculous as the Germans saying they’ve never lost a war that mattered. Or even worse, the French saying, “Paris has never been occupied.” Except by the Romans, the Vikings, the English, Napoleon, and the Germans. A brief review of history shows the Jews had an equally dismal record of maintaining their independence. After all, they were slaves in Egypt for 400 years, and then carried off into captivity by the Assyrians, then the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and finally, as the Jews made this bold statement to Jesus about “never being slaves to anyone”, their country was under Roman occupation. Their sinful pride has blinded them to the truth. They had been slaves and they still were.

But that is the way of pride, the way of sin. Sin blinds the eyes of men and poisons their minds so that ridiculous, illogical beliefs become societal norms. Only mad-men would call the murder of over 60 million infants, “exercising one’s freedom of choice.” In a similar way, those with gender dysphoria, commonly called transgender, need help. They need psychological, spiritual, and physical help. They need our prayers. They do not need to be confirmed in their delusions. As it is written, “**So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them** (Gen. 1:27).” From these examples it is easy to see the correlation to our Lord’s words. “**Truly, truly I say to you, whoever commits sin, is a slave to sin.**” The Lord Christ manifest the deadly peril not just of the above-mentioned sins, but every sin and vice known to men.

The devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh would tell you that you are in control. That you have never been a slave to anyone. They would convince you that heroin addicts and

alcoholics have problems, but that your sins are under control and are minor infractions of God's Law. They would whisper that the use of pornographic materials and crude language are fine because everyone does it. But everyone doesn't do it. Jesus didn't do it. Nor does hedonism of men erode or change God's law. Sin remains sin, no matter how many people are doing it. No matter how small you think it might be. And all sin is deadly. Sin is no respecter of persons and given enough time it will destroy your life either in this world or the world to come. Your fallen flesh and pride rebel against our Lord's assertion, that, "**everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.**" You have a problem and you do not have your sins under control. You need help. Repent.

Do not be like the Jews in our Gospel text who objected to the Lord's words saying in pride "**we are (Lutherans), we are children of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.**" Not only is it a ridiculous statement, but it is categorically false. In the same way that the Children of Israel needed rescued from the tyranny of Pharaoh, you too need to be rescued from your sins. It isn't just those in homosexual unions or those living together outside of holy marriage that are slaves to sin, but every man who has looked at a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart, and thus is a slave to sin. Everyone who has gossiped has slandered their neighbor and is a slave to sin. "**Surely, there is no one righteous, no not one for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace.**" "Truly, truly I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave to sin." Therefore, repent. Turn away from your sin, your slavery. And look to the one who has the power not only to rescue you from bondage, but to ensure that you abide in the house of the Lord forever.

Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son, came in the flesh as a man, and as a man overcame sin, death, and the task master, the devil, who held you in bondage. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Mary's son, was tempted in every way that you are, yet without sin. He retained His freedom that

He might free you. He strove with the devil both in the wilderness and the garden of Gethsemane and overcame temptation by prayer and God's Word. Finally, upon the cross Jesus handed the devil his final defeat and procured your liberty. The Jews declared to Jesus that they were the offspring, a better translation might be seed, of Abraham, but Jesus is the true promised Seed not only of Abraham, but of the Seed whom God promised to send to crush the Serpent's head. As it is written, "**And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel (Gen. 3:15).**"

By His death upon the cross and resurrection from the grave Jesus Christ has paid the price for your sins, rescued you from death and the devil, and set you free from the bondage of sin and the Law which accused you day and night. **You are justified by faith, apart from the works of the law.** As it is written, "**The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:56-57).**" Left to yourselves, there was nothing you could do to free yourself from the slavery of sin. For, "**Whoever commits sin is a slave to sin.**" Yet the Lord Jesus Christ had mercy upon you. He humbled Himself, was born of the Virgin Mary, and become obedient to the point of death, even death upon a cross. He is the Son of God and the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. God the Father has anointed Him the Christ **to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound (Is. 61:1).**" Jesus has set you free from sin and bondage, and **if the Son sets you free you are free indeed.** Therefore, rejoice O Christians, and take comfort in your Lord, who came down from heaven, that He might bring to you to His heavenly home as His brothers and sisters, children of God by adoption in the waters of Holy Baptism and thus, co-heirs of the kingdom of heaven.

Yet though we have been set free from sin and the power of the devil, we still continually struggle against sin and temptation. The kingdom is ours even now through the waters of holy baptism, yet we have not come to our eternal rest. The Law is good, but it still accuses us. For a time, we are still part of the church militant, the fighting church. And fighting against sin and temptation is important. What then shall we do when we are beset by sin and temptation? We are to follow our Lord's example and resist temptation with the Word of God and prayer. What shall we do when we succumb to temptation? We must repent and turn from our sin to Jesus Christ the Son of God. He abides forever and will not cast us out from His presence. He forgives us and therefore we are free sin, death, and the devil, and will abide with Him forever.

As a pledge and token of His abiding love Christ bids you come to the altar God, to God your exceeding joy, and eat the heavenly banquet which He has prepared for you. For in the Lord's Supper you eat and drink the body and blood of your Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. And that forgiveness, given here, in this place, at this time, in the holy the Holy Communion has the power to free from besetting sins. The strength to resist the temptations of the devil, the world and your sinful flesh, and the power to keep you firm and steadfast in the one true faith unto life everlasting.

As Christians we find our strength and consolation in the good gifts that our Lord has given us, especially in His Word and Sacraments. As it is written, **"If you abide in my Word you are my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."** God's Word is not just our truth, but the truth. And this Gospel truth is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. It is our shield and buckler, our refuge and strength. By it demons are put to flight, and men are raised to life. For God's Word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword. It kills the

sinner by the Law and brings resurrection and life to the Christian who is born, not by flesh and blood, but by water and word, by the Gospel. So now we wait dear friends. Gathering as often as we may to receive the good gifts that the Lord provides. Not forsaking the gathering together as is the habit of some, but consoling one another with the Gospel and cling to God's Word and the Savior who is revealed therein, even Jesus Christ, whose return we eagerly await. Till that happy day, when we are finally rescued, be confident dear friends that the Son has set you free, and therefore you are free indeed.

And the peace of God that passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.