**Sermon John 8:31-36 New King James Version (NKJV) – Reformation Day 31/10/21**

**Youtube Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/y4bJLCNlPN4**](https://youtu.be/y4bJLCNlPN4)

***31****Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.****32****And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

***33****They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”*

***34****Jesus answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.****35****And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever.****36****Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

**I have a friend whom I have not seen for many years**. We first became friends when we were in primary school. Our friendship grew in high school and extended into our early twenties. In our teenage years we spent a great deal of time together. We talked about everything, our hopes, our dreams, our deepest held convictions and beliefs and of course girls. I don’t think I have ever known another human being apart from my wife better than I knew this friend.

**Then things began to change.** We went to different universities, we met our future wives, got married, had children, were separated by distance, work, and family life. We settled into a pattern of seeing each other maybe two or three times a year. Eventually he moved interstate and years began to pass when we would not see each other or even talk to each other. One day we were having a chat on the phone and we started discussing one of my friend’s pet topics. A topic I had been very interested in in my late teens but had put behind me long ago. In the course of the conversation my friend said how great it was that we both thought the same way and suddenly I didn’t know what to say. I realised that I no longer thought or felt the same way as my friend. Not just about the topic we were discussing but about many things.

**The only way to keep a relationship alive and fresh and strong is by keeping in contact with the person you have the relationship with.** You need to make regular times when you can talk to each other, listen to each other and share your deepest thoughts, dreams and desires with each other. If you don’t keep up that regular communication the relationship will become weaker and eventually you could lose the relationship completely. This isn’t only true of our relationships with people, it is also true of our relationship with God.

**God loves to communicate with us human beings. He has spoken to us in the past through prophets and finally through his one and only Son, Jesus Christ.** When Jesus speaks to us it is God speaking to us. But it isn’t only through words that Jesus speaks to us it is also through actions that Jesus speaks to us. Everything that Jesus says, everything that Jesus does is God saying and doing it, because amazingly Jesus is God. If you want to know God then get to know Jesus. There is no better, clearer more complete way to know God than to know Jesus.

**Jesus says, *"If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, 32and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*** The word translated as abide suggests the idea of living in the same home together and spending a great deal of time together. In another place the same word is used as Jesus talks about us being like branches abiding in Jesus the vine (John 15:4). Jesus also says that those who eat his flesh and drink his blood abide in him (John 6:56).

**Friends abide in each other’s words.** Or to put it another way friends regularly spend time together talking to each other and listening to each other, telling each other the deepest thoughts and desires of their hearts. Friends also spend time in each other’s physical presence. This is what builds relationship. If you spend time making yourself at home in Jesus’ words, listening to Jesus and talking to Jesus. If you spend time in the presence of Jesus through Holy Communion, then you are his disciple and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

**Today we celebrate the Reformation of the Church that was marked by the posting of the 95 Theses upon the Castle Church door at Wittenberg.** Large parts of the church at the time had either lost or were in danger of losing the relationship that God wants to have with his people. Many people had little or no access to God’s word and therefore did not know the Good News of Jesus Christ. Martin Luther through reading God’s word, rediscovered the Good News and wanted to call the church back to the truth of the gospel. He found the truth by reading and diligently studying the holy scriptures. By abiding in the word of God Luther discovered the truth that set him free.

**What is this truth? The truth is that freedom is not based on what you do.** Freedom is not based on how good you are, how smart you are, how powerful you are or how wealthy you are. Freedom is based on knowing and trusting Jesus. The truth is that **we receive forgiveness of sin and are made right with God by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith. The truth is that we receive this faith through God’s word, when we hear the good news of Jesus Christ.** The truth is that our faith is sustained as we abide in Jesus and his word.

In John 14:6 Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”* We too like many in the church of Luther’s time by not spending time abiding in with Jesus, can lose our relationship with Jesus and lose the freedom he offers. On the other hand, if you spend time making yourself at home in Jesus’ words, listening to Jesus and talking to Jesus. If you spend time with others, gathered together in the name of Jesus. If you abide with Jesus as you receive his body and blood, then then you will know the truth, and he will make you free! Free from sin, free from death, and free from the devil. Free to live life to the full.

And all of this is a pure gift, a gift given to you by Jesus as he opens his arms wide on the cross to embrace you for eternity. **Amen.**

*Pastor Rolf Lungwitz*