

Sunday 30th June 2019 Freedom - life 24/7
Galatians 5:1,13-25 Luke 9:51-62

Freedom..... What do you think of when you hear the word freedom?

Songs by Wham or Robbie Williams?

The 1987 film about South Africa called Cry Freedom?

Pictures of refugees fleeing for freedom from war torn countries?

Someone just out of prison, gasping fresh air and seeing the sun shine?

A woman with every trace of ravaging drugs gone from her body?

With fresh anticipation these people can begin life anew, free from what has held them captive.

But we can enjoy all of the above and still not be truly free.

The opening sentence from our Galatians reading says 'For freedom Christ has set us free.'

Living a life led by the Holy Spirit is when we experience total freedom. By placing our trust in a good good God, who is greater than anything we can imagine so that we don't have to fear or strive or fight or...

Paul was writing to the people of new churches that had been established in Galatia (What we know as southern modern day Turkey). They were non-Jewish people who had come to faith in Jesus but the Jewish believers were trying to convince them to still abide by the Jewish Law. Paul was writing to them to remind them, convince them, that their faith in Jesus was what would save them, they did not have to follow the old Jewish Law.

And the first verse of our reading is the key to the whole of his letter to the Galatians

'For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore, and do not submit to a yoke of slavery'

Jesus Christ died on the cross, was buried and was then raised to life again so that, if we believe in Him and receive His loving and gracious gift of salvation, we are FREE. The necessity to follow the complicated details of the old law are gone. We just have to love God and love our neighbour as ourself.

But Paul warns us Don't abuse this freedom
 Don't use it for self indulgence or self gain or self importance
 Live and be led by the Holy Spirit

Put off old self, love God with every part of your being and your life will bear fruit of the Spirit

Paul goes on to write about the difference between the works of the flesh.... what we may naturally tend towards... and the fruit of the spirit within us.

People often think that being a Christian means a long list of things we can't do and a whole list of laws that we have to follow... they think of it as anything but freedom

But Paul explains that true freedom is found when we surrender to Jesus and live our lives led by the spirit

Fruit of love

joy
peace
patience
kindness
goodness
gentleness
faithfulness
self control

And that means 24/7 not just in church

How we live our lives outside of the church setting makes a difference

If we are followers of Jesus, disciples then our way of life should be consistent. Like a stick of rock.... BRIGHTON written all the way through it no matter where you cut in to it

Because if we are living for God then that means seeking to love Him and our neighbours 24/7

Are we the same? Or do we have 2 or 3 different lives... our church life, our home life, our work life? What we might call our private life?

Know that at the moment we are in the waiting time, waiting to see who the new Conservative party leader will be. Last week there were the headlines about Boris Johnson and what was reported as having happened in his home. Would we accept that that is his private life and it is of no concern to his running as party leader? we may have differing views on that

We are not perfect!!! SORRY to tell you!!!

We will get things wrong sometimes. But do we have the intention of seeking to be led by the Spirit to live according to His ways 24/7 or do we just save that for Sunday mornings?

Interesting to think about

How intentional are we in our day to day living?

Long time ago I hear a challenging question

How much evidence is there to convict me of being a Christian?

What characteristics do our lives show?

Are we closer to what Paul describes as works of the flesh? or fruit of the Spirit?

Listen to a different translation of those verses (The Passion 5:19-23)

The cravings of the self-life are obvious: Sexual immorality, lustful thoughts, pornography, chasing after things instead of God, manipulating others, hatred of those who get in your way, senseless arguments, resentment when others are favoured, temper tantrums, angry quarrels, only thinking of yourself, being in love with your own opinions, being envious of the blessings of others, murder, uncontrolled addictions, wild parties, and all other similar behaviour.

Haven't I already warned you that those who use their "freedom" for these things will not inherit the kingdom realm of God!

But the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit within you is divine love in all its varied expressions:

joy *that overflows,*

peace *that subdues,*

patience *that endures,*

kindness *in action,*

a life full of virtue,
faith *that prevails*,
gentleness *of heart*, and
strength *of spirit*.

Paul is saying that the fruit - singular - of the Holy Spirit is love - Love for God. Love for neighbours
He then gives a list of virtues by which this love is expressed...joy, peace, patience etc.

Our children and young people have been learning a song which is taken from a series of videos to help them remember this list of qualities and we shall watch that after we have shared communion when they have re-joined us. Be prepared!

Living life loving God and our neighbour may be the best way and the way that gives us greatest freedom but it is not always easy. Living our lives as devoted followers of Jesus, as disciples of Him, is a life long choice that is best done in community, with the encouragement and support of others. That is what being part of a church family is all about. But there is also the opportunity to participate in something called a Personal Discipleship Plan.

A PDP is an accompanied faith journey that you will take with a local mentor that explores six core questions that discern what God is doing in your life and what you might be called to next.

They are a great tool to help us in our individual discipleship journeys.

If you are interested and want to find out more then chat to me and come along to an evening on Wed 10th July at St Pauls Wokingham.

For freedom Christ has set us free

Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence
but love one another

Live by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh

Produce the fruit of love, love that will be seen in you as joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control.