

Sunday 2nd July Freedom!
Romans 6:12-23 Matthew 10:40-42

EVERYONE is welcome here this morning

Welcome to stay for a cup of cold water afterwards!

Actually we can do better than that! tea or coffee :-) Biscuits and maybe even cake!

Very welcome.

Not just us that welcome you here but Jesus also. He welcomes all of us

Want to think this morning more about the Romans passage. For those of us who were here last week we will follow on a bit

If you weren't then hopefully you will be encouraged by what I am about to share

People often think that being a Christian means that you follow a long list of rules about things that you cannot, or should not do

Well - the Bible does give us some things that we should not do

The most common 'Do not...' is Do not fear! 365 times in fact - one for each day of the year

The things that the Bible teaches us not to do are actually for our own good and the good of those around us

God loves us. You and me! And He loves us with a perfect, pure, selfless love so if he teaches us not to do something then it is because we would be better off not doing it!

This passage was written by a man named Paul - so not direct words from God - but Paul had, by the time he wrote this passage - become a close follower of Jesus and was writing to the early believers in Rome, trying to help them live more in tune with how Christ wanted them to live

He is urging them not to let sin control them, not to let it have power over their lives

Sin being the thoughts, actions, desires that were harmful to themselves and to others and that went against God's teaching

He uses the strong language of being a slave to sin

Being a slave means surrendering your life to the control of someone or something else

And Paul, in his opening sentence, suggests that we have a choice about this

Don't let sin exercise control over you says Paul

We have a choice, and this is where we are following on from last week, we have a choice because Jesus Christ actually offers us a way out from being captive to the power and temptation of things that are ultimately not good for us and are not part of God's loving and perfect plan for us and for our world. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection to new life a way of freedom is available to us.

Colin & Tracy and Isabella's Godparents have already stated, as have many of us in the past, that we turn away from sin and the devil and turn to Christ

That is great.... but maybe easier to say and believe in here on a Sunday morning than it is sometimes out there in our big wide world the rest of the week.

Because we can become slaves to all sorts of things, not always things that seem bad, but to things that can actually dominate our lives

Fashion TV Fitness work alcohol mortgage wealth the list can go on and on

If you are not sure what you may be captive to then maybe do a careful review of how you spend your money or your time which websites do you frequently visit and for how long?

If these things, or anything else becomes our main focal point and we become controlled in achieving that thing then we are slave to it and not surrendered to God and His will for us

Because we cannot serve 2 masters.

And God actually offers us something far better than any of these things

Life in all its fullness with Him

He offers us not only freedom FROM x y or z but freedom FOR life, for joy for contentment

As I said last week temptation is temptation because it is easy or attractive

We don't usually get tempted by horrid or difficult things

So we need the power of Christ in us - His Holy Spirit in order to consistently say no to sin and the devil and to keep our eyes and goal set on Jesus and His best ways for us and keep walking towards Him

Those that were here last week... do you remember what the word baptism means?

Submerge or dunk like fabric being dyed

When we are baptised we are submerged in Christ and given a new identity

We become a new creation with a new identity

But we have to learn how to live in that new identity

Those who have been married... think back to that first time that you were pronounced husband or wife!

You had a new identity... the husband or wife or...

But I suspect that none of you were the same in that identity as husband or wife as you were a year or 5 year or even 50 years later

What about, those of you who have had children... when the doctor or nurse first handed you your first child and called you mum or dad for the first time

You had to learn, and probably still are learning what it means to live in that identity

4 years ago this weekend I was made a priest in Wells Cathedral

I have had to learn and am still learning to grow into that new identity

As Christians we have to learn to walk into our new identity

Free from the power and control of sin because we have the power of Christ living in us

That is what the word sanctification means it is a gift from God that we have to learn to live out in our day to day lives in order to live in the freedom that Christ offers us

Isabella is too young to have made that choice for herself. Colin and Tracy have chosen to have her baptised and so they and her God parents and in fact all of us, have a responsibility to help her grow up knowing what promises have been made on her behalf so that when she is old enough she will be able to make an informed choice about the path that she wants to take. Whether she wants to choose to walk in the freedom Christ offers her through his death and resurrection

All of us here this morning have a choice about whether we want to live as slaves to sin and those things around us that can be so tempting

Or whether we want to live surrendered to God, free to live in the here and now with Jesus, surrendered to him and on into eternity

Because the nicest bottle of wine, the smartest phone, the most comfortable car, the newest fashion the fittest body may be good in the short term and may bring us some happiness But ultimately it is the joy and life that Christ offers that will bring us the greatest of all joy and contentment and life in all its fullness.