**“Called to Freedom”**

Psalm 16

1 Kings 19:9b-21

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

 Pentecost 3, June 25/26, 2022

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. For you were called to freedom, brothers.”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

“I went sky diving; I went rocky mountain climbing. I went two point seven seconds on a bull named Fu Man Chu. And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter and I gave forgiveness I’d been denying … and [my dying dad said] someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying.” Tim McGraw sang: “I became the husband that most of the time I wasn’t”. I became a friend a friend would like to have. Fishing wasn’t such an imposition (and I went three times that year). I finally read the Good Book, and I took a good long hard look at what I’d do if I could do it all again … and then I went sky diving; I went rocky mountain climbing. I went two point seven seconds on a bull named Fu Man Chu. And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter and I gave forgiveness I’d been denying … and my dad said someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying. Like tomorrow was a gift and you’ve got eternity to think about what you’d **do** with it (what **could you** do with it? What **could** **I** do with it? What **would** **I** do with it?). I went sky diving; I went rocky mountain climbing. I went two point seven seconds on a bull named Fu Man Chu. And I loved deeper and I spoke sweeter and I gave forgiveness I’d been denying … and my dad said someday I hope you get the chance to live like you were dying.”

In this very well-known country song, expressed is a **strong** **desire for the days of our life to be walked in a way different than the norm**. I recognize (in the song that speaks to so many) a desperate (and, maybe, far too late) **plea** from a father to his son (“**hoping**” as he calls it) to get him (with himself) to **perform in a huge way better than he normally does or has been**. The world **seeks** (and this song puts words to that **seeking**) to deal with the days or our lives in a way **enhanced substantially** by joy and freedom (not slavery to our own lacking). It **wishes** and **hopes** that something better for Sundays through to the next Sunday (and year after year after year in that) would be “**lived so much the louder**”. We **beg** (and do that **begging through prayer or just regret and a longing that we just can’t shake**) that our kids will excel and thrive on things that we **ignored** or **never could attain-to** or even **muster the energy to try-for**. I hear (in the song and beyond the song) people **wanting**, yet that want is **fickle** and **unsatisfying** even when we think (for some moments) that we’d gotten what we’d strived for. “Sky diving and bull-riding and the serious giving of forgiveness and reading and caring about the Good Book and its Author and then parenting and spousing and whatever else is not **NOW EXPERIENCE, just doing them**”, these are **hopes** and **dreams** and **goals yet disappointingly wished for and hoped for sung about and embraced in a culturally joint feeling of regret and underwhelmingness that we’d wish wasn’t the case**. I hear that expressed and aligned-with as the appeal of this song demonstrates.

**God** **offers** a **“walk of life” that is different and glorious, even specific in its guiding and living and life enhancement**. “**I** Want to **Walk** as a Child of the Light; I want to **Follow Jesus**” and we enjoy being able to (something He **offers the ability for** from out of the freeing gift of redemption). **Walking with** and **following Jesus** then happens, and does in an ever-increasing way, allowed to be awoken-into and by our own allowing of it to happen by God’s grace within the **afterglow (wake) and structure** of God’s gift to us of a freedom from bondage to sin, death, and the devil (and Hell).

**Text**

We’re free from those things unless we re-enslave ourselves back to them. We’re free (we **ARE**)**“from bondage to death and Hell and even the slavery of making a PRACTICE of sinfulness by Christ who has set us free**”, Galatians says. That’s what it reminds of: that humanity is **“Called” to Freedom”, and that through Christ Jesus’ victory from all that’s bad for us / evil toward and in us and, even, complacent in us … by His sacrificial death for us on a cross. Our “Freedom” is from bandage (literal bondage) to our propensity to sin (and practice that). But that “freedom” for us (all humanity) got bought and paid-for and individually promised us by His baptizing of us / adoption to His Father of us into the Holy Family / His brotherhood as He shares Himself with us / baptizes us into Him and His death and resurrection, granting us the Heavenly Father to father us. And the effects are LIFE forever and abundant even now because of the forever part … all by promise and gifts**. “So **live** like you are **LIVING**” (not dying, except to the re-enslavings of your moments **with weaknesses and sin and still self-centeredness, but emptiness in that**). **Live** rising from a purposeful confession to forgiveness and “**live as in Christ knowing Him risen and ascended to reign over all that’s you and your family and your situations and your circumstances and your work and school and dwelling and neighborhoods / free from concern for only yourself, cared for and directed / known by God who’s Your Father and Jesus who’s your Savior and brother**”.

The greatest of the prophets (**Elijah**) needed reminded of that. Singing with Tim McGraw (had he had the song), he **forgot** God being with Him, so gave up its documented. He dreaded what he thought he had in loneliness and a lack of success with futility and a wishing that things could **feel different … considerably different**. But he’d forgotten that they **were significantly different**. He **WAS** “Called to Freedom” and the following of God to proclaim that freedom to others. He was told of tasks he was to do (a purpose with divine consequence) and of seven thousand souls that would be brothers and sisters of his / a fellowship to him.

And **Jesus**, not concerned with **longevity** of the earthly part of life, but had a purpose and duty (a known Mission to His short days upon this earth expressed in Luke chapter nine), **His determination was shown**. No sky diving or bull riding for Him, yet the simple things enjoyed because of the **Mission** and **it alone following the Father’s will** that led to a return to Him after the work and glory forevermore. Jesus had no comfortable “place to lay His head” yet **didn’t care** because **His comfort and delight was more important than anything else by miles … He knew what freedom to do the Father’s will meant … He was SENT**.

This, by the way, is one of my **favorite texts in Scripture**. Luke 9, verse 51, **hinges all that’s Gospel** … and that hinge is the **Mission** and **focus on it of Jesus**: “When the days drew near for Him to be taken up, He **SET HIS FACE to go to Jerusalem**.”

**Application**

In one sense, we are **free in all things because of Christ**. Luther’s got a quote (that’s been made a T-shirt): “Sin Boldly”, and that’s been abused to describe a perversion of the fact (which Paul follows-up on in the Galatians reading), but Luther’s point was emphasizing “why we’re justified (saved)” and God’s redemption through Christ and then forgiveness and gracious promises through baptism is no **semi-successful, yet-to-be-fully completed task by Him because sin has been defeated and we do, now, live “free of it’s end result” in a “state of grace” (and that by divine promise)**. Yet “don’t use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh”, Paul says, “but through love **serve one another**, for the whole law is **fulfilled** (and here’s the sanctification that is freeing in serving the desire of God for an abundant life): just ‘love your neighbor as yourself after loving the Lord God with all your heart, soul, and mind.’”

Sanctified (or holy) “freedom” is “**walking by the Spirit**, **not gratifying the desires of the flesh for they are against (and contrary to) the Spirit**” **/ just don’t do it or practice it (what’s enslaving)**. A whole list of don’ts he provides in Galatians 5 starting at 19 and going to 21. It says that “those **willingly doing any of these things (though made free, yet re-submitting to a yoke of slavery to them)** **will not inherit the kingdom of God (the final gift, so selling yourself into that slavery**.” Don’t **do those things in a practicing (flesh-desiring) way. You were “Called to Freedom”**.

And the “**fruit of the that Freedom (in the Spirit)** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law”, so Freedom from, even, the Law and its condemning nature**. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus **have crucified that slavery** **(which can and will always when remembered effect life’s abundant walk)**, **crucified slavery to sin (or killed it off with Christ’s sacrifice) the flesh with its passions and desires**.”

**Practically**, the key to an abundant (FREE enjoyable) life is to **REMEMBER the gifts of God that are personally for and sent through you**. “Let us ever walk with Jesus” **REMEMBERING** (“**in REMEMBRANCE OF**”) what are His gifts and promises, setting (that way) **OUR** “faces (purposefully in that remembrance) to **go to Jerusalem**” which means the much better and gloriously enhanced place He has planned for us today and tomorrow (the location and destiny and frame of mind of a newly redeemed Jerusalem because of Jesus’ passion work there. That **REMEMBERING** (and all that it **births and grows in abundant characteristics**)is “following Jesus and His example” … in **love of even this life and our neighbors**. In +His name, Jesus. Amen.