



A Sermon preached in Christ Church, Grosse Pointe, Michigan  
by The Reverend Andrew Van Culin, *Rector*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 8, Year C)  
26 June 2022

*In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

*For freedom Christ has set us free.*  
- Galatians 5:1

We may find no better Biblical verse for modern American's than this verse from Saint Paul's letter to the Church in Galatia: *for freedom Christ has set us free.*

We Americans cherish our freedom – the freedom to make our way through life's choices independent of coercion or pressure from any institution or state, even if those choices are destructive to myself or to my neighbor. For us 21<sup>st</sup> century Americans the freedom to choose is more important than the quality of the choices we have before us or the effects our choices will have on those around us.

The freedom is the thing.

And so it was, to some extent, for Paul – in Christ we, and all people, are set free. Truly free – neither Christ the Son, nor God the Father, stands over us demanding a particular choice, threatening life or limb or eye for our disobedience. In Christ there is no withholding of love or forgiveness until perfection of faithfulness [either in *orthodoxy* (that is, right belief) or in *orthopraxy*, (that is, right practice)] is achieved.

Such freedom is not new to Paul, of course – he is simply reinforcing an ancient thread of the Judeo-Christian tradition . . . even in this morning's reading you will note that Jesus refuses to rain down fire on the inhospitable Samaritan village (the same fundamental sin for which Sodom and Gamora



are destroyed in ages past), any more than he will rain down fire on Caiaphas and Pilate and all those crowds and soldiers who join in the mockery of his crucifixion.

No, freedom, Paul and Jesus remind us is the ancient way of God – it is, even, the original way of God. As the first stories of Eve and Adam remind us, even then, in the infancy of human history, God imbued humanity with freedom – the freedom to choose between good and evil, even if the tragic choice we make brings evil to our lives or the lives of those about us.

From our beginning, scripture reminds us, God has set us free.:

*For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters;*

But that is not where Paul (or Christ or God, for that matter) stops.

*only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence,  
but through love become slaves to one another.*

*For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment,  
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Yes, to freedom are we called, but *also* to love.

But even that is a freedom. You are free to love or to hate. You are free to be at peace with yourself and your neighbor or to go forth for war. You are free to be licentious and gluttonous or to live with self-control and righteousness. You are free to consume all things for your pleasure or to develop generosity for your neighbor and to steward are things for their preservation and wellbeing.

You are free to live as kings and queens for whom all things are made; or you are free to live as slaves to love for one another.

*For freedom Christ has set us free.* True. Neither God nor Christ holds anything over you or anyone one – God’s life and love, God’s mercy and forgiveness, are not condition in any way to anyone.

But that makes things hard – for now you are free to choose the life and faith *you* will live.



In freedom you must choose. You alone must choose between two ways of life: the life of the flesh, the life of self-pleasure and self-love and the life of the Spirit, the way of Christ, that is the way of sacrificial love for one another.

Indeed, for freedom Christ has set us free. And to love Christ has called us all.