

The Lord's Assertion

John 8:31-36

Reformation Sunday, October 30, 2016

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The Lord reveals to you a proper way of thinking about sin and salvation. He reveals that it is slavery and then freedom.

Anyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave does not always do slavey things. Sometimes a slave is at rest. Sometimes a slave is with his family. Sometimes a slave is raising his children. Sometimes a slave is enjoying a holiday. But even when the slave is doing those things the slave is still a slave. While he may do those things for a while, he will always have to return to doing the things of a slave. If he is a household slave, he will have to return to the duties of the household. If he is a field working slave, he will have to return to working the fields. He will not escape those things even though he does not do them all of the time because he is a slave.

Our Lord asserts that anyone who sins is a slave to sin. Sin is pernicious. It only takes one sin to indicate that you are living in the statues of slavery to sin. And just like slaves in this life you will not always sin while you are a slave to sin. Even while you are a slave to sin there will be times when you will commit acts of righteousness. There will be times when you do something good or kind to your neighbor. There will be times of devotion to God. But those acts of righteousness and those moments of devotion to God will not liberate you from your slavery to sin. Since you are slaves to sin, you will have to return to your sins. There is no alternative. You are a slave to sin. Any slave to sin will return to his sins. He cannot escape them.

Understand what this means. This mean that you do not have a full conception of sin until you understand what the Lord says in this passage. There is a temptation on the part of many to think of sins as a series of individual acts. We either think of the things that we have done that God has forbidden, or we think of the things that God has enjoined which we have failed to do. Those things are simply indicators of our slavery. They are not the slavery itself. And unless we come to terms with the slavery, we will never come to thanksgiving for the liberty.

I think the reason that we like to think of sins as a series of events it because we believe that we are justified by our good works. If we honestly believed that we were saved by Christ Jesus and that our righteousness is only in Him, then we would not be afraid to admit that we are slaves to sin. Our fear of admitting that we are slaves to sin and our insistence that we talk about sins in terms of individual acts that we have done or failed to do indicates that we still believe that we are saved by our good works. And Luther rolls over in his grave.

Here is what I mean. If I believe that my sins are nothing other than a series of acts that I have committed against God's Law, then that means that I can take credit for the times that I did something right before God. If my sins are nothing other than a series of episodes where I failed to do something right before God, then I can take credit for all of the times that I did something right before God. But why would I want to take credit for the things that I do right before God unless I were trying to be saved by them? Such people are not trusting in Jesus for their salvation or they would be willing to admit that their sins are indications that they are enslaved to sin entirely and need the Son to set them free.

If a person continues to think about sin as a series of acts that they commit or fail to commit, they will either wind up licentious and think that they can do enough to make up for the bad that they have done in which case they are damned, or they will become a legalist and read the Bible as nothing more than rule book of dos and don'ts and try to figure out how they can keep all of the laws of God in order to

lead a perfect life and nothing will be forbidden to them unless God specifically spells it out to them in detail and they will be willing to quibble with God over every little detail hoping that their barren life of keeping rules will be alleviated by God offering them a little bit of fun.

That means that admitting that you are enslaved to sin is ironically liberating. Admitting that you are enslaved to sin liberates you from the need of reading the Bible and paying attention to all of the rules to make sure that you have done everything just right. Admitting that you are enslaved to sin, also liberates you from licentiousness which is a terrible form of slavery itself. There is nothing more dangerous and no heart more despairing than one who is enslaved to pleasure and will do absolutely anything to get it.

Admitting that you are a slave actually liberates you from legalism and licentiousness, but it does not liberate you from sin and hell. For that you will need the Son.

This then produces the life of thanksgiving and gives you something to sing about. If sin is nothing more than rules to keep there is no reason to sing in that and some "Christians" who still believe that God wants nothing more than obedience from them sing, not because there is joy in singing, but because God has commanded them to do so. And so they wind up singing songs about themselves and what they are doing for God and not a word is breathed about what God has done for them. If they did breathe such a word, they might just have to give thanks.

For the Son has a permanent place in the home. In this case our Lord is not talking about a permanent place in the home of sin rather the Son has a permanent place in the home of the Father. If there is a Son, there is also a Father. One does not have a Son without a Father nor a Father without a Son. The Son has a permanent place in the home of the Father.

The Son is the Son who pleases the Father. He is not enslaved to sin. Because He is not enslaved to sin, no sin is manifested in His life. For those who are legalists this is beyond understanding and many of us have a hard time understanding it. How could the Son have known all of the rules of the Father much less kept them? Well, the Son did not have to approach the question in that way. He was not enslaved to sin, therefore sin did not manifest itself in this life. He is the One with whom the Father is well pleased.

Furthermore the Son is the King of Israel. Of all the nations that are on earth including the United States only one nation has received the promise from God that it would become everlasting and that is the nation of Israel. All Israel needed was a king with whom the Father was pleased. Since the Father is pleased with the Son, the Son is the king of Israel who makes Israel the everlasting Kingdom. This is why when Gabriel announces the birth of the Son to Mary, he tells Mary that the Son will sit on the throne of David and reign over Jacob forever. This is why the Son is risen from the dead. You cannot establish an everlasting Kingdom if you are dead. But He lives and His Kingdom is forever. And so the Son remains part of the home of the Father forever. His place in the home is unquestioned and unrivaled. If the slaves are going to be set free, they will need to be set free by such a Son.

Furthermore the Son is the One who pleases the Father by doing the Father's will. The Son accomplished the Father's will by offering His life. His life is redemption from our sins to be sure. The offering of His life is atonement to be sure, but the point that our Lord is emphasizing this morning is that the offering of His life is the ultimate act of obedience to the Father's will. No one can be more obedient to his Father than if his father asks for his life and he gives it. No one pleases the Father more than the Son and so when the Son gives His life in accordance with the Father's will, the Father restores it to Him.

This is furthermore why admitting that we are slaves to sin is liberating. If we admit that we are slaves to sin, it liberates us from paying attention to a bunch of rules. Legalists get lost in the forest of the

rules that they are trying to keep and never really keep any of them because they never see that God is demanding that they lay down their life. You want to fulfill your vocations perfectly to the Father? Then lay down your life for them. Otherwise you get nothing left but a bunch of rules and regulations to keep and two dimensional and flat life devoid of what and how God would have you live.

Admitting that we are slaves relieves us of this necessity. We cannot keep the rules, but admitting that we cannot keep the rules does not save us. You can admit that you are a sinner and still go to hell. The Son must set you free and this is what the Son has done. He has set you free. All of His actions were designed to set you free and when He accomplished all of His actions He set you free. He liberated you from your slavery. He liberated you from your slavery to sin. He has given to you a new existence. He has given you a new life and a new birth. He has raised you from the dead. He has given you a permanent place in the home of the Father.

This truth the Son has revealed to you in His word. And that is why we treasure the Word. We do not treasure the Word because God has commanded us to treasure His word. If that were the reason we treasured the Word, then we would never treasure it as we ought. We treasure it because it reveals to us that the Son has liberated us from our slavery and given us permanent places in the home of the Father.

That is why we would die for the Word. That is why we would read the Word. That is why we would let nothing come in between us and the Word. That is why we praise the Word. What better reason could there be?

And if I may, that is why Luther risked his life for the Word. He did not do it out of obedience to the Father as if the Father were really a task master and not a Father. Luther risked his life because of the joy of having a permanent place in the home of the Father and was unwilling to relinquish it. The other people who supported him in the same Reformation risked their lives in the same way and for the same reasons. It was not because they were obedient. If it were then they would be slaves again. It was because they had a permanent place in the home of the Father and they were unwilling to give that up.

And so when you face life and face it you will, do not face it as a slave, for you are not slave. Face it as a freedman. Live as one who has received a permanent place in the family because you have received it. The Son has given it to you. His Word testifies to this true. His Word is truth.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.