



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

THIS SUNDAY June 30 & BEYOND”

‘False Freedom’ vs Freedom with Jesus



People actually turned away from Jesus? That’s what we hear about in Sunday’s Gospel reading from Luke’s account (June 29, 2019). Incredible.

After all he had done already? And the thousands and thousands of people who had already benefitted from his power ministry of healing and exorcism and resurrections?

What in the world?! What could possibly keep them from turning to Jesus? Really? Being face to face with Jesus and then turning their face away from him?

Yes, these were of a Samaritan village, and many people in bible studies will make much of the Samaritans having nothing to do with Jews. But not so fast: that was NOT the case with the people in that different Samaritan village from which came “the woman at the well.” They heard her testimony, and invited Jesus to stay longer with them. And he did many powerful works there. They turned their faces TOWARD him, not away. So that Samaritan vs Jew argument won’t work here.

You know, there have been many, many famous Christian leaders over the 2000 years (approximately) since Jesus rose from the dead who spent much of their early lives turned away from Jesus. Why? Were they secret Samaritans, or was there something else going on in their lives causing them a fear of the face to face?

And what brought them around?

One of the most famous was Augustine, from the North African town of Hippo. We know of his story because he wrote about it. Of course, one of the key elements in his story of eventual conversion was that someone close to him had been praying for him relentlessly. Talkin’ bout his mother, Monica! This truly was a woman of virtue. She suffered greatly because of her husband’s adulterous relationships. And her son was eventually following early on in his father’s footsteps. She was not about to let that happen, if her prayers to God had anything to do with it.

One of the other lessons for Sunday, from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians, may actually give us an answer to the Samaritan refusal to receive from Jesus, as well as give a glimpse into the very things that Augustine says got in the way for him (and for which his mother's prayers helped clear the way to his new life in Christ).

Paul wrote that we need to "Stand firm", and to not submit -- again -- to the yoke of slavery. He's talking to those who were already Christians. Which means that whatever this slavery is all about, it is something that has the ability to come around and get us all shackled up AGAIN. I think that a lot of people struggle with Christianity because they just don't see freedom and slavery at work in their lives, at least not for what they really are.

I think a lot of people start to tune Paul out when he says not to gratify the desires of the flesh and then lists them. I think a lot of people tune out Jesus even if he they hadn't heard a thing he taught about, because they already have an interior conviction of what is bad (immoral and sinful) in their lives, and that Jesus represents a challenge to such. And listening to Paul talk makes us all uncomfortable!! And it seems no one is left out of his list. Take "pleasure" as an example: Years of hook-ups and casual relationships don't actually make you an experienced lover (don't you know!), but make it more difficult to experience true love at all. Love is a decision to make your life totally about another person, not a magic spell that somehow turns a selfish person selfless. Oh, there is no doubt that love and pleasure can go together, and the bible does not deny such (just read the Song of Solomon). BUT, in fact, the more you EQUATE love with pleasure, the more you numb the desire for the real thing and then leave yourself unable to live into that kind of relationship when you want to. It feels like freedom in the beginning, but ends in slavery, which is why so many marriages fail and people that are never alone can be the loneliest.

The trouble is that we usually can't tell the difference until we start to feel the chains of our freedoms. Or, if not left to our own demise, if when we hear the teaching and preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit convicts our hearts and minds of what road of deception we have been heading down, and we turn our face to Christ.

This was in fact St. Augustine's experience. By the time he realized that he wanted the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that Paul tells us is the fruit of the Spirit, his life had already been heading in

the opposite direction for a while. Even though it would take years to be free enough to live the life he wanted (years covered in prayer by that virtuous mother of his), the good news is that God began working in Augustine's life immediately. He gave him a growing awareness of his bondage to loosen the chains and taste of his freedom to encourage him, until finally Augustine was able to walk out of the prison he'd spent so many years building.

What about devotion to Jesus feels like slavery to you? What are the freedoms that you think he would be denying you? Be honest and bold in asking, because if your freedoms are really slavery, there's no point in making the walls of your prison thicker by pretending they're not. Before it is too late, let Jesus Christ break your slaveries, and set you free to serve him in great thanksgiving and praise.

Father Robert Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Third Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21 Psalm 16:5-11 Galatians 5:1, 13-25, Luke 9:51-62

CALENDAR

SUNDAY: Third Sunday after Pentecost

8:30a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)

—The entrance to the church is on 6th Avenue—

Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.

TUESDAY: Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

FRIDAY

AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

SUNDAY

The Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

8:00am Low Mass

10:30am Solemn Mass

AA Meeting

7:00p Little Apple Group (Parish Hall)

An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego
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