

FREEDOM FOR WHAT?

Text - John 8:31-38

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Mass.

Sunday, July 29, 1962, 9:30 A.M.

Introduction:

In President F. D. Roosevelt's annual message to Congress of January 6, 1941, he proposed that U.S. lend materials and weapons to the democracies fighting the menace of Hitlerism. If that were done, he remarked, the democracies would win. The victory would make possible "a world founded upon four essential human freedoms" -- freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. These four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression

freedom of worship

freedom from want

freedom from fear

were included in part in the famous Atlantic charter prepared by Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt off the coast of Newfoundland in August 9-12, 1941, and issued to the public the 14th of August.

I was a youth of 16 years then, and I remember very well how these four freedoms and the Atlantic Charter became the expression of the victory aims of the democratic nations.

Freedom was a key word then, and continues to be a key word in the world of today. Specially freedom from oppression. Just notice the great number of nations that have won their independence. Perhaps more than 50 in the last 15 years.

But just as important are the other freedoms:

-- freedom of speech and expression -- millions and millions today -- more than ever -- live under tyranny and are denied freedom of expression.

-- freedom of worship -- Persecution in communist and in so-called Christian countries.

-- freedom from want -- Yet today millions and millions of hungry people.

-- freedom from fear -- but look at Algeria and Congo, where millions are gripped by the fear of violent death.

Strangely enough, one of the basic words of Christian faith is freedom. This is the reason why the Christian faith can speak meaningfully to present-day man. Hear the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John:

"You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

"So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

- I. Let us examine some of the areas of life where the freedom of which Jesus speaks operates: First, let us consider some of the negative aspects of this freedom.
- A. The Christian is free from sin --
Romans 6:1-11 -- Miss the mark -- Not being faithful
God in Christ offers us forgiveness and entrance into a new realm of life where we breathe the air of fellowship with God.
- Paul cried: "Wretched that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."
- B. The Christian is free from the world and the dominance of men.
1. By world we mean the human society and its power structures, as they autonomously and constantly play the role of God for men and women.
We are not to conform ourselves to the world --
-- atomic shelters mania -- hate the Germans mania--
-- hate the Japanese mania -- hate the Russians mania --
-- status-seeking --
 2. Free from subjection to men. "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves to men" (I Cor.)
- II. But what is this freedom for? Let us turn to the positive side.
- A. We are free to live deeply.
1. Not on the surface of life. The book, A Testament of Devotion by Thomas Kelly speaks about living life on the surface and living life in depth; the center of strength; the world of appearance -- the eating, the speaking, the working, the sleeping.
Earning a living controls our lives. -- But what happens deep inside of us? Let us look at some examples: -- Brother Lawrence;
-- the Juggler of Notre Dame.
- Can we see our lives suffused with the presence of God?
Can you bring up children with the consciousness that God is with you? Can you cook that way? And now to all of you -- are you aware of the presence of God in your daily work and life?
- This is what freedom is for: to live in the realm of the Spirit.
To live life in the dimension of depth -- where God is and can be experienced as the sustaining power.

Not freedom for comfort, but for joy and service.

- B. We are now free to take up the cross, to live sacrificially.
Hear the words of Jesus: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Mark 8:34 "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." What does it mean to take up the cross? What did it mean for Jesus?

1. Temptation -- to be obedient to God and his plans
2. Set his face to Jerusalem.

What does it mean to us?

1. German church in 1934 -- Declaration of Barmen -- recognized only the Lordship of Christ.
Niemöller -- God is my Führer
2. For Martin Luther King and the others
3. For you and me -- to join faith and obedience

Conclusion =

St. Francis visits the Sultan Saladin

We are free from sin, the world, from men

We are free for -- life in depth
 life in obedience