

**"TRUE FREEDOM"**  
**Exodus 32:1-4; 7-8; 19-24**  
**Sermon preached by Dr. Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, July 6, 2014**

One of the criticisms you hear a lot about the way we celebrate our national holidays in America like July 4th is that we've turned this important remembrance into a day to go to the beach, the mall and the ball park. Some would say we take our freedoms for granted along with lost any sense of the high cost that was paid so you and I can be here today living in a free country.

This morning I invite you to consider what freedom really means. And I want you to go beyond thinking about our political freedoms, which of course are tremendously important, to our most basic freedom to be human beings created in God's image. Again, political freedoms are important but keep this in mind: even a person living under a totalitarian system, stripped of all political rights can still claim the freedom of a human being created in the image of God. St. Paul in a Roman prison, John McCain trapped in the Hanoi Hilton and Nelson Mandela languishing for 25 years in a South African penitentiary.

So, what is it that makes us truly free? Let's begin by saying what real freedom is not. Real freedom doesn't mean you can do whatever you want, whenever you want to do it without worrying about consequences.

Last month it was Senior Week down in Ocean City. Most of these kids have just graduated from high school and are on their own for the first time. One of the ways they declare their independence and exercise their new freedom by doing whatever they want to do because **"I'm 18 and my parents don't own me"**. Are these kids really savoring their first taste of freedom?

Let's now move quickly on to adulthood. Are we really and truly free just because we can do what we want to do as adults? Let's day dream a little. Even if you were independently wealthy, had everything your appetites desired and could come and go as you pleased with no boss or any other authority figure breathing down you neck, are you really and truly free? Not according to the Bible. Real freedom only comes when you are willingly and intentionally dependent on God.

Remember the Exodus story? The Hebrews were the Pharaoh's slaves for 400 years. God, through Moses, liberated them. But not so fast. Just because they were liberated from slavery, didn't mean they were automatically and truly free. This was demonstrated when Moses left them behind when he went up on Mount Sinai and didn't come back down right away the Hebrews said to one another. **"Since Moses left us on our own let's do whatever we want."** So, out in that sandy desert they threw themselves a Senior Week minus the ocean. They built a golden calf and partied hardy. It was as if they were declaring **"I'm 18, and Moses can't tell me what I can and cannot do."**

Well, when Moses came back the party was over and to teach them that real freedom only comes from being dependent on God, they were kept in the wilderness for forty years so they could

finally lose their old slave mentality before they could enter the Promised Land as free men and women. That forty years was a life time in those days, which should tell us that becoming truly free is a life-long process. It doesn't happen with the snap of your fingers. Real freedom grows in you, in fits and starts, as your spiritual life ebbs and flows during the different stages of your life. But before this process can even begin there needs to be at least a smidgen of trust even if that trust is borne out of desperation.

Remember Mark's gospel story of Jesus healing the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus' 12 year old daughter? In each case the unnamed woman and Jairus approached Jesus because there was nothing left to do. Both had a "what have I got to lose?" attitude because both had tried everything and came up with nothing. So, for whatever reason both Jairus and the woman placed whatever trust they had in Jesus. They had a tiny bit of trust, the size of that small mustard seed Jesus spoke of in his parables.

So they trusted Jesus and as a result they were set free to be whole, truly alive and truly human.

But even though Jesus' healing touch in both cases brought about two great and wonderful miracles we miss the real point of these stories if we don't recognize that these miraculous recoveries were not ends in themselves, but a sign that God's kingdom broke into our lives. Certainly their initial encounters with Jesus were turning points in their lives, but it was just the beginning. They both had the rest of their lives before them because both their physical healings were just the first step becoming their true selves, as God created them to be.

That's what real freedom is. The freedom to become your real self. Once we were enslaved to our old sinful selves but when Christ liberates us we find out who we really are.

Here's a parable of you and I being given our freedom:

Imagine this: you are a beautiful bronze statue created by the Master Craftsman. You are a perfect reflection of your creator's best self, wonderfully made. Somehow you find yourself perched on the Bay Bridge when all of a sudden you have a great fall. Down you go several hundred feet into the water. Down you go another ninety feet to the murky bottom where you find yourself stuck in the mud. Being a bronze statue you can't set yourself free, so there you stay. Slowly, but surely your beauty is covered by slime, then barnacles, then rust until your beautiful form is now unrecognizable. Your true self, who you are created to be, is now disfigured by layers of grime. You are absolutely lost.

But you are not forgotten. Ever since your fall, your creator, the Master Craftsman, has been looking for you and soon enough you are found. Your creator now becomes your life saver as you are plucked from the murky deep and brought back home. You are now free, but not completely. You see, you are still covered by years of slime, rust and grime. The real you is there but your image is hidden over so, your creator begins the long, hard task of cleaning you up,

removing your false cover and retuning you to your original beauty until you can cry out, “Free at last, free at last. Thank God almighty, I’m free at last.”

So gaining freedom is a life long process. It begins when you trust just enough to let Jesus find and heal you and it continues on as the Holy Spirit works with you and within you until you are completely healed and made whole.

So, sure, political freedoms are important, very important and on July 4 we should celebrate and commemorate the Founders and their cause. But even more basic and more important is our personal freedom as human beings created in God’s image. For that freedom insures that we will grow into our fullest humanity as God’s children for in the end it is in Jesus Christ that we find our truest freedom.

Let us pray!