

THE FREEDOM THE LAW GIVES

A Sermon for Sunday, Oct 29, 2017

The 21st Sunday after Pentecost and Reformation Sunday (500)

St. Paul's Cathedral, Kamloops, the Very Rev. Ken Gray

NOTES ONLY

To the GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW . . . which reads:

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, **which commandment** in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the **greatest and first** commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang **all the law and the prophets.**"

I would like to add something about the Dead Sea Scrolls . . . with first, some background:

- 'Dead Sea Scrolls': from Wadi Daliyeh to Masada, but especially Qumran on the North-West shore of the Dead Sea
- Principal Significance: key primary local written material for the times
- The scrolls highlight Jewish religious pluralism of 300 BCE-70 CE
- Largely ideologically consistent library of 900+ MSS
- Likely collected by the Essenes, an ascetic, pious and significant group beyond the Pharisees and Sadducees
- Most not written at Qumran, but brought from elsewhere; differing scribal systems

And next a special text, 1QH XV-XVI

Cleaving to your Holy Spirit,
I will hold fast to the truth of your covenant,

That I may serve You in truth and wholeness of heart,
and that I may love Your name.

And I know that (humanity) is not righteous except through You,
and therefore I implore You,
by the spirit which you have given me,
to perfect Your favours to Your servant for ever,
purifying me by Your Holy Spirit,
and drawing me near to You by Your grace
according to the abundance of Your mercies.

I know, O Lord, that You are merciful and compassionate,
long-suffering and rich in grace and truth,
pardoning transgression and sin....

Reject not the face of Your servant

People, in every age, trying to live what the prayer book calls a devout, religious and Holy life, not only for the cause of human flourishing, but in gracious response to God's creative and creating initiative

People who do not simply take life as it comes, people responding out of the many varied experiences, pitfalls and delights of daily living

People, like you and me . . .

People, who have very particular needs and aspirations, such as Luther who we remember specially today as many celebrate Reformation Sunday on the 500th anniversary of Luther's Wittenberg declaration against the Roman Catholic Church and Augustinian order of his day.

The Gospel read today in many Lutheran churches comes from John 8:31-36

Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and **the truth will make you free.**” They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free’?” Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So **if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.**”

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Loving God and loving your neighbor could very well be the freedom you desperately need -- a freedom from your own self-love.

Being set free is the kind of freedom that is known only in relationship -- with God and with your neighbor.