

# Sermon for The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

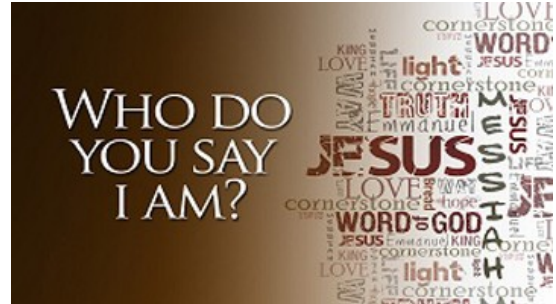
**Date:** July 4 2021

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**Old Testament:** Genesis 3:1-7

**Epistle Reading:** 1 Timothy 2:1-7

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 9:18-27



**Sermon Text:** Luke 9:18-27

**Sermon Title:** A Free Slave

**Introit:** Psalm 132:13-16; Antiphon: Psalm 132:8

## Hymns:

- LSB 966 – Before You Lord We Bow
- LSB 822 – Alleluia! Let Praises Ring
- LSB 821 – Alleluia! Sing to Jesus
- LSB 733 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past
- LSB 651 – I Love Your Kingdom, Lord

## Songs:

- I Believe in Jesus - Keith Matten
- Chain Breaker - Zach Williams
- A Shield About Me
- Beulah Land
- Wake Up Sleeper - Austin French

## Liturgy:

Divine Service I, p. 151

## Liturgy:

Creative Worship



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## **Text: Luke 9:18-27**

Now it happened that as he was praying alone, the disciples were with him. And he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” And they answered, “John the Baptist. But others say, Elijah, and others, that one of the prophets of old has risen.” Then he said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered, “The Christ of God.”

And he strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Years ago in this country there was a revolution. A revolution for independence, which we will celebrate again this very day, the Fourth of July. Today, however, there is another revolution going on, also for independence, except this is not a political revolution. It is a cultural, moral, religious, revolution. Which makes this revolution much more dangerous and serious.

This is a revolution that is challenging the very foundations of our culture. This revolution demands you believe there is no absolute truth. There is no truth that remains true even if no one believes it. The revolution demands truth is only true if someone believes it. This revolution demands God be what you want him or her to be. All gods are equal, all lifestyles are equal, all choices are equal. None are wrong and none are right, they simply are what you want the truth to be. In other words, you are independent. No one and no god can tell you who to be, or what is truth. You are independent. You are free, and freedom is a good thing, right?

Except the freedom that this revolution promises is really no freedom at all. It is in fact slavery. It is slavery to sin and sin's affect. How sad it is that so many people, seeking to be "free," are actually sinking deeper and deeper into this slavery. Addiction, dysfunction, confusion, denial, anger, loneliness, hopelessness, these are just a few of the symptoms of sin's affect. All the while these people think they are going the right way, headed in the right direction, and at times even those who would call themselves Christians telling them so. They cannot see it isn't working. This revolution promises everything, but delivers nothing.

"We are 'woke' Americans. We are 'progressive.' We are liberated from the past 'foolish ways.' We are more intelligent, more scholarly, more scientific. We know the right way, the new way."

This is, in fact, nothing new. This revolution has been going on since the beginning. Since shortly after "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.<sup>1</sup>" Men and women declaring their independence. Throwing off the restraints. Walking over the boundaries laid down by God to protect us. Rebelling against authority. Pursuing freedom. Seeking power. Going their own way, following their own desires. From Adam and Eve to you the story is the

1 Geneses 1:1

same. We, as the human race, have been at this a long time. The result has not been freedom or independence, but stronger and abysmal slavery to sin. The harder we fight the deeper we fall.

Unlike the revolution of 1776 this older revolution is one we cannot win. It is as Jesus said in the Holy Gospel:

“Whoever would save his life will lose it.<sup>2</sup>”

If we insist on saving ourselves, freeing ourselves, declaring ourselves independent from God, and anyone else, we will in fact have lost. We will be lost. Lost in eternal death from which no one returns. That is not an happy message, but Jesus continues,

whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.<sup>3</sup>”

If we lay down our lives in repentance, in faith, in obedience to God, depending on Him, then we are free; then we are forgiven; then, and only then, are we heirs of life eternal.

Jesus’ words sound backwards. They sound upside-down. They are contrary to common sense, to the American Way. The problem is this: Jesus is Emmanuel. He is the God of creation walking among us. He formed us. He designed us. He is desperate to save us from sin’s eternal death.<sup>4</sup> Jesus shows us that we are the ones who are not right; we are the ones who need correction; we are the ones who need to be turned up-side-down to put us right-side-up. The one and only way that can be done is through the cross of Christ.

That is what Jesus is teaching His disciples in the Sacred Scriptures of the Holy Gospel we heard today. “Who do the people say that I am?<sup>5</sup>” He asks. There a number of answers. They all hold Jesus in very high regard and respect, but they are all wrong. They are all inadequate. They are all missing something. Then Peter gives the right answer, “You are the Christ of God.<sup>6</sup>” In other words, you are the anointed One; the One true God who has come to save the world.

Jesus immediately grounds this answer where it must be found: at the cross. He says:

2 Luke 9:24a

3 Luke 9:24b

4 1 Timothy 2:4

5 Luke 9:18

6 Luke 9:20

The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed...<sup>7</sup>

We cannot know Jesus, respect Jesus, or love Jesus properly or rightly without the cross.

That is why He charged His disciples not to tell anyone. Not yet. The people were looking for a Savior who would give them independence, freedom from Rome. If they heard that Jesus was the Messiah they would have made Him King and expected Him to do what they wanted. They would want a cross-less Christ, but there is no such thing.

Jesus said:

The Son of Man must suffer... many things... be rejected... and killed, and on the third day be raised.

On this we are dependent. In this we are saved. Jesus did not use that word “must” lightly. There is no other way. His death, and resurrection, are the only means by which we can be truly free.

It is only Jesus’ death and resurrection that can break the hold of chains of sin on each one of us. Only Jesus’ death and resurrection can give us true hope. Hope beyond the grave. Only Jesus’ death and resurrection can defeat Satan, and all his works and ways, he is too powerful, too sly, too unrelenting for us.

Being independent sounds good, and it may be, until sin bears its fangs. Scripture states:

Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.<sup>8</sup>

The problem with our own devised freedom is in the blindness it causes. Blindness that remains until the insatiable maw of the grave looms over us. Then sight returns and it shocks us. It happens at the death of a loved one, or in the face of terrorism or disease. It happens when Satan whispers in your ear and drives you to despair. Does that freedom, which the world promises, still sound good? It doesn’t take long being out on your own to realize there are bills to be paid, and you can’t pay them.<sup>9</sup>

7 Luke 9:22

8 1 Peter 5:8

9 Luke 15:17 (For more context see also Luke 15:11-32)

Only Jesus' death can pay the price for the debt of sin, which we have rung up. Only Jesus' resurrection can give us a new life as we are Baptized into His death and rise up in His resurrection, clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness.<sup>10</sup> The answer to the freedom that we seek is not to throw off the shackles of God's Word, which we perceive to enslave us. The answer, to the freedom that we seek, is not to rebel and redefine what it means to be spiritual.

The answer is to turn to the One who was shackled for us, who was nailed to a cross for us, and who did not rebel. The answer is to turn to the One "whom they have pierced,<sup>11</sup>" to that bloody, humiliated, corpse on the cross,<sup>12</sup> and confess with Peter, "You are the Christ of God."<sup>13</sup> It is only joined to Jesus that our shackles are removed and our slavery ends. Only He holds the key. Only by being dependent on Him can we be independent of Satan's slavery and sly deceptions.

We want to think being independent and being free go together. We want to think we can't be free unless we are independent. Jesus is telling us dependence and freedom go hand-in-hand. Maybe not always politically or culturally, but certainly spiritually. Only as we live dependent on Jesus can we be truly free.

Jesus goes on to say:

If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.<sup>14</sup>

If we keep the mindset that independence and freedom must go together, then we will never understand why a loving God would put crosses, struggles, difficulties, and challenges to our faith into our lives. Lost in sin's lies we ask, "wouldn't a loving God take these things away from us? Wouldn't a loving God want to take better care of us and make our life easier?" With those kinds of questions we are falling into the same trap. We want a cross-less Christ.

Your Heavenly Father gives you crosses to bear not because He doesn't love you, and not because He likes to watch you suffer, and not for any other reason than, by that cross, drive you to the cross of Christ, His Son. God does not want you happy. God wants you saved.<sup>15</sup> By the cross He places on you God makes

10 Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 59:17; Ephesians 6:14; Revelation 7:9

11 Zechariah 12:10

12 Isaiah 52:14

13 Luke 9:20

14 Luke 9:23

15 1 Timothy 2:4

you dependent on Him. Then He has not, in fact, burdened you but set you free. That is why Jesus said, “Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it.”<sup>16</sup>”

It is the struggles of life that drive us to the source of life, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.<sup>17</sup> It is the challenges to our faith that drive us to the source of our faith. It is the difficulties to love and forgive that drive us to the source of our love and forgiveness. Brought to our knees, seeing our needs, and realizing our dependence, we drink deeply from the Word of God,<sup>18</sup> and we wash and rejoice in the waters of Holy Baptism.

Brought to our knees, seeing our needs, and realizing our dependence, we imbibe deeply from the Word of God,<sup>19</sup> and we feed hungrily at the Holy Table of our Lord’s Body and Blood. It is in these Means of Grace<sup>20</sup> we find the fruits of the cross of Christ. In these Means of Grace we find His forgiveness, life and salvation. In these Means of Grace we are joined to Jesus, and He to us, and we are set free. True independence is found only in our dependence on Him.

In a world searching for answers and freedom, that is the true revolution.  
Amen.

**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**



16 Luke 9:24

17 Hebrews 12:2

18 Isaiah 12:3

19 Isaiah 25:6

20 The 'Means of Grace' are God’s Holy Word, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion.