

John 8:31-36 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³² "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." ³³ They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How *can* you say, 'You will be made free'?" ³⁴ ¶ Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. ³⁵ "And a slave does not abide in the house forever, *but* a son abides forever. ³⁶ "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

It means to be free!

What does it mean to be Lutheran? It means to be free.

Now you may laugh at that because you might think of Lutherans as some of the most rigid , stubborn people out there and you would be often right. But it is still true that to be Lutheran means to be free. It's the truth that sets us free. Freedom only comes from abiding in God's word and leaning not on our own understanding. Its the truth of God's Word that makes us free. Free from our sin that would condemn us, free from our fears which plague us. Free from our own reason which would deceive us. Free from death that would destroy us and Satan who would devour us.

In the years after the Reformation, the Catholics accused the people who stood with Luther of just being a bunch of "little Luthers". To which they responded that if the Catholics meant by

"little Luthers" that they did not trust in the authority of men but only in the authority of God's Word and the true Gospel contained there in that we are saved by faith in Christ apart from the works of the law, then yes they were all just "little Luthers" and they were proud of it. And the name that was meant as an insult, became a badge of pride "Lutheran".

Last week we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. On October 31st, 1517 Martin Luther pounded the 95 theses on to the church door at Wittenberg. Even the secular world marks this as the beginning of the Reformation and one of the most important dates in History. However, they get its significance completely wrong. They stress it as the end of the dark age of illiteracy and the end of bondage of the conscience to the Catholic church and the beginning of a new age of reason and the freedom of conscience. That was not what the Reformation was about nor the great thing that God did for us then. Yes Luther and the Reformation stood for the freedom of the conscience and soul from

the Catholic church but they did not stand for the freedom of the conscience. They stood for the conscience only being captive to the Word of God, for it alone is truth. As Luther stated boldly yet fearfully willing to give his life, “ My conscience is held captive by the Word of God unless I am convinced by Scripture, I cannot, I will not recant”.

Now if you were paying attention you will have noticed that I have said two things that seem to be a contradiction. I have stated to be Lutheran, to be Christ’s disciple indeed, means to be free and that to be Lutheran, to be Christ’s disciples indeed, means that your conscience isn’t free but held captive to the word of God. While that is a paradox it is not a contradiction. It is having our conscience captive to the word of God that sets us free, that makes us free, kind of like a train captive to railroad tracks is free but a train off its tracks might think its free but is not.

May God grant us all the freedom and joy that comes from being bound to the Word of God. May God grant us all to be “ little Luthers”. Not because we worship Luther but because

abiding in God’s Word is what our God and savior has instructed us to do and because that is how God sets us free. *“If you abide in My world you are my disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”* To believe not less or more than the Bible Says, to have our hearts and conscience captive to the word of God and *casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.*

When by the power of the Holy Spirit we do this, we might get called things worse than “little Luthers”. When we do this the world and even many “Christians” will certainly see what you as foolish and stupid. This is to be expected and even cherished. **1 Corinthians 1:21** *“For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”*

We are proud of being thought foolish by the world in matters of faith. For we are not saved by our reason but by our faith in Jesus who loved us and gave Himself for us, a redeeming sacrifice for our sins. At every turn, at every doctrine, our reason,

the world and Satan will betray us but faith clings to what God says even if it doesn't make sense to our mind.

Scriptures declare Jesus to be God and the Father to be God and the Holy Spirit to be God and yet it also clearly says there is only one God and Him only shall you serve. Yet the reason of man balks at this. How can they be different and yet the one same God. And so some rejecting the truth deciding to follow their own reason instead declare that they are three separate gods or that Jesus isn't God or many other explanations. And they think you unreasonable for believing in a triune God- three separate persons yet one God.

You can point out to them that it is unreasonable to think reason can comprehend the nature of God but while that is true, that is not why we believe it. We believe it for the most childish of reasons - for the Bible tells me so. The world might see this child like, trusting what God says in Scripture as "childish" but Jesus sees it as a beautiful thing, the thing that makes one a disciple.

Mark 10:14-15 *"Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid*

them; for of such is the kingdom of God. "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." We are proud to be "Childish".

To give you another example. Here in a few short weeks will begin to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The world and even many who call themselves Christians believe that the virgin birth of Jesus, God becoming man, is nonsense. To their mind God becoming man and a virgin birth makes no sense. Once again you can point out to someone that believes in God and yet rejects these things that it makes no sense to believe in God and yet deny God the abilities and power that make Him God as the angel said to Mary "For with God nothing will be impossible". Yet the stupidity of the deniers isn't why we believe. We believe because God had promised the birth of Immanuel, son of man and yet son of God and detailed its fulfillment in Holy Scriptures. And the Holy Spirit has shown us a truly as He showed the shepherd that the child born that day in the city of David is Christ the Lord. The world might think us fools to believe in something that makes no sense but we

are proud to be called fools by them **1 Corinthians 3:19-21** “ *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness";* ²⁰ *and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile."* ²¹ *Therefore let no one boast in men.*” We are fools for Christ and proud of it.

Every step of the way casting aside every reason and thought that would contradict God’s Word makes us Jesus’ disciples indeed and sets us free. God died for all men and there are none that He does not love and desires to be saved. Thus you can know that He loves you and died for you and your sin and desires you to be saved and sends the Holy Spirit to you to give you the gift of faith that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the son of God and believing thus may have life in His name.

Let the world call us names like fools, and “little Luthers” and “childish”. There is only thing without error in this world and it is Scripture. And there is only one who is the way the truth and they life and He calls us by different names. He calls you His disciple, He calls you His child. He calls you forgiven. HE calls

you His beloved. He calls you “the redeemed who shall not pass into judgment but shall pass from death to life”. And He doesn’t just say that. God doesn’t say anything that isn’t true. He has made it so. How do we know so? Because the Bible tells me so.

Amen.

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