

February 07, 2010

The Freedom with Responsibility

(Ex 20:1-17, Gal 5:1-6, Lk 4:16-30)

When we talk about freedom we should not forget the contingency of our very existence. We are in this world because God has put us here. Our existence depends on our creator. This fact we should always keep in our minds when we talk about freedom. What ever we know depends on what we have understood with the minds that have been given to us. What ever we have is given to us. So our freedom has come freely from God. It has come with responsibility to obey Him .Therefore true freedom is to seek what God wants us to do and walk according to it. We have every freedom to skip the traffic red light but we know what happens if we do. That is why the Psalmist said, "I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts."(Ps 119:45) When God said, "*You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat*". Is God trying to hold us back? Does God want us to remain in a pre-enlightened moral infancy? Is God withholding knowledge from us? No! Not at all! **God is simply and emphatically telling us that no freedom is without responsibility, no liberty is without limitation.**

Satan always misinterprets God by telling lies. When Adam and Eve were enjoying perfect freedom within the limits of God's command Satan made Eve to think that she was not really free to do what ever she liked. From that time onwards people are deceived to believe Satan's lies and have been enslaved by Satan. That's why Jesus said, "who ever sins is a slave to sin" and only those who are set free by the Son can become truly free(John 8:34,36).Egyptian bondage of the people of God symbolizes our bondage to sin. The ritual of Passover always reminds the people of Israel how they have been set free by God. In the same way the Eucharist reminds us that by the blood of Jesus Christ our Pass over lamb God has set us free from sin.

Just as Israelites who were freed from Egypt were given the responsibility of obeying the law given in today's Old Testament lesson all those who are set free by Jesus have the responsibility of abiding by the words of Jesus. In today's Epistle lesson God wants us to learn that the freedom granted to us in Christ Jesus is not for our self indulgence but to grow in love. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us to

redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are his very own eager to do what is good(Tit 2;14). In other words the church is the people who were redeemed, i.e. set free to do good works. We are given freedom to do God's work responsibly. To day's Gospel lesson reminds us the work we have to do as a church.

The Old Testament Lesson: Exodus 20:1-17 The Purpose of Ten Commandments

The bible tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But what is sin exactly? Sin is the transgression of the law. (I John 3:4). What law? The Ten Commandments.

If we are to understand sin and why we need to repent, then we need to know and understand the law - the Ten Commandments. Once we do that then we can understand why Jesus Christ died for us and how we are saved by grace.

The Scripture says: "The purpose of the commandments is **to reveal sin!**" God did not give the commandments to save us from His judgment. God gave them to show us that **we are condemned sinners** and that **we need a Savior!**

Just as the hospital X-ray machine is useful for **showing** what is not right in a person's body, so the Ten Commandments are useful for **showing** what is not right in a person's heart. And just as the X-ray **cannot cure** the one who is sick, likewise the Ten Commandments **cannot cure** anybody's heart which is full of sin. For that to happen, that person must go back to the Great Physician, that is, to God. Only God has a plan to save all of us from the death and condemnation that await all of us due to the sin that is inside us.

The love of God is so great that God who knows that His people can never keep His commandments has also given animal sacrifices in the Old Testament and after that His only begotten son Jesus Christ as atonement for the sins of the whole world. We can obey God's commandments only when are born again of the spirit of God and receive a new heart from God.

In the Sermon on the Mount we find Jesus interpretation of some of the Commandments. There we find Jesus telling us that sin starts with just a thought. It is more than just actually carrying out the act, but thinking or harbouring thoughts about sin is just as wrong, because

action follows thought, and if we control our thoughts then we are less likely to do things that get us into trouble.

Jesus fulfilled the law in this way:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Mathew 22:37-40).

"Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. (Romans 13:10)

This is generally what the Ten Commandments are all about. The first four teaches us love toward God and the last six, love towards our fellowman.

The Law establishes moral and ethical values in our lives. This is the main purpose of it. And most importantly love to God and others.



As a matter of fact Jesus said if we love him then we will obey him. Therefore serving Jesus is not matter of observing some religious traditions like circumcision or baptism and other rituals but faith expressing itself in love. That is today's epistle lesson.

The Epistle Lesson: Galatians 5:1-6 Love is the fulfilling of the Law

The book of Galatians is the charter of Christian freedom. In this profound letter Paul proclaims the reality of our liberty in Christ-freedom from the law and the power of sin, and freedom to serve our living God. In Paul's time there was an extremist Jewish faction with in church. They taught that Gentile believers had to submit to Jewish laws and traditions in addition to believing in Christ. As a missionary to gentiles, Paul had to confront this issue many times. Galatians was written, therefore to refute the Judaizers and to call believers back to the pure Gospel. To day God is once again telling us that mere observance of all the traditions of the denomination to which we belong like the Jews who followed all the religious traditions rejecting Jesus will not help us to earn our salvation. Salvation is by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and nothing else. Faith in Christ is true freedom.

Christ died to set us free from sin and long list of laws and regulations. He came to set us free not to do whatever we want because that would lead us back into slavery to our selfish desires. We are now free and able to do what was impossible before –to live unselfishly.

Trying to go to heaven by keeping law or some traditions and being saved by grace to inherit heaven are two entirely different approaches. We can never save ourselves by our good works and religious observances. Only faith in Jesus Christ can save us. Therefore we are not saved by our works but once we are saved we have to remember we are saved to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. Today's gospel lesson shows us what those good works are.

The Gospel Lesson: Luke 4:16-30
The responsibility that has come with our freedom.

God has sent His son Jesus Christ to establish His Kingdom on earth by defeating the enemy Satan who invaded the earth and took his children captive. Therefore Jesus came and by His cross triumphed over the enemy Satan by disarming the powers and authorities (Col 2:15). He has set us free from Satan and enrolled us as His soldiers to fight the devil. Remember all those who were freed from Egypt marched out as an army of God. Therefore we are freed to fight. Just as God anointed Jesus with His spirit and gave the manifesto of the kingdom to be established, Jesus is likewise sending us into the world with His spirit and the word of promise. What Jesus read in the synagogue and said that it was fulfilled is a quotation from the prophet Isaiah in which the entire programme of the kingdom of God is indicated. The whole mankind has been under the economic, political, and spiritual oppression of Satan. The oppressing forces are poverty, injustice, sickness, exploitation and brokenness. We can fight these various forces with the sword of the word of the promise of God which is the Gospel. The responsibility of the Church is to preach the gospel and show the world the love of God by serving people who are in need and make every year a jubilee year of cleared debts and blessing. May God help us to do this, Amen.

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