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Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about the freedom that God gives us to say yes or no to God.

Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because saying yes to God begins with knowing that we have a choice.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon my first back after two Sundays of vacation

What are the next action steps?

Say yes to God.

What is the good news (bottom line)?

The good news is that we are set free from sin by God's grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

Metadata

- Topic(s)
 - grace, free will
- Books of the Bible
 - Galatians, Genesis
- Series
 - Freedom in Christ
- Speaker
 - Andrew Conard
- Tags
 - freedom, sin, grace, forgiveness, choice, free will, human condition, sin

Outline

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Galatians 5:13-23, CEB

You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only don't let this freedom be an opportunity to indulge your selfish impulses, but serve each other through love. 14 All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: Love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour each other, be careful that you don't get eaten up by each other!

16 I say be guided by the Spirit and you won't carry out your selfish desires. 17 A person's selfish desires are set against the Spirit, and the Spirit is set against one's selfish desires. They are opposed to each other, so you shouldn't do whatever you want to do. 18 But if you are being led by the Spirit, you aren't under the Law. 19 The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, 20 idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, 21 jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against things like this.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Series Review

Today we conclude our series, Freedom in Christ. I am grateful for Katelyn Hageman and LuAnne Vides for preaching the past two Sundays.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next

week.

Opening Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Freedom on Vacation

Our family arrived home from vacation last Sunday evening. We had a wonderful time away with family and friends. We spent time by a lake on the Fourth of July, visited family that we had not seen in several years and spent most of our time at a cabin in Woodland Park, Colorado. My parents own this rustic one bedroom cabin and rent it out over the summer. It was a place where we went on vacation when I was growing up. I have years of memories of activities both there at the cabin and in the surrounding area.

This was John and Anne's first visit to the cabin. I was looking forward to sharing with them this place and all the things that can be done in and around the Woodland Park and Colorado Springs area. And there are a lot of things to do.

As you know, one of the great things about vacation is that you are free to do whatever you want. This brings both opportunities and challenges. We could jam pack the day with activities all over the area or we could do nothing planned and spend time around the cabin. There were some days where it was a little too much on either extreme and the result was tiredness or crankiness pushing too hard or the need to do something to get out and about.

Overall we had a wonderful vacation, as we found the balance of the opportunities that the freedom of vacation brought for us.

Transition

The freedom to choose is not just for vacation or in some part of our lives. This is how we were created - in God's image.

Created in God's Image

"We are part of God's creation, made in the image of God."¹ Hear these words from Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let us make humanity in our image to resemble us so that they may take charge of the fish of the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and all the crawling things on earth."

God created humanity in God's own image, in the divine image God created them, male and female God created them.

¹ William J. Abraham and David F. Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 59.

“What does it mean to be created in the image of God?”

It means that we are free to make choices: to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God.”² When people live into the image of God, it is beautiful.

This is a life of loving God and loving neighbor. It is one in which we care for the needs of others, steward the resources that God has given us and share a rich life with family and friends.

It is a life in which we experience the fruit of the Holy Spirit, as we find in the scripture passage for today - “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”³

Example of a Holy Life - John Dallam

Who do you know that lives a life like this? A life of holiness? One of the people in my life is John Dallam - when you were around him, you could sense God’s presence.

Invitation to Holiness

God invites everyone to a lifetime journey toward holiness. God does not force anyone to make the journey. As created in God’s image, we have freedom to choose. God did not create robots who were programmed to obey God. God loves us enough to allow us to reject his gift of love. Each of us have the ability to obey or disobey - to say yes or say no.

Transition

The truth is that all of us mess up, hurt other people and look around the world to see that things are not as they should be. This is the human condition.

The Human Condition

When left to ourselves, we turn away from God’s desire for our life. We tend to break relationships with God and other people. This is true from the very beginning of time. While we were created in God’s image, we see that we quickly use our freedom to choose poorly. Hear these words from **Genesis 3:1-7**:

The snake was the most intelligent of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say that you shouldn’t eat from any tree in the garden?”

The woman said to the snake, “We may eat the fruit of the garden’s trees but not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. God said, ‘Don’t eat from it, and don’t touch it, or you will die.’”

The snake said to the woman, “You won’t die! 5 God knows that on the day you eat from it, you will see clearly and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

² William J. Abraham and David F. Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 59.

³ Galatians 5:22-23, CEB.

The woman saw that the tree was beautiful with delicious food and that the tree would provide wisdom, so she took some of its fruit and ate it, and also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Then they both saw clearly and knew that they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made garments for themselves.

“[This] is a story about how humans defied God. In fact, they tried to be like God. The serpent enticed Eve into disobeying God by telling her that when she eats the forbidden fruit, “your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Adam apparently needs no such enticement. He simply eats what is given to him.

Then we read that the snake was in fact right: once Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, “they eyes of both were opened” (3:7). They were created in the image of God, but that was not enough. They wanted to be more like God, and they reached too far.”⁴

Examples of Sin

The passage from Galatians gives a few of these examples: “sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that.”⁵

Transition

We can follow God.
We can turn away from God.
We can say, Yes.
We can say, No.
So how does God respond?

Conclusion

God’s response to the human condition

The reality of evil, sin and darkness in our world needed to be taken care of, forgiven, cleaned up and brought to light. God’s response to this, our human condition, is not to force us into line and crush any rebellion against God’s dream for the world. Instead, he sends his only son to win us over by his love. Jesus, the one that God loves so dearly, becomes human and lives with us.

Good News

⁴ William J. Abraham and David F. Watson, *Key United Methodist Beliefs* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 53.

⁵ Galatians 5:19-21, CEB.

The good news is that we are set free by God's grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. We are made right by God's grace. God's forgiveness sets us free and all we have to do is ask. When we ask and accept God's grace and take a next step on the journey toward perfect love of God and neighbor, amazing things can happen.

Call to Action

Maybe there is a place in your life where you need to be free - a relationship in need of repair, sin in need of forgiveness, progress toward holiness. One of the ways to take a next step in your journey toward perfect love of God and neighbor is to ask God through prayer.

- You might want to accept God's gift of grace and forgiveness and say Yes for the very first time.
- Or you may want to recommit yourself to say yes to God again

I want to make it possible for you today. There may be just one person here today who would like to experience freedom by God's grace for the first time or recommit to their faith. It is a simple prayer. So, if you would like, you might just echo this prayer under your breath. Will you pray with me?

Invitation

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for your life and love. I am sorry for the things in my life that have been wrong. I turn away from everything that I know is wrong. I receive your gift of forgiveness and put my trust in you. Please, help me live as one of your children. Holy Spirit, fill me and set me free to live a life that really is life. Thank you, O God. Amen.