

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

In these words Jesus talks about freedom. Freedom can be a good thing or a dangerous thing. We can use freedom for good, or to harm others and ourselves.

Many schools around Australia are bracing themselves in these weeks for what is known as "muck up day". It's a day when year 12 students are at school formally for the last day before they swat for exams. They sense freedom ahead, life with no bells and assignments, teachers and classes.. Their expressions of freedom often involve, messy substances, toilet paper, graffiti, destruction, and alcohol. Sadly in some cases as happened at one Melbourne college this week their expressions of freedom went too far and property was damaged and people were injured and all 250 year 12 students were suspended. Now some may not get to sit exams at all.

It's not just in school yards that freedom is misused. It happens in our own back yards and churchyards too. We speak our minds without considering the feelings of others, we want our own way sometimes without considering the rest of the body. In our freedom we tread on each others toes. Today's issue of "Together" our SA/NT church newspaper raises the interesting question of where total freedom of speech and freedom to write in and express oneself in a church newspaper is a good thing and when does it become destructive and tear down the church rather than constructive and build it up. When does speaking our mind just muck things up for everyone.

Every day is muck up day in some way for each of us. God gave us the freedom to misuse our freedom! And often we do, we say what we feel like and we do what we feel like and sometimes it mucks up the lives of people around us and our own as well. Martin Luther was conscious of mucking up every day. He felt a failure every day before God. He and we discover if honest that we are not really free at all, we find our selves bound to think more of ourselves than the impact of our behaviour on others.

Jesus said we are all bound to sin. **"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin"** We are not as free as we like to think. We can try to be good, try to do the right thing some of the time but we simply can't all the time. We seem bound to sin, to misuse our freedom of speech and thought and behaviour to muck up sooner or later.

It will show up in young Bradley's life soon enough, that's why his mum brought him here for baptism today. She knows he is not a blank screen, but seems already wired to think of himself, to muck up. Not that God wanted it that way but we seem to pass it on to our children, it's in the blood. We call it "original sin". It originated in Adam and Eve, it reached our parents but it is now part of us, and we can't help ourselves and we find our own original ways to express it. We don't have to be taught to be selfish with our freedom and how to muck up our own and other people's lives.

Luther felt like despairing about how bound he felt until he was led to discover how Christ sets us free.

Jesus said: **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** **"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."**

The way to freedom is holding on to Jesus and his word. It starts with facing the truth, the truth about us and our muck up days and mucked up lives, and then holding on to the truth about his forgiving love that died for and covers our messes and sets us free. Freedom is holding on to the truth that Jesus himself is about God. Luther found to be true what Jesus promised **"If the Son sets you free, then you will be really free"**. There is only one way you can be released from slavery to yourself and sin and no longer suffer the consequences of such slavery – Jesus the Son of God will declare you free as a gift. You can't free yourself. Only the one who has died to forgive your sins has the real authority and power to set you free. Luther said this so well in the Small Catechism,

"Jesus rescued me when I was lost and sentenced to death. He set me free from all my sins, from death and from the power of the devil"

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The truth of Jesus Christ sets us free:

- to be honest and face our sin and a sinful world before God
- from a guilty conscience and the condemnation of God's law
- from preoccupation with ourselves to love God and others
- from worry over our future in this life or the next

Some people say Christians are restricted and bound, anything but free. They don't understand how bound they and we all are. And they don't understand what being a Christian is. They still think in terms of following a set of rules and behaviours rather than faith in Jesus and the grace of God. Christians are truly free – freely forgiven and justified by God himself. We don't have to trust our own goodness – we trust Jesus. And we are now free to live, love, serve, fail and die because Christ has set us free. Christians are free to express their new found freedom in ways that build up rather than muck up the lives of people around us.

Luther believed in Christ he was free, even though he suffered depression, death threats, was kidnapped and even excommunicated from his church. He was free – truly free, in Christ.

That same truth that set him free is what is at the heart and centre of our faith as Lutheran Christians.

That truth sets us free each Sunday – free to confess, freely forgiven, free to face life and to love and serve.

Bradley was set free this morning. Today he was washed with water and God's word, the word of Christ. He was joined to Christ in his death and resurrection. He was cleansed and set free. The catechism says in baptism God forgives sin delivers from death and the devil and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised" Jesus said **Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever**. Bradley has a son of God, a place with God permanent place in the family, as he holds to Jesus teaching and to Jesus himself the way the truth the life. Bradley is free today but always struggle with old selfish self wont stay drowned in baptism. Every day in some sense be a muck up day that what we all experience but not despair . Good news of his baptism is that he can be set free has been set free, hold to it and let it make a difference

I read yesterday that Australia came 28th in the "world freedom of the press awards." Freedom of the press is about the freedom to tell it like it is, the right of the public to know the truth. We came 28th. God hasn't left us in the dark about the truth. Jesus said you can know the truth about yourself, God, life in the world, and beyond this world.

The truth is that our worst "muck up day" can be transformed into "freedom day" by Jesus, that's what his forgiving love and grace does. It cleans us up and lets us start again. That's what Luther discovered and the church rediscovered and that's why we call it a reformation.

May that reformation take place in your life too as we rediscover each day the freeing grace of God to us in Christ.