

“Freedom”
By Rev. Frances Savill
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Readings:

Galatians 5:1,13-25

What does freedom look like?

Some of you might remember the commercials for Freedom 55.

If you bought their product you would have financial freedom at 55 and the ads promised that financial freedom would mean freedom and happiness- everything you needed for the good life. Does having money equal freedom and happiness? Having enough money to live certainly is helpful for a happy life, but money doesn't mean freedom.

I had a conversation with a young woman who just finished her first year of University.

She goes to school in Ottawa, and we were joking that her parents should get her a car.

And her response was- then I would have complete freedom.

I was quick to point out that a car doesn't equal freedom, it equals bills for insurance, parking, gas, repairs and a lot of responsibility.

In our scripture this morning from Galatians, Paul is contrasting living the old way, the way of the world, the way we lived before experiencing the work of God in us and for us, and is contrasted with living this new, free life that is ours in Jesus.

“Freedom” as Paul is using the word, the way the Bible uses the word, has very little to do with how we think of the word in our day.

Freedom today means doing whatever I want, whenever I want, fulfilling my own needs and wants.

Paul is very clear that our definition of freedom is really a different kind of slavery.

We become slaves to our own desires, and that is not the way of a free Christian life, certainly not the road to abundant life promised in Jesus.

Paul says that our freedom, Christian freedom is to serve one another in love, that is how freedom grows.

This sounds a little odd to our ears, but consider it for a moment.

Have you ever met someone who is consumed with desires – good or bad... usually there’s something good in the desire.

They want to be a great musician, they want to be an amazing artist, they want to be happy and comfortable, they want to live in a certain house, they want to have a certain lifestyle, they want to have success at work, or eat great meals, or have lots of friends.

Those desires, any of them, when they are the focus and a person decides to go for them, immediately the desire enslaves them, and the greater the desire, the greater the slavery.

Let's think through one example:
You want to be an amazing athlete.

So you sacrifice for your sport, and train hard, and work hard, it becomes the focus of your life, other parts of your life are sacrificed.

And what if you succeed, when is there enough success, enough recognition, when are you good enough? How hard to you have to work to stay #1? The competition, the pressure, the enslavement never ends.

And then who are when you retire?

And what if you get injured and can't play anymore?

It feels like your life is over.

And what if you never make it?

Are you a failure if you never achieve those goals?

Some people think they are.

Does this list describe any driven people you know?
Would you characterize them in some of these ways?

Are their lives ever filled with strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, or addictions?

That's half of Paul's list of what it looks like when we live according to letting our desires rule us.

When we live life on our own terms, letting our own desires rule us, even good desires, we find ourselves comparing ourselves to others, always under pressure to succeed on our own, and it leads to bitterness, envy, and other life taking behaviours from that list.

What is the alternative?

Paul calls us to new life in Jesus that looks to Jesus for who we are and what our lives are about.

The foundation of our lives is knowing that we are loved, forgiven, beloved children of God, complete in Jesus.

And then in response to our love of Jesus, and in response to Jesus' unqualified love for us, we are free to love and serve others.

We might love and serve others as an athlete, or an artist, or a musician, or a business person, a father, or a whatever our gifts and talents can be used for.

But the focus is on loving and serving God and others.

Freedom, freedom in Christ grows and becomes abundant life in service – not serving our own wants and desires, not being driven by others or even the needs around us, it comes from responding to God, God's love, God's grace, God's gifts, God's work and the gifts God has given us, for God, and for God's people.

This morning we've seen Arlene's life of serving in Nigeria, but she continues to serve here. She continues to bless the church, to bless all of us, hers is an abundant life of freedom in Christ.

This free, abundant life is offered to us today, as we turn towards God, as we turn towards serving others for God's glory. Thanks be to God.