

Pentecost 3, Year C,

Sermon by Rev. Glenn A. Brumbaugh

30th June, 2019

Galatians 5:1, 13-26 MSG / Luke 9:51-62 NIV

Freedom. What does that mean to you?

That word is bandied about a lot in our common language.

From Janis Joplin's "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose"

in the song Bobby Magee

to Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Free as a bird now...,"

we can mean many different things when we think of being "free."

While very different in flavor, both of these examples

highlight a sense of being unencumbered,

of not being weighed down in some fashion.

We often think of freedom in a political sense as the ability to do as we choose,

without a lot of rules telling us what is possible and what is not.

President Herbert Hoover once said that

"Freedom is the open window through

which pours the sunlight of the human spirit and human dignity"

and Nelson Mandela said

"For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains,

but to live in a way

that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Clearly the concept of freedom plays a big part in our lives.

We often view it as something positive, and as Americans,
something we often think of as vital to our happiness and satisfaction.

But are we really free?

Does what we think of as independence and freedoms really lead to our being satisfied?

In our culture many of us have a great amount of freedom available:

we can choose where we live, what work we do,
what we choose to say, who we spend our time with, and on and on.

Yet often, those very things we cling to as our cherished freedoms,
can also wear us down.

We get caught up in our careers, our bills, our houses and our stuff.

Our home lives can dominate our minds
and worry can creep in to consume us.

We can find ourselves suffering mentally and physically
from the stress we find ourselves in.

But what are we to do?

We have to work, we have to care for our family and loved ones,
we have bills to pay.

But do we keep those worries in perspective? Is there a sense of balance?

We often think that we need to obsess over the everyday problems of life
but what does that get really get us?

In our gospel lesson this morning, Jesus is talking about those very kinds of concerns.

While his examples may seem a little extreme,

I think we miss the overall point if we focus too much on the specifics.

These were all people who were stuck worrying
over those parts of their lives that lead to so much stress for many of us.

Family duties and connections,

those things that dominate such a big part of our lives.

And don't get me wrong, these are important things.

But a big part of the gospel message is not to let those things bring us down.

We are meant not to spend our lives

obsessively worrying about our obligations and commitments,

how we will make ends meet.

In Matthew 6, Jesus tells us

“do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your
body,

what you will wear.

Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?

Look at the birds of the air;

they do not sow or reap or store away in barns,

and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.

Are you not much more valuable than they?

Can any one of you by worrying

add a single hour to your life?

“And why do you worry about clothes?

See how the flowers of the field grow.

They do not labor or spin.

Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor
was dressed like one of these.

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field,
which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire,
will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?

So do not worry, saying,
'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?'
or 'What shall we wear?'"

Jesus is urging his followers through these vignettes
to seek balance in how we live our lives.

Likewise Paul, in his letter to the Galatians

gives us a laundry list of behaviors to avoid
because they focus our attention too much on ourselves,
on behaviors that lead us to be too self-focused
and caught in our own little dramas.

Instead we are to turn our attention outward,
to the love of our neighbors that is to be our greatest commandment,
and to love God with our whole being.

And the biggest part of that love is the faith and trust that we will be cared for,
that God will provide.

So where do you find yourselves today?

Do you find yourself worrying about how things will turn out,
full of doom and gloom for tomorrow?

Or do you focus on today, the here and now,
seeking joy in every moment you are blessed with?

As people of faith, we're given freedom to make that choice.

Author Robert Young once said, "I have on my table a violin string... it is free.

I twist one end of it and it responds. It is free.

But it is not free to do

what a violin string is supposed to do--produce music.

So I take it, fix it in my violin and tighten it until it is taut.

Only then is it free to be a violin string.

By the same token, we are free when our lives are uncommitted,

but not necessarily to be what we were intended to be.

Real freedom is not freedom "from," but freedom "for."

He makes a good point that we often view the freedom we have

as being freedom from something:

freedom from tyranny, freedom from excessive control,

freedom to live our own lives.

But what if we viewed our freedom as freedom for something?

What is that purpose, why are we given this freedom?

Both Jesus and Paul tell us that our freedom is for living out the gospel,

for showing the world what it means to live a kin-dom life here and now.

Is the life we lead one of faithful confidence in the here and now,

or is it one of worry about tomorrow?

Where are you this morning?

It is a tough road to walk at times.

We are beset by so many things that lead us into “freedom from” thinking
instead of “freedom for thinking.

We have legitimate things to worry about.

We have responsibilities to our family, our jobs, our community.

We can't help but worry sometimes.

But we also have a different path in front of us.

One that leads to a kin-dom life here and now.

One that offers hope and confidence

that we can live a life of joy right here and right now.

Do we make our focus the freedom to live free in Christ, or on our own?



I'd like to close today with sharing with you an unfortunate malady

that often affects many people.

It's called the Eeyore Syndrome.

People with this syndrome walk around
acting like Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh.

They choose to look at the gloomy side of life.

Their eyes are cast down, their countenance is cheerless,
and they have no enthusiasm or anticipation for life.

Joyful people cannot have The Eeyore Syndrome.

The Eeyore Syndrome is not a Fruit of the Spirit.

The Eeyore Syndrome is not a realistic view of life nor faith-filled.

William Ward writes words about the discouragement
that can apply to the Eeyore Syndrome.

He says, "Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past,
distaste for the present, and distrust of the future.

It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday,
indifference to the opportunities of today,
and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow.

It is unawareness of the presence of beauty,
unconcern for the needs of our fellowman, and
unbelief in the promise of the kin-dom of God
ushered in by Jesus.

We can contrast the Eeyore Syndrome with the example of Pooh.

Someone who is satisfied with the freedom
for the here and now he's given.

Someone who is content with whatever honey he comes across

and is always happy with whatever transpires,
because he knows he can be confident
in the providence that all will be cared for,
whether he worries about it or not.

We all have a choice to live as Eeyore or Pooh. Which freedom will you choose?