



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON
6-19-16

Here we are – happy people – assured people. People in love with Jesus Christ! It is great to be a Christian. We are so free – so loved – and we live a life of faith with only ONE authority. There are NO earthly authorities in charge of us –the boss of us. We need no rabbi, reverend, Iman, caliphate, guru, bossy parents. We who are in love with Jesus Christ are the most free people on this earth and faith is our disciplinarian.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. That is the situation Paul is agonizing, lecturing the Galatians over. They KNOW their salvation comes from their faith in Jesus – their hope, their guidance, their freedom. But they are choosing to follow some human voices that are telling them that as Gentiles they must receive circumcision to be acceptable Christians. No, no, no says Paul. All that matters is your faith – there are no more rules, no more laws that can hold you captive. You are free people No more walls, no more judging, no more checking things off a list to earn love. Now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian.

No Law!!!! No earthy disciplinarians?! Let's think about following the law. Anyone dealing with law enforcement knows how hard the attempt is made to create a black and white world. In order to create this black and white world – there must be authorities, power, control. There must be interpretation of the law, administration of the law, ongoing enforcement of the law. The law – where in civil society or in the church – is about power – power in human beings – not God. And that happens in churches. It happened in the Jewish faith tradition. It happens in many Christians churches then – in Galatia, and today – the pastor's authority – the elders authority. In Galatia men are told they must be circumcised. I still remember my best friend telling me, when we were nearly married, young adults, that her church had told her how many children she must have. I was incredulous as I told her I would deal directly with God and my husband in making that decision.

For I tell you – pure faith must allow doubt, flexibility, love, and trust – otherwise – if all is proscribed – it is NOT Faith! I tell you – right here, in this place, we are the most blessed, the most free people on earth. We are disciples of Christ Jesus only and our faith is our guide, disciplinarian, and source of love and life.

Our Faith. Does the freedom of our faith allow us to commit sins and live in unhealthy ways. Emphatically NO, never! By no means, is what Paul writes. In our freedom to love and worship Jesus – we receive all guidance in the life we are asked to live as people of faith.

You have an idea of faithful disciplines. We must fill ourselves up with scripture and holy writings. At night, I know my Bible reading fills me with the foundation for living. And prayer – listening for the still small voice, the voice that comes from within me and yet is not me. And sharing our life and our wealth – that discipline also frees us, keeps us aware of others. And learning from mentors. To know better how we might live a life of faith – it is good to notice and habits, behavior, words, and choices of someone we know to be faithful to God – not to this world. In surrounding ourselves with faithful people – we too learn how to be faithful. In surrounding ourselves with the words and activities of faithful people – we too learn how to be faithful.

How wonderful it is to be faithful. How wonderful it is to be in love.

Thanks be to God.