

A Sermon Preached by Pastor Justin Johnson  
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church Bellingham, WA 98225  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost July 4, 2010  
Text: Colossians 5-6

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Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the first verse of Chapter 5 in Paul's letter to the Galatians, he writes, "For freedom Christ has set you free." We heard this read last week and I would like to look back at Galatians chapter 5 today especially since today is the day we celebrate our freedom as citizens of the USA today on Independence Day.

Yes, today is the fourth of July. On this day in 1776, the Declaration of Independence was ratified and we declared our independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain. With the independence came freedom including the freedom to gather together here today and to worship as we so desire without fear of being jailed or losing our life. This is truly a blessing. And today is a day to give thanks for that freedom and the men and women who have served and fought over the years to protect that freedom. And today is a day to celebrate as well.

Yet before we carry on with the pomp and circumstance of the day, I want to pause for a moment and think about what it means to have freedom.

When we think of freedom, we often think that it means that we are not accountable, that we can do whatever we want, whenever we want to, to whomever we want. It is easy to think that freedom means no accountability, no responsibility.

But that is not how Paul lays it out in Galatians. No, it is helpful for us to consider what Paul has to say, for what he writes helps us to understand what it means to be free in Christ, which then ought to shape what it means to be a citizen in a free country.

So Paul says in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Galatians verse 13 that, "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another." Wow. Not typically how we think of freedom now, is it? Usually

one looks at freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence. I don't know about you, but the first thing I think about when I have a chance to make decisions on my own, that only affect me, I am thinking about self-indulgence. Most teenagers when they are given more freedom usually end up self-indulging. I know that I did.

Yet here in Galatians, Paul is calling us as followers of Christ out of our belly-button staring haze to say that there is a world out there that needs your good deeds. God does not need them in order for you to be saved, that is finished in Jesus Christ, but rather your neighbor does.

Yes in Christ we are set free from all that binds us, the powers of sin and death, the vortex of self-indulgence, and we are called forth and sent forth to be God's hands and feet in this world. For as Jesus says, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few, therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. (Luke 10:2) Oh and by the way, says Jesus, you are the answer to the prayer I just asked you to pray, so go. Do God's work in Jesus name. Live by the fruit of the Spirit: in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal. 5:22) Carry your own load (Gal. 6:5) and Bear's one another's burdens (Gal 6:2) and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

So this day, I dare you, as you are sitting watching fireworks, or sitting at a picnic with family or friends, talk about the freedom that you have in Christ and how it shapes your life. For this Independence Day we give thanks not only for the freedoms we have as citizens of the USA, but we as followers of Christ can give thanks for the freedom we have in Christ. A freedom that that calls us through love to be a slave to our neighbor as God's love is poured out through us. And in this way the good news is spread. Thanks be to God. Amen.