

John 8:31-36

³¹Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." ³³They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?" ³⁴Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. ³⁶So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

Psalm 46

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. ²Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; ³though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah ⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. ⁵God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns. ⁶The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. ⁷The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth. ⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth." ¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt — a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

John 8:31-36, 2017

There is kind of a red line that runs through these lessons for this weekend that speaks to the relationship we have with God.

In fact they all clearly speak to knowing God

When you read through our lessons you hear the Psalmist say: "...be still and know that I am God..."

There is a certain peace that is not only called for but granted in these words,

and peaceful resignation to God,

giving yourself up to God.

You hear the Prophet Jeremiah speak of the new covenant God will make with the people of Israel saying to them;

With this new promise,

"I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be my people. They will know the Lord;"

And John tells us in the gospel lesson, "continue in my word and ...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

These lessons all have something else in common. Each one of them resides, or originates from a context of stress, fear and anxiety.

Listen to Psalm 46.

...though the earth be changed...mountains shake...waters roar and foam...mountains tremble...nations are in an uproar...kingdoms totter...bows are broken, spears shattered and shields burned,

In the midst of all that God says,

be still, and know that I am God.

Jeremiah speaks to a people who have been conquered, displaced, deported, enslaved, people who are in exile.

They have lost hope, not only in their future, but in their God whom they believe loves them no longer.

In the midst of all that Jeremiah gives the people a new message of hope and promise.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they will be my people... they will know the Lord.”

Our gospel reading for today comes to us from the midst of all kinds of tension, fear and anxiety

about this man who has come with a new message and is turning the whole religious community upside down.

The woman caught in adultery was dragged before Jesus by men expecting Him to give the command to stone her as the law required

and Jesus says, You who are without sin cast the first stone. They dropped their stones and walked away, probably embarrassed.

The crowds were beginning to believe Jesus is the Messiah and the Pharisees and temple leaders were becoming afraid of the power he had over the people, and their fear and anxiety is only relieved in Jesus' crucifixion.

Continue in my word and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

Is it true then that it is in the anxiety of life,
living in a world that is out of your control, where wars rage
among and within nations,
where earthquakes shake the ground in Mexico and around
the world,
where hurricanes drown the coast lines,
that God's word brings peace, comfort, healing and restoration.

Luther wrote in *The Freedom of a Christian*.

"no external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom, ...One thing, and only one thing, is necessary...That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, '"

You remember the first verse of the gospel of John;

In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God and the Word was God.

And in verse 14 The Word became flesh and lived among us.

The word became the flesh and blood of Jesus.

It is Jesus himself then who stills your heart and mind and sets you free from the tension, anxiety and fear of this world.

It is Jesus, in his suffering, death and resurrection who is the new covenant God has made to save you from all your sin and this life.

It is Jesus who is the truth that sets you free not only free from something but for something as well.

He has freed you for loving God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,

and loving your neighbor as yourself;

the law written on your heart.

Be still and know that I am God.

You can't do these things on your own.

At the end of our service we will sing Luther's famous hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*.

In the second and fourth stanzas we sing about the one who is to come and accomplish all these things for us;

to free us, to save us;

the champion, the one whom God himself has elected.

“Who might this be?” you ask.

Christ Jesus, mighty Lord, God's only Son adored. He holds the field victorious.

God's Word forever shall abide...for God himself fights by our side with weapons of the Spirit.

But you must remember that you have a role in the care of this world.

We need to be able to interpret our gospel message as the power of God's Word working in people's lives,

changing their hearts in ways that enables Him to work through them in this world, to provide all that is needed here.

When you were baptized water was joined with God's Word and you were freed of the sinful state of existence you were conceived into,

and you received the promise of eternal life with your God.

And in the power of that Word, the Holy Spirit, came to write on your heart God's note of love, his commandments,

and you know that this is your God and you are His child.

Continue in my word and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

The power of God's word changes hearts and lives right here through the work that we do in God's mission.

In the beginning was the word...and the word became flesh and lived among us.

The word still becomes flesh and still lives among us.

God's word takes on your flesh because you are the presence of Christ in the world today.

You are the ones who are called to witness to the power of God's word alive in your heart and life so that other lives can be changed.

You are the ones called to console, to heal, to work out God's purpose in the world, to give generously, to love fully,

because you know God.

God has changed your life, he has written on your heart,
He has been with you in the noise of everyday life, in the loud
crashes of every crisis of your life,
and in those moments when you were able to be still
and rest in the promise knowing that He is your God,
and you are His people.