

Jesus brings real freedom

1. Intro

- One of the accusations the secular world will level at Christianity is that the Christianity is a strait jacket
 - Like a strait jacket is meant to bind and restrict a person's movements ... Christianity restricts what a person can do in life
 - That to become a Christian ... means your life will be constrained and limited and you'll have to give up your freedom
- And because our culture values freedom so highly ... the only logical and reasonable thing to do is to reject Jesus and reject Christianity
- Because our culture says
 - Unless you have the freedom to express yourself in what ever ways you desire, you're not being true to yourself
 - You're denying who you truly are as person unless you are able to explore your identity and humanity and how you wish to express that
- And so secular thinking will say ... Christianity and following Jesus is incompatible with truly being human and being free to be true to yourself

- However, when you read the Bible, that secular worldview that says Christianity and freedom are mutually exclusive, is seriously misguided
- Because it makes two significant errors
 - Firstly, it assumes living a secular life means you are free
 - And I want to show how that's **not** the case ... in fact living a life without Jesus means the exact opposite ... you're actually enslaved
 - Secondly, it assumes that Christianity and following Jesus limits and constrains your freedom ... whereas in actual fact ... when you understand the gospel you see that Jesus brings real freedom

- That's our topic for today – ***Jesus brings real freedom***
 - The God who brings freedom

- The world that seeks freedom
- The Christ who truly frees

Pray

2. The God who brings freedom

- Doing a short series here at church called Jesus in the OT
- One of our aims in this series is to help us see the connection between the OT and the NT and in particular
 - to see Christ in the OT (not literally)
 - to see how the OT is fulfilled in Jesus
 - to see how the OT points to Jesus
- All scripture is God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness
- So today we'll see how God can teach us from the scriptures about how we can have true freedom in Christ
- And to do that ... I want start with this passage from Exodus 1

- Context - Genesis
 - God's people in Egypt
 - Forced to migrate there to escape famine in Canaan
 - Joseph > sold as a slave by brothers ...
 - Israelites ended up settling in Egypt and remained there for 430 yrs
- Exodus 1
 - New Pharaoh ruling over Egypt and the Israelites growing in number
 - In fact, the Israelites had populated the land so much, that the Pharaoh was fearful of them rising up against the Egyptians ... and so he gave the order to enslave the Israelites
- The Israelites were oppressed > forced into hard labour > their lives became bitter
- However, even worse was to come

- God's people continue to grow
- Pharaoh's became even more fearful
- And so in order to control their numbers and oppress them further ... he ordered all Hebrew baby boys to be killed at birth

- **Illustration**
 - It is an awful thing to be enslaved like that
 - In our modern world we've seen it with African American slaves in US
 - And in our current era, where children and women are sold into sex slavery

- Whether it was then or now it's a terrible existence
 - Sub-human to be in slavery
 - And it leads to hopeless and despair

- But because God loves his people and had made promises to them ... he does not allow their slavery to go on forever
 - People cry out
 - Next 12 chapters of Exodus describes how
 - God raises up Moses as a rescuer
 - Moses is called to lead Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery to freedom

- How does God do this?
 - Sends plague after plague on Egypt to break Pharaoh's stubbornness
 - Blood in water, gnats, flies, sores, hail, locusts, frogs, darkness, death of animals
 - Eventually, death of first-born son
 - Eventually, Pharaoh relents ... says "Go"
 - And the Israelites leave
 - But Pharaoh changes his mind ... chases after Israel in desert with his armies and traps them near Red Sea

- But God miraculously parts the sea allowing Israel to walk through on dry ground
- Pharaoh and his army chase Israel through the parted waters
- But God allows the water return > drowning and destroying all of Pharaoh's army
- Finally, God's people are free
 - Set free from the bitterness, hardship and destructiveness of an oppressive slave master
 - And we see how God is the God who has the power to bring freedom

3. The world that seeks freedom

- All societies and cultures consider freedom to be essential to our humanity
 - 1st amendment of Constitution of USA – all about freedom of speech, religion, vote, protest
 - The motto of the French Republic is "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
- Right throughout history, when nations or tribes have been conquered by an invading army ... their natural response is to fight and rebel in order to maintain or regain their freedom
- Freedom is a good and right thing to seek after and fight for
- However, today's modern world is now so individualistic in its thinking and worldview that freedom is now understood to be the ability to 'be free to do what I want any old time' as the Soup Dragons sang in 1990 ... just as long as it doesn't hurt anyone else
- So if you want to
 - Do mind-bending drugs ... you're free
 - Change your gender ... you're free
 - Start your own political party called the Pirate Party ... go ahead
 - Style your hair into a mullet ... knock yourself out

- You're free to all of that ... as long as no one gets hurt in the process ... you ought to have to the freedom to do all of that

- However, there's a great paradox here
- Because while we crave after, seek for and value freedom ... the reality is ...
 - No one is truly free ... because really, we're all slaves!

- Not slaves like Israelites in Egypt or Afro-Americans in Louisiana
 - But we're all slaves to the thing in our life that we live for

- What I mean is this
 - Whatever we live in our life has control over us
 - The thing we live for enslaves us

- **Illustration - Bob Dylan: You gotta serve somebody**
- Bob Dylan understood this in his song – you gotta serve somebody
 - *You may be an ambassador to England or France*
You may like to gamble, you might like to dance
You may be the heavyweight champion of the world
You may be a socialite with a long string of pearls.
 - *You might be a rock n' roll addict, prancin' on the stage*
You might have drugs at your command, women in a cage
You may be a businessman or some high degree thief
They may call you doctor or they may call you chief
 - *But you're gonna have to serve somebody,*
You're gonna have to serve somebody
It may be the devil or it may be the Lord
But you're gonna have to serve somebody

- Looked it up on Youtube
 - Muscially ... got to be the worst song I have ever heard > terrible!

- But the lyrics ... are very perceptive ...
- We're all serving somebody or something
- We're all slaves to somebody or something
- Therefore, we're not really free at all

- Now the most extreme example of this is someone who has an addiction
 - Drugs, alcohol, or gambling ... that addiction controls their life
 - Whole life is
 - About finding the money fund the next hit
 - Their day is a right-off if they can't drink or have a bet or shoot up
 - All they think about is where is their next high coming from
 - And even if they **want** to stop ... they can't
 - It has such a grip on their heart and mind that they can't say No ... because they're slaves to their addiction

- Now that might seem obvious to most ... except that we need to realise that this is true for all of us when it comes to the thing or things in our life that
 - We live for
 - Seek fulfillment in
 - Think will bring us happiness

- Doctor
 - Article in the paper this week
 - Sex was his thing > it enslaved him
 - He was so caught up by his desire for it ... it led him to engage in inappropriate sexual relationships with patients
 - His marriage broke up, his was banned as a medical practitioner
 - He wasn't truly free ... he was enslaved by his desire for sex and it ruined his life

- For many of us ... the thing we live for is the approval of others

- We need to know we are liked and appreciated
- And so, we are constantly doing things to feed that need for approval and appreciation
 - Go to the gym to get skinny or bulk up
 - Post lots of 'How cool is my life' pics on social media
 - Work hard outdo our peers to get the bosses thumbs up
 - Act up at school to get in with the 'cool kids'
- And that desire for approval and appreciation means we're not really free to do what we want ... because all were doing is living to satisfy and fulfill this thing that has mastery over us
- Like addicts or slaves ... our behaviour ... and therefore our life ... is dictated to by something else ... in this instance ... our need to have others approval
- **Illustration – Kanye West**
- Lots of interest recently about Kanye West becoming a Christian and his new album Jesus is King
 - Lots of really good biblical stuff
 - But it's interest that it has this recurring theme of slavery and freedom
 - In "Follow God," he raps
 - "Every single night, right, every single fight, right? I was looking at the 'gram', and I don't even like likes."
 - The pun evokes the image of Instagram as a drug—a gram of cocaine—feeding an addiction but never satisfying a longing
- And so, whether it's happiness, comfort, success, pornography, career, popularity ... the things we live for enslaves us
- And that will play out in various ways ...
 - When you fail to attain the thing you live for you will despair
 - If someone / something stops or blocks you from getting it ... you'll get angry
 - If you're worried about losing the thing you live for ... you'll be fearful

- If you don't have it yet, you'll be so driven it will consume you
- So, we want freedom, we value freedom ... but tragically we don't truly experience freedom because our human nature means we are slaves to the thing we live for
- And like Israel in Egypt to be a slave to something is a terrible existence
 - And its sub-human ... because we're not created to experience the hopeless and despair that comes by virtue of being enslaved to something
 - God created us to experience life that is far better than that

4. The Christ who truly frees

- So how do you get that?
- How do you get the life that means you can enjoy the good things of this world without being a slave to them?
- We need to turn to the God who brings freedom
- Because like Israel in Egypt, unless we turn to the God who brings freedom, ... we will continue to remain enslaved and never be truly be free
- Let me explain
- After God rescued Israel from Egypt ... they were set free ... politically at least
 - God eventually took them to Canaan – the Promised Land – where they enjoyed much of the blessings of living freely in their own land
 - However, a few centuries on and that had all changed
 - The Assyrians swept in from the north and conquered the northern tribes of Israel in 722BC
 - 135 years later, the Babylonians invaded Judah and carted them all off into exile in 587BC where they became slaves once again
 - And so the freedom God had won for them was lost
- How?

- Because they hadn't been freed from being slaves to sin in their heart
- Their slavery to sin meant they were constantly turning away from the God who freed them and turning to idols
- And it was this sin of idolatry ... that meant they ended up as slaves in a foreign land
- And so, because they were still slaves to sin in their hearts ... they continued to slaves in life
 - Or to put it another way ... their sin stopped them from being free
 - Or to put it another way ... until they were set free from their sin ... they would never truly be free
- And so, the God who brings freedom ... sent his son into the world, to go to the cross and die for sin ... so that all who believe would be set free from their sin
- Listen to these words of Jesus in John 8
 - ³⁴ *Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*
- Jesus promise there in v36 ... is that he can set you free
 - And as you read the rest of the gospel it is clear that it's his death on the cross that pays the bondage price required to release you and me from our slavery
 - Because Jesus pays that price and redeems us, you and I are set free
- **Illustration – Andy McNab**
- Read Bravo Two Zero
 - Andy McNab > British SAS > sent behind enemy lines in 1991 Gulf War to destroy communication lines and scud missile launchers
 - During the mission they were caught by Iraqi's

- Almost ½ the book spells out how he & his surviving patrol members were systematically beaten > tortured > interrogated
- It just went on and on > no way out > no way of escaping
 - He desperately needed someone to come in and free them
 - It was only when the Allies won the war ... that he and his fellow prisoners were released and he was able to be freed
- You and I are like Andy McNab > we're slaves / captives and unable to free ourselves
- Through the cross ... Jesus won the war over sin and death
 - Means that by faith in him ... we've been freed from being captives and slaves to sin and death
 - Sin and death is no longer our master
- *So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*
- Free from what?
 - Free from sin and death
 - Free from the judgement we deserve
 - Free from the condemnation that sin brings
- But Christ's death not only frees you **from** something
- It frees you **for** something
- Jesus freeing you through the cross
 - doesn't mean you're now free to do what you want
 - doesn't mean you can do anything you want as long as no one gets hurt
- No ... Jesus has paid the price for you ... and now you belong to him
 - He's your new master now
 - He says ... I paid the price to free you ... now your allegiance is to me
- Paul makes this clear in Romans 6

- ¹⁶ *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey-- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

- Paul's point here is that you're either a slave to sin or a slave to Christ
 - Either sin is your master or Jesus is your master
 - There's no third option

- And the great irony here is ...
 - In order to be truly free ... you need to become a slave
 - Unless you become a slave of Christ ... you remain a slave to sin and will never truly be free

- **Illustration – Kanye West**
- It's quite incredible that someone like Kanye West understands this truth
 - A guy who had the world at his feet
 - Fame, fortune, popularity and influence
 - But like he does for every Christian ... God has shown him mercy and grace ... and opened his eyes to the good news of the gospel
 - Come to faith in Jesus Christ
- One of the truths of knowing Jesus ... is that he now has real freedom
- 'Selah'
 - He refers to John 8:33 and John 8:36
 - Because he is set free in Christ he says he *'won't be in bondage to any man'*
- 'Closed on Sunday'

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- He raps that when Jesus is his '*number one*' there is '*no more livin for the culture, we no nobody's slave*'
 - '*God is*'
 - He sings how when Jesus is King we're no longer prisoners (slaves), there is freedom from addictions and our idols can be cast aside
 - Jesus brought a revolution*
 - All the captives are forgiven*
 - Time to break down all the prisons*
 - Every man, every woman*
 - There is freedom from addiction*
 - Jesus, You have my soul*
 - Sunday Service on a roll*
 - All my idols, let 'em go*
 - And so as Kanye West knows Jesus is King ... he now knows that he is free
 - And having and experiencing this freedom is something every person comes to Jesus and makes him their king
 - And not only are you definitively set free from sin and death ...
 - But you are set free from the bondage of slavery of all those other things that capture our hearts ... our idols
 - You see friends ... when you're a slave to Christ ... when you are in Christ ... when you saved by Christ ...
 - You have everything you need
 - You have every spiritual blessing that the creator God of the universe pours out on his beloved sons and daughters
 - You are loved more than you know
 - You are valued beyond your imagination
 - You are precious in his eyes
 - So precious, so loved, so valued ... that he was willing to give up his one and only son to get **you**

- When you get that ... when the truth of the gospel hits you heart like it seems to have hit the heart of Kanye West ... then all those other things you
 - live for
 - idolize
 - seek after
 - they become just things
- They no longer have the grip on your heart that they once did ... which means you are free indeed
- You see when you receive the righteousness of Christ, and learn to rejoice in it ... then I can look at
 - Yourself in the mirror
 - Your life's achievements
 - Your popularity among your peers ... and say
 - "what makes me beautiful to God is Jesus
 - "what makes me special is I am loved by Jesus
 - "what brings me joy is I am forgiven by Jesus
 - "what gives my life meaning is living for Jesus ... not these other things."

- When you can say that ... then the Son sets you free, and you will be free indeed

PRAY