

10th Sunday after Trinity

Psalms: 145

145 I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

² Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

³ Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

⁴ One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

⁵ I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

⁶ And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

⁷ They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

⁸ The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

⁹ The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

¹⁰ All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall bless thee.

¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

¹² To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

¹³ Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

¹⁴ The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

¹⁵ The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

¹⁶ Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

¹⁸ The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

¹⁹ He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

²⁰ The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

²¹ My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

First Lesson: Ecclesiasticus, or the Book of Sirach 1:1-10

In Praise of Wisdom

- 1 All wisdom is from the Lord,
and with him it remains forever.
- 2 The sand of the sea, the drops of rain,
and the days of eternity—who can count them?
- 3 The height of heaven, the breadth of the earth,
the abyss, and wisdom^[d]—who can search them out?
- 4 Wisdom was created before all other things,
and prudent understanding from eternity.^[e]
- 6 The root of wisdom—to whom has it been revealed?
Her subtleties—who knows them?^[f]
- 8 There is but one who is wise, greatly to be feared,
seated upon his throne—the Lord.
- 9 It is he who created her;
he saw her and took her measure;
he poured her out upon all his works,
- 10 upon all the living according to his gift;
he lavished her upon those who love him.^[g]

Second Lesson: John 8:25-36

- 25 Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.
- 26 I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.
- 27 They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.
- 28 Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.
- 29 And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.
- 30 As he spake these words, many believed on him.
- 31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;
- 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.
- 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

³⁴ Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

³⁵ And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

³⁶ If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Introduction

One of my favorite television programs growing up was The Twilight Zone with Rod Serling. I loved how the tension would build and every episode ended with an ironic or strange twist, often making the audience pause and reflect. That was certainly true for me and my imagination. As I was preparing for today's homily and reading our second lesson from John 8:25-36, one particular episode popped into my head after all these years.

In the first season of the Twilight Zone, there is an episode entitled "Time Enough at Last" starring the famous actor, Burgess Meredith. It is a story of a man named Henry Bemis who works in a bank, but his real passion is reading books. In fact, he is absolutely obsessed with reading them and he sneaks them into his work and reads while on the job, often ignoring his customers. This prompts his boss to pull him into his office and verbally berate him. He tells Henry, "you can't function in an organization, you are a reader of books"! He mocks his love of the printed word and his failures as a bank employee.

We then see Henry in his home. His wife is also constantly nagging at him to stop wasting his time reading and focus on things that will make him respected. She sabotages his books and he is left frustrated and isolated from everyone. Yet, his tragedy isn't just external; he is trapped in a world that mocks his passions, and he never seems to have the time or opportunity to do them.

One day he takes his lunch to lock himself in the bank vault where he can read his books in peace and not let society judge him or drag him from his passions. While safely inside the vault, a nuclear blast wipes out civilization and everyone in it, sparing Henry. He looks around at the smoking ruins and realizes he has food and everything to keep him alive, but he is totally alone. At first he is upset, but eventually he stumbles upon the surviving public library and joyfully declares himself a "free man" because he finally has all the time in the world to read.

Henry Bemis places his absolute trust in printed pages and uninterrupted time. He believes that if external obstacles (his nagging wife, his overbearing boss, and society) are removed, his soul will find complete peace. He finds however that his security is fragile, resting entirely on external variables.

The episode, before the end, delivers a startling, ironic twist. Just as Bemis gathers his stacks of books in the ruined library, believing he has achieved absolute freedom, he trips, and his thick eyeglasses shatter onto the pavement. Without his glasses, the vast ocean of knowledge before him is entirely inaccessible. He cries out the line: *"That's not fair. There was time now... There was all the time I needed!"* His physical blindness instantly strips away his perceived freedom, leaving him completely helpless in the rubble.

At first glance, a theological dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Gospel of John and a classic mid-century sci-fi story about an apocalyptic librarian would seem worlds apart. Perhaps quite a stretch for our newly minted Deacon, but bear with me. In our second lesson, John 8:25–36, we focus on bondage, truth, and freedom, and in *The Twilight Zone's* "Time Enough at Last" we share profound parallel themes regarding the human illusion of control, the nature of true freedom, and tragic self-deception, in regard to the truth of what really matters. In verse 32 of our reading, Jesus delivers the message, *"And ye shall know the truth, and*

the truth shall make you free". Both our reading from John and the account of Henry Bemis explore the theme of misplaced focus and our own perceived freedom. Both narratives suggest that true freedom cannot be achieved simply by escaping annoying people, changing your environment or situation, or leaning on social status and standing. True freedom, and acknowledging that truth, requires an anchor outside of ourselves. Our reading from John provides a profound opportunity to contrast the "slavery" of human ego with the "freedom" of living in the Truth. Let's explore what Jesus told the Pharisees and how we can apply that wisdom and truth in our own lives.

Body

In verses 25-30, Jesus addresses the question posed to him, "Who art thou?" (v.25) In doing so, Jesus points the Pharisees away from human descriptions and toward His unique, ontological union with the Father. Like our Lord's first-century audience, we do not "figure out" or come to know Jesus through human reason alone. We come to know Him as He is lifted up on the Cross. In verse 28, *"Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things"* (John 8:28).

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man..." is the key. Again, like the people who he is speaking to that day, we understand the Truth of who God is by looking at the sacrifice of Christ, not by our own philosophical and earthly endeavors. Jesus uses the language of being lifted up to point forward to His death, but also to His ultimate exaltation after resurrection and ascension. Jesus emphasizes that His actions and words are not self-generated but are in perfect alignment with the Father's will. Jesus says *"then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of*

myself; but as my Father hath taught me” (v.28), This reflects the Trinitarian relationship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working together.

In verse 32-33, Jesus identifies the illusion of autonomy that the people are feeling. *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?”* (John 8:32-33). The crowd bristles at the idea of being enslaved and bound by another. They claim, “We have never been slaves to any man!” In reality they are enslaved by their pride, their hostility, and their moral blindness. We often make the same mistake. We claim we are self-made, autonomous, or in control of our lives. The Anglican view of human nature, the doctrine of Original Sin, reminds us that we are all born into a form of spiritual slavery, the slavery to our own sinful and rebellious, self-centered desires. To deny this is to stay trapped in a prison of our pride and our own self-importance.

Jesus responds to the Pharisee’s indignation that they have never been slaves by telling them, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.”* (v.34) Jesus exposes this as a false foundation, noting that everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. Their trust is anchored in the wrong place. True freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want; it is the freedom to become who we were created to be. Jesus says in verse 31, *“If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed”* On this tenth Sunday of Trinity, we reflect on our own Christian discipleship, by continuing to follow or abiding in Christ. We abide in Him through the Word and the Eucharist. It is a daily, relational commitment. We are not freed by a one-time intellectual assent, but by consistently living in the house of the Father. Last week, Fr. Chris, through the parable of the Prodigal son illustrated the “abundant life that we live with our Father in His house, and the famine and misery we encounter when we choose to leave His home and

separate ourselves from Him”. He stated in his Homily, “when we leave our Father’s home we wander in a land of famine and cease to be who we truly are, because we have gone and joined ourselves to something other than God”. Jesus tells them in verse 35-36, “*And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*”. (v.35-36)

Action

This week, let us realize the truth of who we are. Instead of acting like sinners who are trapped by our own anxiety and actions, let us walk through the door of salvation that Jesus has opened. Let us dwell in our Father’s house. Accept the Truth that you are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*” (Psalm 139:14), loved, forgiven, and set free by the sacrifice of the Son of God. If we are truly free, we stop asking for things that are meant to build our ego or add to our self-made kingdoms and start asking for things that please the Father. True freedom is the alignment of our desires with His. “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” (v.33) True freedom is found when our rebellious human will yields to His Divine will in all things. From Luke 22:42, “*Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.*”

Conclusion

In our second lesson today, Jesus speaks to people who think they are free, but who are enslaved by Rome by their own history, their own pride, and their own religious definitions. The religious leaders described in John's Gospel thought their heritage and legalism guaranteed their freedom, remaining blind to the Romans and the spiritual chains binding them. Henry Bemis thought absolute solitude and zero interference from other people guaranteed his happiness, remaining blind to the fragility of his own physical body and his total dependence on a fragile pair of glasses. Both narratives suggest that true freedom cannot be achieved through our efforts

and reliance on our own judgement. When we live in the Truth of what Jesus tells us we realize that Our Lord Jesus doesn't offer a manual for freedom; He offers Himself as *the way, the truth and the life* (John 14:6). He says, "*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*". (v.36) The truth that sets you free is a Savior who looks at the secret places of your captivity, your sins and wickedness, and loves you too much to just leave you there. From Second Corinthians, "*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.