

Thought for the Day

Thought for the day is based on one of the day's lectionary readings.

For the Bible online, go to: <http://bible.oremus.org/>

Choose your version (we use NRSV in church)

Copy and paste the reference into the search box and the passage will be displayed.

Wednesday 1 April

John 8.31-42

What is freedom?

Jesus offers freedom to the Jews. 'The truth will make you free', he said. They were puzzled. 'But what do you mean? We are sons of Abraham, we are slaves of no-one. Surely we are already free!' In that world, you were either a free man, or a slave. They thought this was clear cut. You are owned by someone else; or you are your own person.

But Jesus was talking about a different kind of freedom. He said, 'You are a slave to sin when you commit sin. But if I, the Son make you free, you will be free indeed.' Free, that is, of sin. Our prayer of absolution says 'God...have mercy on you and set you free from sin'. The collect for the 4th Sunday of Lent asks 'may we all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed.'

We know about the chains of sin, don't we; we see it in every kind of addiction, when a person becomes unable to free themselves from some habit. We see it when the consequences of a wrong act reverberate around a person's life and their relationships. When patterns of harmful and destructive behaviour are repeated across generations. When we are all caught up in the environmental damage caused by our lifestyle. Being freed from all that is so much more than being forgiven for one wrong act, word or thought. Freedom...to do things differently. To live in a new way. To make a new start. To be untrammelled by the past. That is a great offer and a great blessing.

It doesn't mean being free to do whatever we like. Remember the words of that other well-known collect: '...whose service is perfect freedom'. This is a paradox of our faith, that in committing to serve Christ we are made free, and we commit to use our freedom to serve him and to serve him in others. It's a free choice; following our servant-king we choose to serve. Following our crucified Lord, we take up our cross. This is real freedom. Not grasping at my rights and demanding all my dues but being ready to set all that aside for something more important. Someone else's welfare, perhaps. As Jesus emptied himself and was found in the form of a slave (Philippians 2.7). Freedom for Jesus meant walking to the cross. Freedom found him breaking out of the tomb, free of the chains of sin and death. "I am the way and the truth and the life", he said. 'The Truth will make you free.'

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy in this time of uncertainty and distress. Sustain and support the anxious and fearful, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may rejoice in your comfort, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.