

Good morning,

As I was praying and meditating on our scripture readings for today, I had to come up with a title for my sermon. It's the first step for me in how I am going to process the scripture and share the good news.

A good title helps me to focus, it helps me to know where I'm going, it brings clarity. Likewise a bad title, muddies the water, distracts, offers no guidance along the way. So either way a title is important.

And so as I began to write, I had two sermon titles. Two trajectories, two landing points, two frameworks. And it is the same two themes that we see in our reading from Galatians. Paul is talking to a church struggling between two things, the law and faith.

These are not just titles, themes, they are frameworks, they are orientations, they are ways of living. This church that Paul is talking to in Galatia are struggling to find a new way to live.

My first title of this sermon was called Those things that bind us. I wonder, what are those things that you are bound to? What are those things that you are bound by?

-Those things that bind us- have power over us.

-Those things that we are bound to- become the lens in which we see our world through; they become our frame of reference.

Or maybe its not even things, maybe its people that we are bound by. OR whatever it is, that is the thing that we lift up, to act as our gauge, our benchmark, our litmis test. Our idol.

Paul in our scripture reading is talking about this. The whole 3rd chapter of Galatians Paul is talking to a church that is bound by the law.

That is how they saw the world, everything through the law. And so, what is of the utmost importance to them is their sense of righteousness.

Not a sense of community, not a sense of compassion. Because their frame of reference is the law then all they can see is how they measure up to it or rather, don't measure up to it.

I wonder if we ever find ourselves bound to some law of this world. Bound to the things of this world. Bound to our sense of expectation. Bound to our perfectionisms.

Paul is talking to a church that is stuck.

If the bar that we set for ourselves is perfection, then of course we will never be able to hit the mark. This is what Paul is warning against. This is a life not of freedom, but a bounded life.

Paul uses very specific language when he is talking about the law in our scripture for today. He says that we are imprisoned and guarded under the law, the law is our disciplinarian. If we are bound by the law, we live an imprisoned life.

I began my sermon trying to describe how the things that we are bound by have power over us. I also began by telling you that I had two titles of my sermon. The one title was those things that bind us. The other title of this sermon is the birth of faith.

I realized that these are not two separate things; it was really the flip side of the same coin. There is always a tension between the things that bind us and the thing that we have faith in.

You see Paul is talking to a church that is stuck, a church that is destined to live a life that ends in imprisonment.

But we, we are celebrating the birth of faith into this world. We celebrated the child who was born of a virgin, in a manger. We celebrated as John says in our gospel the word made flesh. Jesus. Because it is in Jesus there is freedom. Freedom from those things that bind us to death. Freedom from those things that bind us to this world. Freedom

How do we move our lives from bondage to freedom?

Paul knew, just as we know, that all we need is a little bit of faith in Jesus. A little bit of faith that God is going to work that thing out. A little bit of faith in our lives can change every thing. A little bit of faith is all it takes to keep pushing when we think our tank is empty. A little bit of faith. Faith in Jesus is what holds our community together. A little faith compels us to do the right thing, to be compassionate to reach out and touch someone else.

We all need a reminder from time to time.

So I want you to find someone close to you and tell them, all you need is a little bit of faith.

A little bit of faith can change the world... A little bit of faith has changed the world.

A little bit of faith that Jesus can free you from all of your bonds is enough for Jesus to actually do it.

When we are feeling most bound by the things of this world, it is the faith in Jesus that will set us free. That is the gospel!

So as we look forward to this year ahead of us, a new decade, let us leave behind those things that bind and hold us captive. And as we think about how we will be a community for the world in this new year let us bring a little bit of faith that we will experience and be able to share that perfect freedom in Jesus.

Amen