



*This week's Revd. Morris' message: I wonder are we may be experiencing the fullness of Jesus' freedom in our lives?*  
In today's Gospel, John introduces the concept of **Christian Freedom**. This reading is a short one but of vital importance to us as Christians [ and to an understanding of John's wider Gospel also as it's theme is a key one].

Let's dig a bit deeper into what John records of Jesus' teachings here.

1. **'Truth'** when used in this reading does not mean *philosophical 'truth'* or even an absence of error or falsehood but rather the personal experience of God as revealed in Jesus himself, who is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' [ John 14:16] As 'Son' and 'Truth', Jesus himself is the very revelation of God to each of us ...and the whole universe too! (see John 1:18; 5:19-27; 14:8-10); and
2. **'Freedom'** may only be found and experienced by us humans when we are closely connected to, experiencing a relationship and living day to day with Jesus [ or as John puts it '*dwelling' or 'abiding' with Jesus*- see John 15: 1-17] Otherwise, we intentionally or unintentionally, become 'slaves' to something or someone else that will lead us away from God's path for us. We are thereby prevented from being the people we were meant to be and become. This is the true meaning Of the expression 'sin'- namely, something that that gets in the way of our relationship with the Divine.]

So, here Jesus his saying that it is only by growing closer to Him that we can come to personally experience more and more of the Divine and His ways and though this become **freer to be and become who we were meant to be - our true selves**. The way to experience this 'abiding' is by remaining connected, listening to and following all that God says to us in our hearts day by day- through scripture, prayer, meditation, other's Godly insights, Divine 'niggles and nudges' and being watchful for the outcome of providence.

Notice here that **Jesus is calling for a personal relationship with Him - not merely knowledge of or about Him**. John highlights this dramatically when Jesus appears before Pilate later in his Gospel. Jesus tells Pilate, in part, that He comes **'to bring truth to the world. All who love the truth are my followers'**. Pilate, no doubt well versed in an understanding of philosophical concepts of 'Truth', exclaims in frustration **'What is truth?'** [ John 18: 37 + 38] Such is the plight and lack of experiential understanding of any who are not abiding in Jesus.

We see plainly in Pilate's actions his own *personal slavery or bondage to fear* - fear of the crowd, fear of his own inadequacy or demonstrating any weakness or lack of loyalty to the Emperor, fear of losing control of the situation and fear of loss of his own power and reputation should he be perceived by his superiors and peers as mishandling the 'problem' presented by Jesus.



Jesus calls us to be **drawn** by His unconditional agape love into closer relationship with Him and the freedom to be and become our true selves... and not be **driven** by our own insecurities and fears into a **false self** enslaved to our egos and sins. Our Christian lives should not be about blindly following a list of 'dos and don'ts' - its simply staying in relationship with Jesus and continuing to be drawn by His love.

### **Well, what does this all mean for us on Australia Day?**

Unlike those we read about today who were living under the heel of Rome, we live in a country which, whilst by no means perfect, offers to all of its citizens and residents so much political, economic and cultural freedom. *Let us never forget to treasure these freedoms, and also to give God thanks for this and for all those who sacrificed and built this nation which we enjoy and in which we live.*

How puzzling it is to hear today the comments of those who were debating with Jesus, namely: 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone on earth!' And this from those suffering under the cruel oppression of Rome? I wonder what excuses we may all be relying upon personally to explain away our own various 'slave masters' ? [i.e this people, habits, or things to whom we have given power over our lives and which may be leading us away from a closer relationship / abiding with Jesus?]

**Gospel reading: John 8:31-36** Some resources to dig deeper: [https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/reformation-day/commentary-on-john-831-36-7#:~:text=Jesus' mention of freedom offends,sin, living as oppressed people.](https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/reformation-day/commentary-on-john-831-36-7#:~:text=Jesus' mention of freedom offends,sin, living as oppressed people.;); <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/bible/what-does-it-mean-to-abide-in-christ.html>;

**Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service Wednesday 10:30 am.** All regular parish activities are in recess.

**Today's Notices Highlights: Finances:** Giving Act \$9004 Bud \$5896 Final YTD Act \$72190 Bud \$68772 Budgeted shortfall 2024: \$24,323.85; Actual Shortfall: \$14058. **Video Training** available; **AGM #2 16/2/25** Reports to Revd Morris before 7/2/25; **Behind the scenes thx: Big Al and our Maintenance team ! Wanted - Op Shop Volunteers and Treasurer 2IC.**

**Readings for Next Sunday:** Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm 84; Hebrews 2: 14-18; Luke 2:22-40

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**Parish website :** <https://www.stmatthewshollandpark.com/>

**Parish Private Facebook site :** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ; **Public**

**Site:** <https://www.facebook.com/StMatthewsHollandPark> ; **Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754>

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:**

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.