

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Pastor's Page –March 2015

Slave or Free?

The Bible talks a lot about slavery and freedom. They're not something most of us think a lot about. But for the writers of Scripture they were up close and often personal. Slavery was commonplace in Bible times. Freedom was a big deal because it meant you were a person with rights and privileges. Slaves, of course, had none.

I've been thinking lately about slavery and freedom in the spiritual sense. It can be a bit confusing so let me try to explain.

Paul insists that we are all slaves until we're set free by Jesus Christ. Therefore, to live apart from God is to be a slave to sin. If you have not responded to God's offer of freedom in Christ, you're in bondage. Even if you are under the illusion that you're free because you are "free" to do what you want, it's still slavery. Why? Because in that case you are a slave to your desires. The Devil is fine with that. He's got you where he wants you and will be glad for you to continue to fool yourself, thinking you're free when you're not.

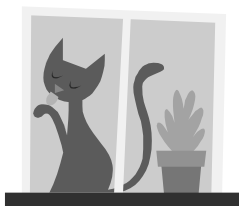
Paul also says that when Jesus sets you free, you are free indeed. But free to do what? This does not mean freedom to do your own thing, as I just got done explaining. When we're saved, we're free from both sin and from *self*. We're no longer hindered from living the life God wants us to live. It means we're free to live as *servants of God*.

Does that sound like trading one form of slavery for another? It does to those steeped in individualism. But real wisdom tells us each of us has one master or another. Like Jesus said, we serve God or "mammon," which is to say everything that God isn't.

What sets apart the freedom that God provides in Jesus Christ are the rights and privileges that go with it. Our privilege is to be accepted as a full member of God's family. Our rights are the rights of those given a part to play in God's household. Among those rights are the right to exercise the power of prayer and forgiveness and love through the Holy Spirit. If you don't exercise these rights and privileges, it's like you put the chains back on.

Lent is a good time to reflect on these things. Take some time to think about what may be enslaving you, how you experience freedom in Christ and what you're doing with it.

Pastor Pat



GUESS WHAT?! WAYNE BOUGHT ME A VALENTINE PRESENT! WASN'T THAT NICE OF HIM? UNEXPECTED, TOO. IT'S NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE. HE GOT ME AN ELECTRIC BLANKET. HE SAYS HE GOT IT FOR MY PERSON. BUT I GET TO SLEEP ON IT AT NIGHT. THAT MEANS IT MINE, RIGHT?

- GEORGE, THE PARSONAGE CAT

