A Declaration of Freedom

## (John 8:31-32, 36)

I hope you all had a good Independence Day. Today, I want to expand on the concept of our independence—not just remembering freedom, but declaring it in every part of our lives. This message is titled 'A Declaration of Freedom,' and I declare right now that God is about to do something unexpected in your life that will break old patterns and open new doors of freedom.

You see, some of you arrived this morning thinking this was just another Sunday. You walked down the sidewalk, shaking a few hands, perhaps grabbing a sip of coffee, and then took your seat. But God isn’t moved by your routine, and he doesn’t need permission to shake up your normal day. In fact, I believe he’s ready to turn your ordinary upside down, so I want you to begin making some declarations of freedom in your life. The Bible says,

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

How many of you would say this morning that you need more power?

Well, the Scripture says his power is working within us, which means he is ready to do more than you expect.

Throughout the centuries, the church has always needed more power, more provision, and more freedom because that keeps us relying on Jesus. If he gave us enough manna from heaven in the morning to last for the week, we wouldn’t come back until we needed more. But let me clue you in on a secret: Jesus is here, his power is at work within us, and he promises:

"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

And so, today we want to make this declaration of freedom from lies, fear, insecurity, and confusion because the truth will set you free.

That’s important right now because these are troubling days. Many people feel like their freedom is slipping away. Some blame one side or the other; others have gone so far as to call violent protests free speech while ignoring the real injustices being committed. Meanwhile, both sides shout that the other is a threat to our democracy, which is misguided and untrue because if you know your history, these United States has never been a democracy — we are a republic with a democratic style of government.

And so, these are troubling days, and people will twist their words, denying what they said, making you think you’re losing your mind and causing you to doubt what you know you heard with your own ears and saw with your own eyes. But today we uphold a higher standard; our declaration of freedom is not found in the Constitution or politics but in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I thank God for Jesus, who was in the beginning, who was with God, and who was God, and who said,

"If you hold to my teaching… you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

That truth is our anchor—unshakable, indivisible, and immutable. No lie, woke ideology, or twisted socialist agenda can diminish what Jesus declared, accomplished, and paid for on the cross.

This morning, I want to talk to you about our Declaration of Freedom, but I will be honest with you: even though I trust God, I still sometimes feel troubled. I lie down troubled and wake up troubled. Like David, I cry out:

“The waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me” (Psalm 69:1-2).

And if I didn’t have the Word of God, I would sink under the weight, but the Word is my daily bread, my place of peace, my daily reminder, my declaration of freedom.

I understand that the prophet Nehemiah knew that feeling too because he said:

“When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4).

In fact, the prophets faced many great challenges—dry seasons and corrupt kings—yet they still proclaimed the truth. They struck rocks and saw water flow, called down fire from heaven, and turned wicked cities upside down with a single word from God. Therefore, we stand firm, declaring freedom from fear and worry because, as Isaiah declared,

“God will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3).

And so, we hold our peace because we trust him, and when you know the truth, the truth will set you free.

However, I want you to notice something: context matters, perspective matters, and when I read the Word now, I see the bigger picture. Jesus told the first disciples, “The truth will set you free,” but the early church didn’t live free in the way we think of freedom. They lived under Roman rule and oppression. Soldiers could point to them and call them out, forcing them to carry their burdens, which is why Jesus said in that context:

“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles” (Matthew 5:41).

That was the context of Jesus' coming into the world; Roman control was evident everywhere, with soldiers, taxes, and crucifixions. And so, the Jewish people longed for freedom as they waited for the Messiah because they were in their land but not free.

In fact, you may remember that just before the first Christmas,

“In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world” (Luke 2:1).

And so, they were prisoners in their own land, Israel was part of the Roman world, and it is one thing to be captive far away, as the psalmist described,

“By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion” (Psalm 137:1).

But it’s another thing to sit in your own house and still not be free or to go out into the streets of your city only to be governed by a foreign army.

And so, that was the context of the coming of Jesus. Rome ran the government, the economy, and even daily life. They told the Jews, “You can keep your religion and your temple, but just don’t meddle in the government.” And the leaders of the Jews submitted to Rome and said:

“We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15).

So, the religion of the Jews turned into ritual and routine and lost its power but still the leaders said:

“We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" (John 8:33).

And they had become so accustomed to slavery, to Roman oppression, that people couldn’t tell where the government ended and the church began, but right in the middle of that, God planted a promise, a declaration of freedom, waiting to break through in the lives of those who believe. Jesus said,

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

But they refused to believe and have life; instead, they found shelter and safety in their religion and in their temple. But that Temple was so closely and intricately tied to Rome that it was called Herod’s Temple because of the massive renovations that King Herod did to gain favor with the Jews.

However, the enemy doesn’t get to put his name on God’s house because even the temple in Jerusalem stood as an illustration of freedom. After all, Jesus said: “Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19).

“I tell you that one greater than the temple is here” (Matthew 12:6).

But still, it was this temple in Jerusalem with its huge stones and courtyards that made the disciples say,

“Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” (Mark 13:1).

However, Jesus wasn’t impressed, because the Bible says that when:

“Jesus entered the temple area, he drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves” (Matthew 21:12).

In other words, Jesus boldly challenged the corruption and religiosity of the temple and announced freedom. He wasn’t protesting because they were serving snacks in the lobby; but because Herod was making money from the offerings and influencing their worship. The government had infiltrated the sanctuary and was taxing people for their devotion. And so, Jesus declared,

“My house will be a house of prayer’; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers’” (Luke 19:45-46).

And so, Jesus entered the temple and overturned tables so worship could be free again. Free from dead religion. Free from man’s ideas. And free to worship in Spirit and in truth. That was Jesus making a declaration of freedom.

Years later, when Paul and Silas were brought before the court in Acts chapter 17, the people accused them, saying:

"These who have turned the world upside down have come here too” (Acts 17:6).

And they did, not with power or politics, but they turned the world upside down with the Spirit of God. And that is our declaration,

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

And God’s Spirit is still turning the world upside down. Therefore, we do not lose heart:

“Though outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

That is our declaration of freedom today, because even if we’re found in chains, no man can chain the Spirit of the Lord.

And so, these are the days when revival breaks out, when what looks impossible becomes possible, when the fire of the Holy Spirit falls again, just like God promised,

“In these last days, I will pour out my Spirit on all people” (Acts 2:17).

And so, we say it again, we make this our declaration of freedom, “Come, Holy Spirit”. And we stand free because,

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

On this Independence Day weekend, we remember why this nation came into being. It began as a declaration of freedom by the thirteen colonies under England’s rule. Those colonies rose up and said, “We will not be ruled by this king, paying taxes, and staying someone else’s outpost.” So they planned, prepared, fought, and in 1776, they declared their independence and put it in writing for the world to see.

The Jews in Jesus' time shared that same desire for freedom, which is why many followed him, not just for the miracles, but because they hoped he would rise up and overthrow Rome. When they shouted,

“Hail, king of the Jews!” (Matthew 27:29).

It was a multifaceted declaration, serving as a prophecy at his birth, a mockery during his trial, and a declaration of freedom on the cross. It was a sign for all to see that the one true King had arrived…

“To proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners” (Isaiah 61:1).

So, when Jesus was born, the Jews were expecting to get their land back and were looking for the Messiah to drive Rome out. That’s why, when the wise men came asking:

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2),

Herod panicked and tried to kill all the newborn children because he was afraid that the one who had been born would take away his throne.

But it wasn’t just the king; even after the resurrection, 30 years later, the disciples asked Jesus, saying,

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).

In other words, they weren’t asking about heaven; they wanted the kingdom on earth. And so, they believed the Messiah would fight Rome, but Jesus didn’t pick up a sword; instead, he picked up a cross. That’s why the apostle Paul said,

“I resolved to know nothing…except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Because the cross is our declaration of freedom. What looked like weakness to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles was really…

“The power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

In other words, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ paid the price, breaking the power of sin and death forever. His resurrection on the third day proved that:

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

But even those closest to Jesus didn’t fully grasp the meaning of the cross, nor did they understand that Jesus was talking about a literal, physical resurrection. In fact, Thomas said,

“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (John 20:25).

In other words, Thomas wasn’t just doubting; he was grieving. He had hoped for freedom, a revolution, the kingdom of God coming triumphantly, but he watched his hope die right in front of him.

Judas couldn’t bear it; the disappointment was overwhelming, and he took his own life. Peter walked away, ashamed and confused, because everything he thought he knew and believed seemed to fall apart right before his eyes. But then, when all hope was lost and the dream was buried, Jesus rose from the grave and declared:

“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever” (Revelation 1:18).

The word had become flesh and dwelt among us, but many did not receive him. And so, the crowds shouted,

“Crucify! Crucify!” (John 19:6).

But Jesus answered them:

“Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days” (John 2:19).

The Jews shook their heads in disbelief, but Peter and John stood up and declared:

“You handed him over to be killed… You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this” (Acts 3:13-15).

Jesus' resurrection is our declaration of freedom, living proof that no grave, no sin, no chain can hold down the hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

And yet, here we are today, living in the land of the free, but many still feel bound. Some wave flags but remain chained inside. Some sing about liberty but stay locked in silent prisons. So, you can celebrate Independence Day and still long for true freedom in your soul. That's why the Bible encourages us, saying,

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

Peter, James, and John were Jesus' inner circle, his closest friends, but even they did not see the promise of the cross and the power of his resurrection. They saw the miracles he performed, they stood with him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and prayed with him in the Garden of Gethsemane, but some moments belong only to you and Jesus.

You see, when you know who you are in Christ and what He has deposited within you, you are living proof that the grave is empty, the cross still breaks chains, and Jesus is still setting people free. The apostle Paul says,

"You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3:2-3).

But not everyone will see it or understand, because some moments of freedom happen in quiet places, a still place where it’s just you and the Lord.

Today, the Holy Spirit reminds us that true freedom doesn’t come from a flag, a constitution, a government, or a holiday; it comes from Jesus Christ alone. And so, if the Son sets you free,

“You will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

When the world twists the truth, and confusion crowds your mind, when pain makes you want to run, stand firm and grab hold of the truth that sets you free.

This is our declaration of freedom: Jesus is alive, the grave is empty, the cross still has power, and the Holy Spirit is here right now, ready to set you free.

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