

## CHAINS SHALL HE BREAK

Friday, December 19  
Reading: Romans 6:15-23

### Translated French Poem:

*The Redeemer has shattered every shackle. Earth is free, heaven open. He sees a brother where once was a slave,  
and love unites those whom iron once held in chains. Who will tell Him that we know Him?  
It is for us all that He was born, suffered, and died. People, arise! Sing of your deliverance.  
Noel, noel! Let us sing about the Redeemer!*

### English Hymn:

*Truly He taught us to love one another / His law is love and His gospel is peace  
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother / And in His name all oppression shall cease  
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we / Let all within us praise His holy name  
Christ is the Lord! O praise His name forever! / His power and glory evermore proclaim!  
His power and glory evermore proclaim!*

“Truly He taught us to love one another” – This command of Jesus is repeated multiple times in the New Testament (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10; 13:8; Ephesians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8; 1 John 3:11-23; 4:7-12).

“Chains shall He break” – The horrors of slavery echo through these lines. In the 1800’s, when ‘O Holy Night’ was written, the slave trade was beginning to come to an end in both Europe and eventually America. The terrible legacy of slavery was a bad taste in the mouth of the authors of these words. That “all oppression shall cease” was their greatest hope.

But these words should also remind us that we face another form of slavery – slavery to sin. The Apostle Paul makes the case in Romans 6 when he states:

“...we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin (Romans 6:6)

Jesus died to free us from slavery – to break the chains! But we are too often still bound by our sin. Paul explains that we are slaves to whoever or whatever we choose to obey. Jesus’ death broke the power of sin over our lives, but we can still choose to follow sin’s temptations. Everyone is a slave to something: a slave to sin leading to impurity, lawlessness, more sin, and finally destruction. Or we are slaves to God which leads to holy living and eternal life where we can sing those “sweet hymns of joy” and “praise His name” forever!

We like to think that we are in control of our lives – that we make the decisions. “I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.”<sup>1</sup> But we are not in control! Our sinful desires and tendencies pull us in directions we often do not wish to go. Without Christ, we are truly slaves to sin. But when we are saved by God’s grace, we should still not be in control! We should obey Christ and the promptings of the Spirit who dwells within us. We should desire to live for righteousness. Are you truly thankful that you gave your heart to the Lord? What evidence do you see that you have relinquished the ‘reins’ of your life to His control? Is your desire to live for righteousness?

<sup>1</sup> ‘Invictus’ by the English poet William Ernest Henley (1849–1903). It was written in 1875 and published in 1888 in his first volume of poems, Book of Verses, in the section Life and Death (Echoes)