

Pilate said, "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"
Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above."
(John 19: 10-11 NIV)

As we approach the July 4th holiday I am reminded of the significance of the Declaration of Independence. It is an amazing document which all Americans should read periodically to remind ourselves what our country is really founded upon. The portion of the Preamble that is perhaps most famous states:

**We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,
that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**

Yet what we as Christians must remind ourselves is that freedom in this world and even in our great nation is not absolute. We are not free to do whatever we want. There are laws that are necessary to protect us from ourselves. Our freedom is freedom only as determined by all of us as Americans.

As Jesus was before Pilate this concept of freedom came into question. Pilate believed he alone held the power of freedom. And in a worldly sense he did. But Jesus explained that Pilate's power over his freedom was not complete. It was not a total power and the freedom which Pilate spoke of was not total freedom.

Jesus had earlier said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this world." This reminds me of the comment that Paul makes in Philippians: "Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven."
(Philippians 3:19-20 NIV)

We as disciples of Jesus Christ must have a similar attitude to that which he had before Pilate. Yes, we live in this world and this world has certain power and authority but it is limited. We serve a risen savior who has the power over all things seen and unseen. That is far beyond the power of Pilate or any earthly entity.

Jesus made it clear that truth and freedom are related:

"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 8:31-33 NIV)

Freedom comes from truth. And what is truth? Jesus answered that question:

"I am the way and the truth and the life."
(John 14:6 NIV)

Celebrate the birth of our country on July 4th. We are truly blessed to live as we do in a land that is based on democracy. But rejoice also that our true citizenship as Christians promises us absolute and unlimited freedom through Jesus Christ.

Have a great month!

Pastor Tim