

Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

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The close reading of scripture by Martin Luther coupled with seeing his poor peasant parishioners fleeced by representatives from Rome lead him back to ancient truths that had been sort of buried or ignored. This talk of truth by Jesus today & the place of truth in the Reformation reminded me of a 2009 movie called, *The International* – starring Naomi Watts & Clive Owen. Without spoiling it for you, I can at least tell you that it's a story about an INTERPOL agent attempting to expose a high-profile financial institution's role in an international arms dealing ring. In 1 scene, Naomi Watts, a Manhattan District Attorney, has an intense conversation with her supervisor, "What are you trying to do here?" "I'm trying to do my job!" "Do you have any idea of the sh*t-storm you've gotten me into?" "We're just trying to get to the truth." "I get it. But what you need to remember is that there's what people want to hear, & then there's what people want to believe, there's everything else, & then there's the truth!" "And since when is that ok? I can't even believe you're saying this to me! The truth means responsibility!" "Exactly! Which is why everyone dreads it!"

"One of these days, you'll see," he said.
"Though you think me cruel,
judge me wrong, & believe yourself right,
one of these days you'll see, I was right!"

And you'll thank your old man – trust me!!!”

My father must've recited that to me & my brother a 1000 times!!!

But he knew it well & probably learned it & its truth from his own father.

“If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples;
and you will know the truth, & the truth will make you free!”

Jesus is addressing Jews who believe his words, but tentatively.

Still hedging their bets,

clinging the law of Moses & the patrimony of Abraham,

they are taken aback by Jesus' insinuation that they are hesitant,

holding back – being held back – by sin itself.

They're not sinful, just prudent.

Like us!

That's why we continue to hold our arsenals & hoard our riches.

A couple of years ago I heard Gen. Mattis speak @ Temple de Hirsch & he talked about 2 distinct ways that America can position itself in the world.

1 way is by intimidation – threatening nations by force...

the other way, is by inspiration –

living out the ways of peaceful, democratic, civil truths

we hold to be self-evident – making enemies friends through diplomacy.

Yet we continue to hold our arsenals & hoard our riches.

It's not sin, it's prudence.

But as William Sloan Coffin once noted in a sermon,

there are 2 ways to be strong.

1 way is to have many weapons –

the other way is to have few enemies.

And there are 2 ways to be rich.

1 way is to have plenty of money –

the other is to have few needs.

Like the early Jewish followers of Jesus, maybe

we're just not quite ready to take the step from the one to the other.

So we try to have it both ways.

After all it's a long way from here to there.

From faith in our weapons to faith in enemies made friends,

from faith in our stock portfolio to faith in God's sufficiency.

It's a long way from here to what Martin Luther called,

“a lively, reckless confidence in the grace of God!”

And like all first steps,

Any we take will be faltering, clumsy, self-conscious....

And hard!!!

That's why as I stand here, looking up there, ahead,

pondering the daunting, difficult distance from where I am
to where I ought to be...
and rehearse for the 1000th time
all the good reasons why I ought to do it my way,
safe & prudent,
I hear a familiar voice, familiar words...
“One of these days, you’ll see,” he said.
“Though you think me cruel,
judge me wrong, & believe yourself right,
one of these days you’ll see, I was right!
And you’ll thank your old man – just trust me!!!”