

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from September 3, 2017

Children's: What supplies will you use at school. What will you take to school? What friends will you see again at school? Will you meet a new friend? What will you learn at school?

What was your favorite moment this summer? Or what kinds of things did you enjoy? What do you like about summer? What if summer lasted all year round?

Wow. One moment Peter is foundational in the kingdom and in the next is a stumbling block. Peter simply says what any of us would say to Jesus who was talking gloom and doom. It appears Peter is trying to steer Jesus in an emotionally healthy direction—giving an encouraging word to a friend. Along the lines of “Cheer up, things will improve,” or “Don’t be so depressing.” “Jesus, its not that bad, you’ll see. And, Jesus, you might change up your message a little bit when we get closer to Jerusalem where all the power people are. You know how they responded to John’s “brood of vipers” sermon. Just hold back on the “Woe to you” sermons.

Like most of us, Peter is concerned about comfort. . .and that’s the problem. Our nature is all about comfort. Is Jesus teaching that true freedom has nothing to do with comfort or comfort’s sister, convenience?

As children, we were fond of playing “make believe” and “let’s pretend.” The line for children between reality and fantasy is blurry. This gives children their creative edge—an endless source of joy, and fear. But when adults blur the lines between reality and fantasy, the price we pay is a loss of true freedom. Jesus was more about true freedom than about comfort. Comfort makes people feel safe even if they aren’t. Comfort allows people do surround themselves with illusions and delusions which can have well intended dire consequences.

A good and true conscience is hard work. We have to ask a lot of questions about truth and truthfulness. Honesty and Truth must always leave the door open to a change of mind. Being flexible is hard work. It is so handy to keep believing what we have always believed. It is also tempting to believe what everyone else around us seems to believe.

Jesus message is not about comfort and convenience but foundational honesty and truth. The **truth** is that he will suffer and die because that is what happens when in first century Palestine, you *publicly* insist on justice and truth leading to freedom. The same thing happens today in many places where falsehood overrides truth telling and the rule of law is set aside for the advantage of a few.

Let’s think about this in terms of the flood in Texas. We hear the heart wrenching stories quickly followed by, “We will rebuild! It will be ok. This will take time, we must be patient.” But what about the people for whom it won’t be ok? The ones who didn’t expect to be inundated by a massive flood and maybe who don’t qualify for help, who might end up losing jobs and being foreclosed, just because of a catastrophe? And what about the next catastrophic flood event which will affect many thousands? What does freedom mean for these people? And how will the insurance industry and federal and local governments deal with these periodic massive floods that we have been seeing clearly more frequently? And how will we cope if the storms get worse and more frequent as climate scientists predict is likely?

There are two ways to respond. We can hold the people’s hands, and tell them it will get better when it might very well *not*. We can mistrust the peer reviewed scientists who have made it their life’s work to research and truthfully tell what their research reveals. Or we can be honest, address the root causes of increasingly dangerous floods such as greenhouse gas emissions and unsustainable development and infrastructure practices. The cheapest routes we’ve often chosen in the past are appearing to have a higher price tag in the end. Unfortunately, the longer we wait, the more challenging our situation becomes. Our children and grandchildren are watching to see if our faith has a voice.

May we choose freedom as Jesus did. As Jesus taught his disciples to do. Regardless of the consequences to their own well being. Freedom will lead us into truth. The challenges facing humanity as well as the church today are challenges which demand freedom, honesty, and a great deal of courage.

In reprimanding Peter for preferring comfort to faithfully calling out injustice, fear, and greed, Jesus reminds us that the way of freedom is not about comfort, but honesty. It’s about boldly, yet compassionately, proclaiming and living the truth. Christ calls us to be free so that we may change the world, or at least to be free to live in justice and peace. He staked his life on it with perfect freedom, because he knew it is much more important to be truly free than to give and receive shallow, untruthful comfort. God give us courage and a voice to listen for and then speak the truth in love. Amen.