

Title: “Freedom. And Eddie”

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John 14:15-21

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Lesson: *We have been set free by the blood of Christ and we are called to respond to this freedom by proclaiming the Good News to the world.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This morning, I want to talk to you about my dog.  His name is Edison, or Eddie, or Edison Joseph Ryan when he's in trouble. He's only a few months old and is still very much a puppy. He has a short attention span, rarely sleeps through the night, and he annoys our other two adult dogs to no end. Because he is so young, we can't trust him to be left alone and so, during the times that the house is void of people, we place him in a large crate. We promise him that we will return to free him from his captivity, and he hears us, but probably doesn't understand or comprehend what that means, so he sits in his crate alone and afraid of the unknown.

In today's Gospel passage we listen in on a conversation that Jesus had with his disciples. He says, in part:

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,^[a] to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be^[b] in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

The disciples didn't know it at the time, but they were on the cusp of a very dark period in their lives. A short time later their world would immediately change. Their leader would be crucified and their sense of security, destroyed. They would gather themselves into a locked room in fear of harm or death from either the Jewish leaders or the Roman soldiers. And although Jesus had given them words of comfort only days before, even though he had promised to send them a helper that would stay with them forever, they would fail to understand his message. And so, they would find themselves confined, hidden, and afraid of the unknown.

Now, for Eddie, we have always returned, and this one particular Saturday was no exception. My family was out and so Eddie was locked in his crate for part of that day. And, as usually is the case, when I arrived home I went to the cage and freed him. I picked him up and carried him outside, and he reacted in the way that he always reacts: as soon as his little paws touched the grass he was off. He ran the entire perimeter of our yard as fast as his little legs could carry him. His mouth was wide open, his tongue was hanging out, and he was moving! You could just feel the excitement emanate from his little body. He was no longer confined, no longer trapped. He was no longer bound by the constraints of his cage. He was free and he couldn't help but celebrate it!

The disciples? They were still hidden, still afraid, and still unable to comprehend the words that Jesus spoke to them about his return and about sending a helper. They didn't understand what he meant, and so they continued to wait. But, after Christ rose again, he *did* return to them, and he *did* send them a helper, and he *did* free them from their confinement. And then they *did* understand what he had meant. And with the boldness and courage that could have only come from the Holy Spirit, they burst open their cage and proclaimed the good news to everyone with excitement, enthusiasm, and eagerness. They traveled all around their world and preached to anyone who would listen. Nothing could stop them; not fear of embarrassment, harassment, or even death. They ran with vigor and zeal; they ran with a message that couldn't be contained.

For us, just like Eddie and just like the disciples, we too were bound and confined. At birth we were subjected to the constraints of sin: namely death and eternal damnation. We were imprisoned with no way to escape and no will to even do so. Without intervention we would make this cage our home and we would decorate it with all the trappings of money and power, of pride and envy, of greed and lust. We would become comfortable in our isolation from God and thereby secure the judgment that we so rightly deserve. But, just like for the disciples, Christ came into this world and lived a perfect life. A life where he overcame the temptations of the earth - all of them. He lived a life that we could not live, one in perfect obedience to God his Father, our Father. And in doing so he lived a life outside of the cage that we were born into; he lived void of any fear of death, because he didn't have to die. You see, a life lived without sin is a life lived without death. But he didn't come down from heaven to live this life for himself, but to live it for us. And so, he journeyed to the cross where he took on our sins, where he *became* our sins. He accepted the wrath of God in our place, and he died a death that we all deserve. But then he rose again. And he came back to our prison, a prison that we were comfortable living in. And there, in our sin and in our rebellion, he sent the Holy Spirit to live within us, to give us the faith necessary to believe in him, to turn to him, and to ask God for forgiveness. He opened the bolted door and set us free!

The question that I have for you this morning is simple: How do you respond to this newfound freedom? Imagine for a moment if Eddie, upon me returning and opening his cage, walked out, looked around, thanked me, and then returned back to his comfortable, solitary life? That wouldn't make any sense! His door is open! He has been set free! Why would he remain in his prison? Or the disciples, if after receiving the Holy Spirit, kept the doors of their room locked, looked around at each other and decided that what they saw, what they experienced, and what they received, was cool enough for conversation amongst themselves but unnecessary to be proclaimed outside those four walls?

So, how do *you* respond to what Christ has done for you? The door is open, the stone has been rolled away. Christ has set you free! How do you respond?

Pray

Lord, we thank you for your work on the cross and for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We ask for the boldness and excitement that we see in the disciples to proclaim your message of salvation to all those we meet. Help us live a life that reflects the freedom that you won for us, a life that turns others towards you.