

Watch this week's service on YouTube by clicking: [September 12 Worship Service Video](#)

- Please enjoy our online worship and feel free to share with others. The link for sharing is: <https://youtu.be/wFoJ5H-BmXc>
- **HeBrews e-Café** returns Sunday at 10:00 AM. Join us at the link below.
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4639675160?pwd=V09OUmV0VFpMVGJLTWhueGpSekkwZz09>
Meeting ID: 463 967 5160 Passcode: 4F7iE2
- For news and events please have a look at **Life & Work**: <https://charleswoodunited.org/media/life-work/>
- Read the scripture lesson for today by clicking here: [Mark 8:27-38](#)
- **Offering Information at:** www.charleswoodunited.org/donate Thank you for your generous support.

Dear Friends

Welcome to worship for Sunday, September 12, 2021.

When I was a student at the University of Toronto in the 1980's I lived in the residences of Victoria College. The U of T is a federated university which loosely means that it is comprised of a great many colleges that were once independent, even as they were neighbours of one another. At some point in history, these many colleges were federated into a single school known as the University of Toronto. What that means is that the campus has many centres. Most of the founding colleges were built without any anticipation of being a single school so they had their own buildings and libraries, playing fields and quads, residences and reputations.

The reason for this trip down memory lane is to say that Emmanuel College, the theological school I was attending, shared the grounds of Victoria and since I lived on campus I had a pattern that I followed every day. From the dorm to the cafeteria, back to the dorm, across the quad, and down a path between the office of Northrop Frye (the legendary literary critic) and Old Vic, the towering red stone building that had once been the heart of Victoria at the end of the nineteenth century. Carved in it's imposing edifice, like a message from the dawn of time, were these words, "The truth will set you free." I walked pass them every day for three years.

Some will recognize those as the words of Jesus from John 8, a passage that is typical of many in John where Judaism is wrestling with the meaning of Jesus. Some scholars suggest, and I tend to agree, that John was written in the second century, nearly one hundred years after the life of Jesus, in a manner to support the separation of Christianity and Judaism. Because of this, some have used John throughout history to justify anti-Semitism though I am utterly convinced that a proper reading allows Judaism and Christianity to live side by side as the kindred spirits and sister faiths they are intended to be.

In a more popular sense, "The truth will set you free", be it carved into Old Vic or used in everyday conversation, lifts up the value of education as essential to human development and agency. The truth sets us free to live, love, dream, grow, mature, become more fully the people God created us to be. That is, until we can't agree on what is true.

The advent of vaccine mandates over the summer, (something I must admit I did not anticipate), has caused many in our country who were taking some delight in being contrarian and opposing Public Health Measures to grow angry and resentful that the exercise of their "rights" or "choice" may have consequences. It has caused an enormous amount of conflict within families and among circles of friends. More recently, it has provoked disturbances in public spaces.

The idea that a group can shout down a campaigning politician and prevent them from speaking, or block an ambulance from entering a hospital, or harass health workers on break, is an affront to anyone who dares believe in freedom, democracy, respect, decency, and morality.

There is nothing uncommon about people having differences of opinion, or passionate positions on social issues. Healthy debate is the spark of enlightenment. But in those situations we typically look for compromise or some middle ground upon which we attempt to build a consensus. At the very least we look for a means to a truce and letting our differences live side by side. But what happens when one side will not abide by truth even as they claim to be fighting for freedom? How is compromise possible when one position is bearing false witness, the claim of a lie as truth?

There is no such thing as the freedom to do anything you want. Freedom extends only so far as it doesn't infringe on the freedom of another to have the same rights you do. My freedom to drink and drive as I wish is denied by my neighbour's freedom to live without unnecessary risk and danger. So it is we have rules that limit our freedoms so that they may be enjoyed by the many and not just the few. Individual freedom and sovereignty over one's body is something we should all stand up for. But if one chooses to exercise that freedom and in so doing endangers another person, then they must accept the consequences of that choice. Or at least stop protesting at the very hospital they will be brought to when they become sick.

This is taxing on faithfulness. We are commanded to love one another and that must include those who differ from us on any number of issues. It is not in the best interest of anyone to harbour resentment towards those who will not recognize the veracity of the very problem they are attacking. But neither should the faithful stand idly by and let lies be presented as truth when they are not. It sounds, and feels, like an irreconcilable situation.

The passage from the Gospel of Mark that serves as the centre point of our worship this week offers a way forward. More specifically it introduces the idea of the 'way of the cross'. Jesus commends the "losing of one's self" to "gain one's life". After all, what does it profit anyone to gain the world if they have lost their very self in the process? Jesus does not go to the cross for the sake of individual freedom. He follows the way of the cross to redeem all human kind. Selfishness dies on the cross with him.

May this be the truth that sets us free.

Grace and peace
Michael

P.S. Together with Operation Ezra we will be gathering dry goods in the month of September to be distributed to Yazidi Refugee Families in Winnipeg. Here is the list of products we are looking to gather. More information on our website: [Yazidi Refugee Dry Goods Food Drive](#)

All-purpose flour
Sugar
Red split lentils
Chickpeas
Tetley Orange pekoe tea
Nescafe - Double filter
Fine salt
Canola Oil
Chicken Maggi cubes Rooster Brand jasmine Rice
Cereal Coffee mate