

**True Freedom** Fifth Week of Lent Wednesday, March 16, 2016 8:15 AM Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; **Jn 8:31-42** (So do we really want to relationship with the Father?)

Now boys and girls, if you are confused by today's gospel reading, that's good; it means you listened because it's actually confusing. **What is confusing about it?** Who is he addressing? **He is addressing those who are following him, and then he says, "You are trying to kill me."** Well, wait a minute, do you try to kill the people you are following? Ordinarily, no. This is talking about a real problem that occurred within his ministry. So **he had followers.** They were following him, but **now they were doubting.** They were wondering, we don't know if we are going to follow this guy very long. So people were starting to fall away from believing him.

One of the big issues was, if you remember from other chapters from John's Gospel, one of the issues was he said, **"Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you will have no life."** This guy is a cannibal. That's what they thought because he used that language, that graphic of eating his body and blood, which of course refers to the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine. **But they didn't understand it in the way he meant it. So words have to be taken in the right context.**

Now they are upset about something else. He said, **"If you heed my words, you will be free."** They said, "Wait a minute, we already are free. What do you mean we will be free? We are free." And he said, no. Why did he say they are not free? In fact it is very subtle. The point is this, **you may think that if you do everything you want, you are free.** A lot of people think, well, I do whatever I want and then I am free. If I do what my parents tell me, I am not free; I do what they say. If I follow the law, then I am not free; I have to do whatever the law says. But if I do whatever I want, then I am free. That's the logic many people have.

**Jesus' point is this, but you don't decide what you want.** You don't decide what you want; it just happens. Now **there is a difference between needing and wanting.** So for example you need to eat. If you don't eat, you die. So you have to eat. But there are a lot of things you want that you do not need at all, so why do you want them? Well, one reason is because **you believe the advertisements** that say, boy, you ought to have this! And you swallow it. You say, "I want that." Why do you want that? Because you saw the

advertisement, so **you are a slave to the advertisement**; you are a slave to the television; you are a slave to the magazine; **you are a slave to whatever you are being controlled by. He calls that sin. Sin is not being free. It's being controlled by desires that do not arise from your own freedom, but they are given to you by something else: the world, the flesh, and the devil—the three sources of desires.**

So he says, look, if you really want to be free, you have to overcome your desires and **you have to let the truth feed you.** If you are fed by the truth, then—and you are not going to get the truth from television. You are not going to get the truth from just any book. You are not going to get the truth just from anybody either. **You are going to get the truth from the Father because the Father has sent his Son, the Word. That's how you become free.**

Meanwhile, they said, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said, well, that's not the father. Everyone has some hero in their past. **There is one Father who has brought all of us into being, and we have to get to know him—know him, not to hear about him, but know him.** And **Jesus has come to establish a relationship between us and the Father, to help us relate to God the way we relate to *Abba*, Daddy. We have to have a deep personal relationship to the Father. And this will make us free; this is freedom. Otherwise we will simply be controlled by this force or that force: heritage, race, materialism.**

Now his followers really saw that as too challenging. There are many Christians today that find that too challenging. They want to call themselves Christians. They say I follow Christ, but they don't really want the fullness. **So do we really want a relationship with the Father? Do we really want to be free?** That's the question.