

PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

Psalm 145:8-14

Zechariah 9:9-12

Romans 7:15-25

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

MESSAGE

“Held by Grace, Called to Freedom”

Pastor Bruce

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

Psalm 145:8 says:

“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.”

Before we talk about freedom, we must first talk about the character of the God who makes true freedom possible.

Our texts today give us four movements:

God’s gracious character sustains us.

God’s humble King comes to set captives free.

God’s people must be honest about the struggle within.

God’s Son invites the weary into true rest.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

1. Freedom Begins with the Character of God (Psalm 145:8–14)

Psalm 145 teaches that God’s greatness is not only shown in power, but in mercy. God is great because He stoops to lift the fallen. He is mighty because He upholds the weak. He is sovereign, yet tender.

On Independence Day, we rightly remember human courage and sacrifice. But Christians also remember that every blessing ultimately comes from the hand of God.

Connection to the Next Point

If Psalm 145 shows us the character of God’s kingdom, Zechariah shows us the kind of King who comes to establish it.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

- 1. Freedom Begins with the Character of God (Psalm 145:8–14)**
- 2. True Freedom Comes Through a Humble King (Zechariah 9:9–12)**

Zechariah gives a surprising picture of victory:

“See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey.”

This is not the image of earthly conquest. This King enters not on a warhorse, but on a donkey. He is victorious, yet humble. He is righteous, yet gentle.

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- 1. Freedom Begins with the Character of God (Psalm 145:8–14)**
- 2. True Freedom Comes Through a Humble King (Zechariah 9:9–12)**

For Christians, this passage points directly to Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Jesus fulfills this prophecy not by crushing His enemies with violence, but by giving Himself on the cross.

Zechariah also says:

“He will proclaim peace to the nations.”

And then:

“Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope.”

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- 1. Freedom Begins with the Character of God (Psalm 145:8–14)**
- 2. True Freedom Comes Through a Humble King (Zechariah 9:9–12)**

The freedom God gives is not shallow optimism. It is covenant hope. Zechariah speaks to people who knew loss, exile, and disappointment. Yet God tells them that their King is coming.

The King's mission is peace, restoration, and release.

This challenges our assumptions. We often associate freedom with power, dominance, and self-rule. But Zechariah shows us that God's freedom comes through humility, righteousness, peace, and hope.

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- 1. Freedom Begins with the Character of God (Psalm 145:8–14)**
- 2. True Freedom Comes Through a Humble King (Zechariah 9:9–12)**

But if Christ is the humble King who brings freedom, why do we still struggle? Romans 7 answers with painful honesty: even those who desire what is good still wrestle with sin.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

¹⁵ I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. ¹⁸ For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

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3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

²¹ So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. ²⁴ What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

Paul writes:

“For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”

This is one of the most honest passages in Scripture.

Paul describes the conflict within the human heart. We may know what is right and still fail to do it. We may desire freedom and still feel trapped by sin, habit, selfishness, anger, fear, or pride.

On Independence Day, we celebrate outward liberty. But Romans 7 reminds us that a person can be politically free and still spiritually bound.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

Paul cries out:

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”

Then comes the answer:

“Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

Romans 7 prevents us from pretending. It tells the truth about the human condition. We are not saved by national identity, moral effort, good intentions, or personal discipline alone.

We need rescue.

Paul’s question is not, “How can I improve myself?” His question is, “Who will rescue me?”

The Christian answer is Jesus Christ.

True freedom begins when we stop denying our bondage and start trusting the Deliverer.

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3. Freedom Requires Honest Confession of Our Inner Struggle (Romans 7:15–25)

Romans 7 names the burden. Matthew 11 gives the invitation. Jesus does not leave the weary in their struggle. He calls them to come to Him.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

¹⁶ “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

¹⁷ “‘We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

The Father Revealed in the Son

²⁵ At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. ²⁶ Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

²⁷ “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

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4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

In Matthew 11, Jesus speaks to a generation that is spiritually restless and resistant. He compares them to children in the marketplace who are never satisfied.

John the Baptist came with fasting, and they rejected him. Jesus came eating and drinking, and they criticized Him too.

The problem was not lack of evidence. The problem was a hardened heart.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

Then Jesus prays:

“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

The kingdom is received not by arrogance, but by humility.

Then comes one of the most beloved invitations in Scripture:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

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4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

Jesus does not say, “Come to me when you have figured it all out.”
He does not say, “Come to me when you are strong enough.”
He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened.”

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”

4. Jesus Invites the Weary into True Rest (Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30)

The freedom Jesus offers is not freedom from responsibility. He says:

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.”

A yoke implies direction, discipleship, and surrender. But Jesus says His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Why? Because we are no longer carrying life alone. We are yoked to Christ.

On July 4th, we celebrate independence. But the gospel invites us into a holy dependence — dependence on Christ, whose grace gives rest to the soul.

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Scripture Theme Connection

These passages form a beautiful movement:

Psalms 145 reveals the gracious character of God.

Zechariah 9 reveals the humble King who brings peace and hope.

Romans 7 reveals the inner bondage from which we need rescue.

Matthew 11 reveals the Savior who invites the weary to rest.

Together, they teach us this:

We are sustained by God's grace, freed by Christ's humble victory, rescued from our inner bondage, and invited into rest through surrender to Jesus.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

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LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

As we celebrate the anniversary of American independence, we give thanks for the freedoms we enjoy. We remember courage, sacrifice, and the hopes of generations.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?
But Scripture calls us to a deeper celebration.
Political freedom is a blessing.
Spiritual freedom is salvation.
National independence is worth remembering.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

Dependence on Christ is worth building our lives upon.

The Lord is gracious and compassionate.

The King has come humble and victorious.

The struggle within us is real.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

But the invitation of Jesus still stands:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

That is the freedom our souls need most.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

This week, as you celebrate freedom, consider three responses:

1. Give Thanks

Thank God for the freedoms, blessings, and opportunities you have received. Do not take them for granted.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

This week, as you celebrate freedom, consider three responses:

2. Return to Hope

If you feel discouraged, remember Zechariah’s words:

“Return to your fortress, you prisoners of hope.”

Let hope, not fear, hold you.

“HELD BY GRACE, CALLED TO FREEDOM”
LIVING IN GOD’S LIGHT

What exactly does this mean for US?

This week, as you celebrate freedom, consider three responses:

3. Come to Christ

Bring your weariness, your struggle, your sin, your burdens, and your divided heart to Jesus.

Do not merely celebrate independence from earthly powers. Receive freedom from the bondage only Christ can break.