

Abide in the Word, brothers and sisters in Christ. The current in this country is progressively moving farther and farther away from what our forefathers understood to be certain inalienable rights. The wickedness of anti-Christian politics such as socialism, which has as its foundation a direct violation of the 7th Commandment, “You shall not steal”, is rearing its ugly head everywhere. Yes, thanks be to God you have the privilege to do what you can to keep it at bay by voting, but you alone can’t ultimately stop Satan’s work in the world. Only God can. So abide in Christ’s Word. For the day may come when the liberties we experience as Christian Americans, particularly our freedom of religion, could be ripped away. The only thing we as Christians can do to prepare ourselves for such a reality is to abide in Christ’s Word. And *that* will set you free. Jesus makes that promise to you. And God cannot lie. Because in Christ’s Word, as we sang in the Battle Hymn of the Reformation, “A Mighty Fortress”, even if they take away “our life, goods, fame, child, and wife, though these all be gone, our victory has been won; the Kingdom ours remaineth.”

Abide in the Word. By faith the Kingdom of heaven is yours now! There is a great line in The Hunger Games movies where the President says to his second-in-command, “Hope. It is the only thing stronger than fear.” As Christians, we have certain hope. And hope is much more powerful than fear. We have certain hope in Christ Jesus. Abide in the Word. Abide in the promise of salvation that Jesus earned for you on the cross. Abide in the washing of regeneration that took place in your Baptism. Abide in the Holy Absolution pronounced by your Pastor. Abide in the forgiveness of sins given to you in Christ’s body and blood under the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Altar. Hope in Christ is stronger than fear of earthly princes or the loss of worldly liberties. The year 2020 has been a year of uncertainty. And there is no promise that 2021 is going to be any better. We might have earthly hope that it will be, but what is earthly hope? We have eternal hope. So fix your eyes on Christ. We have the promise that life in heaven will be infinitely better than anything here. Romans 12:12, “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

The Son of God has set you free. That true freedom liberates you from the curse of the Law and the pangs of eternal death. Live your freedom by walking in repentance and faith. Repent of your sin, and cling to the forgiveness Jesus earned on the cross for you. We “are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith” (Rom 3:25). Jesus has purchased you from sin, death, and the devil with His own blood. God has thus declared you righteous. You receive the benefits of that declaration by faith. As Paul writes in our Epistle, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:28). Brothers and sisters in Christ, abide in the Word. Abide in the Word, and you will have true freedom, a true freedom no earthly authority can give you. Abide in the Word, and you will have a true freedom that no one can take away. Abide in the Word, and the Lord “will keep you steadfast in His grace and truth, protecting and delivering you in times of temptation and defending you against all enemies” as we prayed in the Collect. Abide in the Word, brothers and sisters, remain in it! The Son has set you free by His death on the cross and His resurrection on the third day. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (Jn 8:36). What is this freedom? It is liberation from the cares and concerns of this world, knowing in the assurance of faith that what awaits the saints in heaven is eternal rest from our labors. For as we confessed in the Introit, “The Lord redeems the life of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned” (Ps 34:22). In Jesus’ name, Amen.