



Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
*Pastor Terry's Thoughts of the Week*

## **Handling Freedom: Responsibly**

Martin Luther warned us about “cheap grace”. What he meant was that just because we were free in the eyes of God, didn't mean we could just do whatever we felt like doing. God's grace came at the expense of Jesus' life – that's not cheap. That God's son died for us is a great price to pay for our freedom.

So what is God's freedom all about? It means being free to do the will of God even if it is against the will of people. We have known in our history of figures who have stood up for what they believed, even against the law.

Gandhi was one of the more modern people who did this, but he also advocated the kind of resistance that would not cause harm to another human being. He was a Hindu, but he taught us something about the goodness of God – or maybe God used him to teach his children about better living.

Peaceful resistance is difficult. It means putting yourself on the line and often it means losing the friendship of people. If we are not understood, we will be ostracized by some, ignored by others and very possibly forgotten in history! But without the resistance of some, we would not live in our land the way we do.

Our revolution was certainly not a peaceful resistance. On the other hand, there are some times when those writing and speaking good sense are not heard and, without limited vision, we see no other way than violent resistance. But we need to be careful. We need to remember that violence is absolutely the last resort.

On the other hand, there are times when taking a stand will get you a punch in the nose! It was Jesus who said that we should turn the other cheek. We don't always hear that because our anger responds so quickly. It took good

old Gandhi to bring that form of resistance to light. Most of us still have a problem handling disagreements that way.

But being responsible with our freedom means to remember how costly it is. Not only is “cheap grace” unacceptable, but so is celebrating our freedom without recognizing the cost.

My home town in Massachusetts is filled with cemeteries. There is the Revolutionary War cemetery, the Civil War cemetery, then the general protestant cemetery and St. Mary’s catholic cemetery. We also have a town common, given by John Hancock when he was governor of Massachusetts. In other words, the town is awash in early American history.

But the people of the town still have a lot to learn. On the whole, they are a pretty proud people but they still think that people should live a certain way and they will really squeeze out those who don’t conform. They are free – but within boundaries that history and the current population find “acceptable”. That is not responsible freedom

Responsible freedom finds a place for all useful work. Responsible freedom develops a society in which all people can be safe and protected from harm. In other words, responsible freedom means helping all of God’s children develop the potential God instilled in them. Be responsible!

*TMK*

-- *Week of July 4, 2010*