

## 6.28.20 L13P4 Redeemed from Slavery to Sin

- Does anyone remember whose picture is on the \$50? I ask, because let's face it, we rarely carry one!
  - Ulysses S Grant, general and eventually commander of the Union Army during the Civil War, and the 18<sup>th</sup> president of the United States
- A few weeks ago I was watching a three-day television series about Ulysses S Grant on the History Channel, and I was reminded that there are so many opinions about Grant – some say that alcoholism was a life-long battle, and others say that he was in recovery; some say that he was a general who butchered his army with casualties, and others say that he was a brilliant strategist; some say that he was a corrupt president, and others say that he was naïve about politics while he was overseeing reconstruction in the south following the civil war
- But one thing really surprised me about Grant – before the Civil War while Ulysses S Grant was a civilian farmer, losing the struggle to support his family on an 850-acre Plantation in Missouri, he had a slave named William Jones.
  - And in the midst of this hard time when Grant was unsuccessfully trying to make ends meet farming the plantation, in 1859 Grant took the slave William Jones to the county courthouse, and there instead of selling him, Grant for reasons that we do not know, simply signed a document letting Jones go!
  - Jones wasn't sold to another owner, Grant received no money for the valuable 35-year old man – William Jones was simply set free!
- Especially in the last month or so, we have been reminded of the history of racism in our country, which including its very worse form – slavery, has been called “America's original sin”
  - Even so soon after Juneteenth, it's hard for us to wrap our minds around the institution of slavery
  - But certainly we DO know even now, that slavery involved owning someone, and having absolute and controlling power over them
  - And that's why being set free from slavery was so amazing and so wonderful
- In his letter to the Romans, Saint Paul also talks about slavery in Roman times

- Paul told the Romans then, and he tells us now, that *we had been slaves to sin!*
- That is, we had belonged to someone or something else
- We had been controlled, absolutely controlled by the power of sin
- In fact Paul wrote: “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, *or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?* 6:16]”
- THEN, the Apostle Paul goes on to say that we have been set free from sin... and like slaves in ancient Rome, and like slaves more recently in our country, *being set free was and is an amazing and wonderful thing!*
- In fact there is a word for being set free from slavery in ancient Greece and ancient Rome
  - In ancient times, either by scrimping and saving what little money that they could earn, or more often by a free family member making a payment, a slave could buy his or her freedom
  - When the slave had enough money to buy freedom, the owner took them to the marketplace often in chains, and there in public, the payment for freedom was made, and the chain was then publicly unlocked or broken, and the person was declared free – and that’s where we now get the word... REDEEM
  - The next time you REDEEM a coupon at the grocery store, please remember that long ago REDEEM meant so much more – it meant that someone had bought their freedom which is so much more than 50¢ off a can of beans
  - BUT the freedom that Paul speaks about was not purchased with silver or gold, or Grants or Franklins, Hamiltons or Jacksons... the payment to set us free from slavery to sin was paid by no one less than Jesus Christ crucified and raised
  - And guess what? That payment wasn’t even a loan that has to be paid back. That payment to redeem us was a gift!

- Saint Paul writes: “...the wages of sin is death, but *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* [6:23]”
- Christ redeems us from slavery to sin, and that is the freedom, that is the gift, that is the forgiveness that shapes our lives, and that needs to shape the way that we look at other people
- Because Christ has loved, valued, and redeemed both us and others, ownership and control over another person was and is wrong, and so we have been called to live-out the gift of God-given redemption in our relationships with people of every color, language, and country