

*For You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13*

John (not my husband) was one of a group of young men at the university. They spent a lot of time in places like bars and such and not near enough time in the classroom. I guess you would say they were living “eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die.”

There was another group of young men at that same university. They spent a great deal of time in the classroom, but far more time in one of those “holy club” groups. They attended Bible studies. They did community service, visiting hospitals and prisons, and they prayed and attended accountability groups. They were laughed at. Jokes flowed freely about these young men, especially by the group that was hanging out at the bars. But occasionally there were young men like John who would say to themselves, “I wish I had what they have.”

One of the young men in “holy club” was a poet and singer by the name of Charles, another was the head of the group, John (also not my husband lol), and another was George.

It is amazing to me that this story does not take place today. But in fact happened sometime around 1732, when George Whitefield, a Calvinist, joined with Charles Wesley and John Wesley in a disciplined approach to their faith that was called the Holy Club. There on Oxford University these three great men of faith began a friendship that would shape their faith for the rest of their life.

On July 4, in 1946 (214 years after the incident I spoke of above) John F. Kennedy, who was a congressional nominee and a lieutenant in the Navy Reserve spoke at an Independence Day Celebration in Boston. The speech began “ The informing spirit of the American character has always been a deep religious sense. Throughout the years, down to the present, a devotion to fundamental religious principles has characterized American thought and action.”

In 1960 (the year I was born) Kennedy returned to this thought during a presidential campaign speech at the Mormon Tabernacle when addressing the Cold War as “a struggle for supremacy between two conflicting ideologies; freedom under God versus ruthless, Godless tyranny.”

After winning he addressed freedom and faith once again at his inaugural address (1-20-1961) “The same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebearers fought are still at issue around the globe - the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.”

Now you might be asking: “Why connect this with a story about the Holy Club?” From as far back as I am aware John Wesley linked faith and freedom, with thought and action. He believed you worked out your salvation. In other words the saving grace given to us freely at the cross, where Jesus’ faith and actions combined in justifying grace, as a sufficient atonement for our sins and a promise of eternal life for all those who believe in him, lead not only to faith but a faith that produced good works for the glory of God. Faith in action.

Sunday we will once again celebrate freedom here in the United States. As Christians I am imploring us all to use the freedom we have been given, especially the freedom of religion, to move us to action. Visiting the sick, ministering to those who are held captive physically, emotionally, or spiritually, and caring for those in need. How we do that will be as individual and unique as each of us. But the outcome will be a movement of people who will be seen as those that have purpose and conviction, inspiring some to say “I wish I had what they have.” and be drawn to the God, who both calls and enables us to put our faith into action.

Let’s not waste the freedom we have been given. There is so much that can be accomplished for the sake of the Gospel when we do and there is too much loss at stake if we don’t!