

Vision Series 2023

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[0 : 00] During the Song Dynasty of China, which began in 960 AD and lasted until 1279, Fan Zhong Yuen spent nearly 40 years as a noble scholar official.

He was appointed to be the prime minister over the entire emperor, but later demoted. He firmly believed that governing officials were the first to worry the worries of all under heaven, and the last to enjoy its joy.

And this and his reform ensured the Song Dynasty builds on the prosperity of the Tang Dynasty and left a long-lasting impact on the philosophy of governing and management of a vast country like China.

A friend tried to persuade him to ease off on his reform and be careful about all the political enemy he has stirred up for himself.

And he replied with a poem with this line, Better to ramassade and die than keep silent and live.

Bringing reform that would benefit all under heaven was so important to him that he was not free to keep silent.

[1 : 24] Even though his speak up means demotion or death, but far better than keeping quiet and stay alive. Today, people get into politics and governing jobs for what they can get out of it.

But Fan Zhong Yuen's idea for a government official is unheard of in modern society, in the East or in the West. His realization of the limitation of his freedom is even a rare commodity of our current Western culture.

Fan treats liberty for the betterment of his countrymen. On the other side, many Western people mix independence and freedom together.

Westerners consider themselves free and will protest like William Wallace at the War of Scottish Independence. They may take my life, but they will never take our freedom.

Or Arthur Scott, one of the United States founding fathers, Patrick Henry, give me liberty or give me death. As both calls for their countrymen to break free of their motherland, England.

[2 : 42] The same pride has echoed around many countries last few years. As the world deal with COVID-19 and government restrictions, people protest that no government or anyone should have the right to tell them what to think or how to behave.

Our modern view of freedom is one of autonomy and make freedom the highest value of human existence. People define freedom as the absence of any limitations or constraints.

The fewer boundaries they have on their choices and actions, the freer they will feel. As we carry on our vision series in looking at Jesus is all about life, we will look at Jesus is all about freedom today.

I want to highlight four observations about modern view of freedom and suggest two ways to embrace freedom. Freedom is defined as doing whatever I want without constraint.

Freedom is defined as a way to make freedom. Freedom is defined as a way to make freedom. This definition will only work if there is only just one thing called freedom that either you can have or do not have.

[4 : 05] However, there are numerous freedoms at different stages of life journey and no one can have them all. We all want to be free from illness or sickness and live long enough to enjoy a sustained loving relationship with family and friends.

However, if you like to eat wherever you want to and it causes a problem with your health, you will have to make an obvious choice to limit and change your eating habit.

Likewise, you pursue a career or profession to ensure an income that allows you the freedom to choose your living standard and your lessons.

You will have to sacrifice innumerable other freedoms of time and money. If you speak with anyone who has just started uni this year or is finishing the course, you will know firsthand what it is like to

make those sacrifices.

Freedom is not what our culture tells us. Genuine freedom comes only from strategically losing some freedoms to gain others.

[5 : 25] You should ask which freedom is more important, the more truly liberating. At the same time, ask yourself, who has sacrificially invested in your life to ensure that you are not being unjust?

We are all products of a family and a community that invests much time and love in us. Much of it happened even before we can speak or can now remember.

As a child, when we become injured or sick, or as we age, our need and dependence on others increases, making believing in an absolute individual autonomy a cruel and unjust choice.

No one is ever only responsible for themselves. We all share responsibility for and to others. What John Donne wrote in his poem in 1624, no man is an island and tire of itself.

Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind, still ring true today. Modern freedom lives on the principle that everyone should be free to live as they desire, as long as they do not harm anyone else.

[6 : 53] We no longer need to impose a set of moral rights or wrongs on anyone if people abide to this harm principle.

The freedom of choice will become a self-correcting absolute that guides living together without needing any value judgment. Under this principle, freedom is the only unconditional good and moral absolute of our society that should hold a need.

Michael Kahneman of Harvard Law Society denies it as an empty concept because it cannot stand alone.

It leads us first to define what good and thriving human life is and agree on what harm is for it to work. Whether freedom is good or bad depends entirely on the particular substantive cause on behalf of which freedom is involved.

Our challenge today is not to follow the culturally dominant view of freedom from without any definition of what our freedom is for.

[8 : 17] We must also ensure we do not join the crowd to perpetuate a publicly shaming people or groups to press our moral beliefs about harm on them.

Freedom of choice cannot stand alone as a guide to a behavior even with its full intention of not harming other people. theologian Tim Keller Tim Keller observed that the harm principle is useless as a guide and untrustworthy.

And he also warns freedom as is widely collected in our society is corrosive to humanity in general and to enduring committed love relationship in particular.

He came to this conclusion drawing on Jonathan Head's work titled Happiness Hypothesis Hey, right An ideology of extreme personal freedom can be dangerous because it encourages people to leave homes, jobs, cities, and marriage in search of personal and professional fulfillment thereby breaking the relationship that were properly the best hope for such fulfillment.

His happiness research confirmed the importance of strong social relationship in strengthening the immune system extending life speeding up recovery from surgery and reduce the risk of depression and anxiety disorders.

[10 : 05] Deep down we all sense the need to interact and intertwine with others. We need the gift and take we need to belong.

What would happen if everyone ran off to pursue their freedom? Family would fall apart neighborhood association would collapse and the erosion of voluntary and selfish community will necessitate the soft tyranny of a growing bureaucratic state where individuals are powerless.

Being honest generous and public spirit being faithful to your spouse and children will regularly infringe on your happiness and freedom.

However a more robust and cohesive government is the only alternative if anyone protects their independence and stops doing these things.

The harm of emphasizing personal freedom above community commitment could eventually be the loss of liberty and independence.

[11 : 25] Too much individual freedom leads to increased government control over the whole group because no one is willing to sacrifice for the better good of the collectives.

Any authorities organizations or institutions that impose rules and regulations are often perceived as an enemy of freedom.

Christian is often seen as an arch enemy. many people reckon Christianity requires people to recognize their insufficiency and turn their back on their autonomies.

Autonomics seemingly happy life. It stipulates people to be born as human beings who understand their dependency on something more significant.

They consider that as a great infringement on their freedom. if that's what you think Christianity is all about let me encourage you to scan the Christianity explained QR code in front of you and find out the true meaning of Christianity.

[12 : 36] Christianity being the arch enemy of freedom is a case of mistaken identity. You should give Christianity the benefit of doubt and find the truth. the only thing that generally cannot coexist with the contemporary sense of freedom is not religion but our need for love and worship.

Keller says it well there is no greater feeling of liberation than to free and be loved well. The affirmation that comes from love liberates your fear and self-doubt.

it frees you from having to face the world alone. Your friend and mate will be crucial to helping you achieve many of your goals in life.

In all these ways love is liberating perhaps the most liberating thing but the minute you get into a love relationship and the deeper and more intimate and the more wonderful it gets the more you also have to give up your independence.

when you love someone you are not free. You will always have the well-being and the happiness of that someone on your mind.

[13 : 56] You will think of way to please. If the feeling and giving are not mutually reciprocal the relationship will become exploitative and you will feel more trapped wondering why the relationship is not working and what else you could have done.

You might go from being anxious about staying in a committed loving relationship to consistently dipping in and out of relationship trying to stay afloat to avoid being so hopelessly devoted to someone.

you will move into that direction especially if you want to be true to the contemporary sense of freedom and be your own master. However the more you want to master your freedom the more you will realize you are not free or able to be the master.

Over the last few weeks we have pointed out that everyone has an inner urge to find love meaning and satisfaction. Humans are frustrated and trapped because we are looking at the wrong thing and wrong place.

We look to created things rather than to God to address that urge. We are our worst enemy regarding autonomous freedom because we do not just have an inner urge to find love meaning and satisfaction.

[15 : 31] We also worship what we identify as the source of them and we end up being controlled by it. I encourage you to check out our website and listen again to the sermon from the last two Sundays.

They outline humanity's predicament regarding meaning and satisfaction and what we can do to embrace them. Contemporary people believe that instead of allowing religious authority or tradition to dictate to them they should be free to think or live as they choose.

But the reality is none of us are free agents. We are all worshipping and serving something. There is no such thing as freedom without limitation.

To embrace freedom not in the sense of our contemporary culture tell us we should look for the right the liberating constraint that fits our nature and design.

We should consider which master will affirm cherish empower and honor us and which one will exploit and abuse us.

[16 : 43] Which master is the right master for our hearts and lives and so brings those right constraints. Let me encourage you if you feel somewhat frustrated about your relationship and trapped in your life and on the issue of freedom I do not say it in a nasty or sarcastic sense.

Many modern people try to deny an obvious fact laid out in today's passage read from Romans 8 16 to 21 that we are God's children.

He created us and it says God subject us to frustration for a purpose. Verse 20 read for the creation was subject to freedom to frustration not by its own choice but by the will of the one who was subjected in hope that the creation itself would be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into freedom and glory of the children of God.

Your frustration in life are God's grace to you. God put them there in hope of liberating you from your bondage to decay and bringing you into the freedom and glory of the children of God. God created us to know, serve, and love him. Trying to live for anything else will lead to slavery like running on a treadmill that gets no way.

[18:18] When you begin to live for God and follow his will, you will become who you are meant to be, realizing your original designs.

love for God. Why is it that when you fall in love, you take the initiative to discover a list of all the things your loved one loves and hates?

Then you go all out to say and do the things that delight them. Why do you gladly accept doing their will rather than your own, the little limits on your behavior?

it's because you have put your joy and happiness into the joy and enjoyment of the other. You are happy to the degree they are.

You have come to discover the pleasure of giving pleasure. You don't follow their will as a means to get other things you want. Their love and joy is the main thing you want.

[19:24] In our relationship with God, Jesus took the first step towards humanity. He saved us at an infinite cost to himself.

He emptied himself of his glory and took on a humble form to serve our best interests. When you grasp and understand what God has done for you, it creates a grateful joy that inwardly moves you to want to please, know, and resemble him.

when you put your happiness into his happiness, serving him will become your perfect liberation.

The concept of freedom in the Bible comes through having the right constraint.

The stipulations in the Bible are the list of God's love and hate by which you can please and come to be like him. God's will. That is why we encourage and urge everyone to grow in their faith, spending regular time with God in his word and praying to him.

The more you are in tune with God's will, the freer you will become as you do what you are designed to do. in the past, people intend to break free from God.

[20:49] They ignore God's command and exchange God's glory with created things. So God allowed their earthly master to capture them so they will experience the slavery physically and understand what exactly losing freedom is.

after some time, God allowed a more benevolent master to govern over his people and to let his people return to the place he set for them.

God said in Isaiah 48, verse 12, that he created all of us. I am he, I am the first and I am the last. My own hand laid the foundation of the earth and my right hand spread out the heavens.

This God is a God that Christianity follows. Come as Jesus to redeem us and call us to return to him. This is what the Lord says, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord your God who teaches you what is best for you, who will direct you in the way you should go.

If only you have paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river. Your well-being like the ways of the sea. Jesus knows what is best for us and does not hold back from teaching us what they are and directing how we should live.

[22:15] He keeps doing that today through his commands. If only you pay attention to them and follow God's will of and in a desire to love our Redeemer, you will increasingly sense that you are also becoming who you are decided to be by your creator.

In Matthew chapter 11, verse 28 to 30, Jesus calls us to come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your soul, for my yoke is easy, my burden is light.

Jesus essentially tells us that he calls only to do those things we were created to do, and you will find that his yoke is easy.

He put on us the burden to follow him, but he had already paid the price, so we will be forgiven when you fail. Jesus has taken off us the burdens that other people have.

[23:30] He removed the burden of earning our salvation through striving and effort, and the burdens of guilt and shame from past failures. Jesus has taken off the burden of proving ourselves worthy of love.

He is the only Lord and Master who will satisfy you if you find him, and if you fail him, he will forgive you. Without Jesus, Christianity is exploitative, because God will not change, and you will have to

do all the submitting, repenting, and making all the sacrifice.

But in Jesus, God says, I will adjust to you. I will sacrifice for you. I will give up my glory and immortality in becoming human, and all light and joy, and my very life on the cross.

He was nailed fast to it, so he could not move. How is that for giving up your freedom? I can invite the music team to come up.

Christianity is the only religion that claims God gave up his freedom so we could experience the ultimate freedom from evil and death itself. Therefore, we can trust Jesus.

[24 : 52] He sacrifices his independence for you, so that you can sacrifice yours for him. And when you do, you will find it is the ultimate, infinite, liberating constraint.

If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. Amen.