

FREEDOM TO ENJOY THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

Father's Day reminds fathers like me to listen to advice from their children, especially my eldest daughter who was beginning the task of teaching writing. When I heard that Bemidji State University in the arctic section of northern Minnesota was hiring her to teach composition, I gave her a copy of Natalie Goldberg's *Writing Down the Bones*. It had been recommended to me by a Jungian psychiatrist. Elizabeth, my daughter, found her students suffering almost universally from "writer's block." "I sit at the key board and can't find a way to begin writing about what my summer taught me," which was the first assignment. With the help of Goldberg, Elizabeth coached her students to begin writing about the obstacle to writing. She handed the advice on to me, stuck on the beginning of a doctoral thesis. It worked! And I've used that little piece of advice from Goldberg via Elizabeth for the last twenty-five years.

Preachers have multiple writing prompts: scripture, some of the numerous commentators and students of the same, the culture we all share and comments on the culture, current events like the one filling the past day, such as the SCOTUS decision to rescind *Roe vs. Wade*, as well as personal issues, dreams and imaginings. The pile of prompts grows so generously that we sometimes don't know where to begin! One of the prompts for tomorrow is a portion of Saint Paul's Letter to the Galatians. Paul is downright angry with the Church he founded in Galatia. That congregation is about to insist on the necessity for gentiles to undergo the Jewish requirement that males be circumcised. He goes so far in reference to these apparently male teachers who were teaching circumcision as to say, "I wish they would castrate themselves." He surrounds his distress with teaching about Christ joining us and including us in his work that we need no longer be slaves to the old law. We are free from that slavery. Fathers Day also coincided with the celebration of Juneteenth, the 157th anniversary of the announcing of freedom for slaves in Galveston, announced to them two years after the emancipation proclamation. We and our fathers were teaching a kind of

law that guaranteed dominance of the white race over humans of color. (as if white is not a color?) We were all enslaved by that teaching. We often feel unsafe without our old laws. Men were free to dictate what women could do with their bodies, with decisions about impregnation, with ending a pregnancy when it felt like what a woman had to do to survive and live a life of care for others in our society. Along with celebrating the end of slavery and our growth into new care for one another, we grew in our knowledge of the full humanity of women and men in the case of Roe vs. Wade nearly fifty years ago, without one gender dominating another.

We are in a state of flux in regard to Friday's Supreme Court decision. How do we move kindly into the future? Who will teach us? Will it be dominant men whom St. Paul would wish castrated, or will we find the Holy Spirit leading us into the gifts of the spirit where we will find ourselves enjoying the fruits of the Spirit:" love, joy, peace, freedom, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." "There is no law against such things." (Galatians 5:22-23). Laws we enforce against each other and against those who differ from us enslave us. The Spirit frees us to love and care for each other.