

“My Chains Are Gone”

Galatians 5:1, **Mark 7:31-37**

The Bible is full of stories about the people who were set free by God’s grace. The children of Israel were set free from slavery in Egypt by God through Moses. Moses was scared and afraid when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He was, however, freed from his fear and self-doubt when God sent him to Aaron, his brother, who became his spokesperson to the people. Also, God provided Moses with a shepherd’s staff able to perform miraculous signs, along with the promise that God would be with him.

Naaman, a Syrian army commander, was freed from the hideous disease of leprosy, when he did as he was directed by the prophet Elisha and bathed himself in the Jordan River.

Job was unchained from terrible boils from head to foot and from all his misfortunes when he repented for his arrogance and admitted his ignorance before God’s wisdom.

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus opened the ears of a man who could not hear and released his tongue to speak. Jesus unchained him from deafness and muteness. The people who witnessed the miracle said, “He even makes the deaf to hear and gives speech to those who cannot speak.”

At the amazing concert last Sunday, our choir sang, “Amazing Grace: My Chains Are Gone.” After the first two verses of the well-known hymn by John Newton, the chorus sings, “My chains are gone, I’ve been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me, and like a flood his mercy reigns; unending love, amazing grace.

How many of you have experienced amazing grace? I bet many, even if unaware...and I hope all of you have been touched by that amazing grace sometime in your life, which freed you from the chains that bound you.

As I listened to our choir sing, I could think of many chains that bound me once and were broken by the amazing grace. Although I was not watching how the people were responding to “Amazing Grace: My Chains Are Gone,” I could sense in my body that they were touched by the words and music.

Amazing grace set a man free from the sense of over-responsibility he had felt for his adult children and for guiding their lives to the “right” direction.

Amazing grace unchained a woman from feeling ashamed; the feeling she had every time she remembered an incident in her childhood.

Amazing grace set a man free from having felt guilty all his life that he hadn’t met his father’s expectations and had disappointed him by choosing an occupation not approved of by his father.

Amazing grace unchained a woman from unfounded notions and beliefs about how a woman should live, act, speak and behave.

Amazing grace set a man free from a message he had repeatedly heard growing up and which had kept replaying in his head like an old record: “You won’t amount to anything.”

Amazing grace unchained many women and men from substance abuse—the stories told at every 12 Step Program.

At that concert last Sunday, amazing grace set us free, if not permanently, at least at that moment, from the chains that may have divided us: denominations, age differences, how much we possess, styles of worship, the part of Bellport in which we live; and amazing grace united us as the people of God.

The words of the chorus were added to the well-known and well-loved hymn, “Amazing Grace,” by John Newton. They are simple and authentic words of Gospel. They match the message of the hymn, “Amazing Grace,” which is said to be John Newton’s spiritual autobiography in verse. The chains of immoral lifestyle and disobedience to God were broken when Newton encountered amazing grace. Amazing grace saved him in a violent storm in the North Atlantic when he was slave trading; it led him to become a priest in the Church of England; it moved him to become an abolitionist to serve for the cause.

John Newton looked back on his life and wrote, “Amazing Grace,” at the age of 70 years old. I’m sure he would agree with the words sung by our choir last Sunday. “My chains are gone, I’ve been set free, My God, my Savior has ransomed me, and like a flood, his mercy reigns; unending love, amazing grace”

I'm sure you have your own experiences of how amazing grace unchained you... set you free.

I have asked Kalina to play "Amazing Grace: MY Chains Are Gone."

As we listen to it, let us reflect on the amazing grace that has set us free and give thanks.

Prayer (after Kalina playing):

Thank you God, for your amazing grace that has set us free.

Amen.