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Galatians 5:13-14, Luke 6:39-42

FREE TO BE SERVANTS

Good morning. I want to start off by expressing my gratitude for the scholarship that I am receiving here today.¹ It is an honor to be given this great privilege and I promise that it will be put to good use.

I would also like to thank those who have helped me over these past years at Peace. I have been fortunate enough to be able to be a part of the best youth group in the world led by the amazing Nicole Klinemeier and have been able to work with some of the coolest teenagers I've ever met. I also want to thank Pastor Erik and everyone else in the congregation for making this church the most welcoming place I've ever been.

I remember a couple years ago, when seniors were giving the sermons for youth Sunday and I thought, "there's no way that I'll ever do that, no way that I'll get up there and talk in front of all those people," but here I am.

Even last weekend, I thought to myself, "How can I write a sermon in just one week?" So I did what any high schooler would do, I waited until yesterday to write it. I was fortunate enough to have help from Pastor Erik earlier this week. I still needed some inspiration though.

Then, while waiting for the bus after playing tennis with some of my friends, I saw something that really made me stop and think. There was a car that was waiting to turn and it had a sticker in its window that said "Love each other".

It seemed so simple, like it was saying that all we needed to do was love each other to solve all the problems in the world. But is it really that simple? Not really. It is true that we should love one another, but that's not always easy. So how are we told to love one another? How do we love someone who despises us?

Well according to the reading from Galatians today, we are free through the Lord. It's really a nice thought that the Lord has set us free. Freedom is something really important to me, being a proud American and it's even more appropriate this week, with Memorial Day tomorrow. We are also told that we must use our freedom to help others and to never use our freedom as a tool to put others down. We are told to live not in slavery, but to be servants to one another.

Another way to love those that hate you is to look at why they hate you. In the reading today from Luke, Jesus tells us that you cannot point out the dust in someone else's eye without first removing the log from your own eye. Pretty effective imagery, right?

We can't look for faults in someone else before looking at our own faults first. If we want someone to stop hating us, we need to first determine if their grievances against us are justified, then we have a duty to improve ourselves. Most importantly, we have a duty to love and serve one another in any way we can. Thank you.

¹ Stuart is the 13th recipient of the Peace Lutheran Scholarship, given to graduating seniors who are active participants in the life and mission of the congregation.