Sermon:

What was special about last Thursday? Budget? Graeme’s Birthday? Ascension Day!

Why remember that day? – Jesus enthroned as King of Heaven.

How does Ascension connect to Paul and Silas in a Philippi prison? Singing Ascension hymns?

Strangely the connection is Freedom.

Where is freedom found in the story?

* Fortune-telling girl freed.
* Earthquake which freed Paul and Silas from their chains.
* The jailer freed to believe; see how the prisoners did not use physical freedom to run away.

But there is a deeper freedom shown which connects with Ascension. At Ascension Christ is freed to rule. But not as powerful dominant. NB how Jesus talked about power.

Luke 22.25-27: **The kings of the pagans have power over their people… but this is not the way with you; rather the greatest among you must be like the servant. Who is greater, the one sits down to eat or the one who serves him? The one who sits down, of course. But I am among you as one who serves.**

John 13.13-14: **You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet…**

Phil 2.6-7: **He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had.**

Jesus’ way of being a king, of using power, is to serve. Ascension allows him to do that for us.

Eg. Paul and Silas while in chains had the freedom to praise God.

We look for the same freedom of the Spirit – Pentecost next week.

This is not a freedom to do what we want to do, but the freedom to do what God wants us to do!

John 8.31f: **If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples; you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.**

This is the new covenant of which Jesus spoke in the Last Supper: **This cup is God’s new covenant sealed with my blood, which is poured out for you** (Luke 22.20), which we shortly will share.

Prayer – *Eternal God, who are the light of the minds that know you, the joy of the hearts that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you; grant us so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom, in Jesus Christ our Lord.*