America, Cobbled Together in Freedom

**Galatians 5:13 1 Peter 2:16**

**Summary: We are cobbled together in freedom and the only matrix which can hold us together is love.**

Welcome to our shared worship at this historic cobblestone church, a place uniquely suited for such an American moment. The verb, cobble, means to make or put together. A shoemaker cobbles leather together, usually to make shoes or tack for horses, but those leather bits might also be cobbled together to make a work of art! I had a cobbler friend who would draw a sketch on a cork board and then glue cut, sew or rivet diverse scraps of leather on his outline to make amazing pictures! Cobbled stones generally made roadways to help people travel, but here we are in a cobbled church, which puts a whole new meaning on using cobblestones to get somewhere.

When we are patriotic during worship, we tend to piece our history together roughly – cobble it together – to reflect on what we have been, what we are, and what we may yet become. As many sizes, shapes, colors, and textures of leather or stone can be cobbled together, even so it is with people. None of us, not even the Native Americans began here; we all came or were brought to this land and spread out like dandelions, joining or usurping whatever was here until there was a new world from shore to shore, cobbled together from many people, many nations.

Now, cobblestones are usually set in sand or bound together with mortar. Cobbled leather is stitched, riveted, stapled, or glued together. What binds us together or holds us in a dynamic American tension is an idea, an ideal we call “freedom.”

Freedom is where we have come from, it is where we are, and freedom is the context of our future. Freedom does not provide an escape from conflict or even war, external or internal. Freedom does not insure prosperity, harmony, equality, respect, or fairness. Freedom is our greatest strength and hope, and -- at the same time -- our greatest weakness and threat. They call democracy “the American experiment,” and it will only succeed in an uncertain world if freedom’s matrix continues to cobble people with different philosophies, agendas, faiths, and visions into one nation.

I come to this moment and into our cobbled celebration as a woman of faith, a sister of Jesus called to freedom by God’s Holy Spirit. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians (5:13), he writes: “For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love be servants of one another.”

Peter agrees in his own letter (1 Peter 2:16) reaffirming that freedom must not be a pretext for evil but rather an opportunity to live as servants of God. And it is God in Christ, our example, who forgives, lives, dies, and abides for us. Mortar must be added to sand for the stones which are cobbled together to stand the test of time. We stand here, freely worshipping in a New World, a nation which has, so far, stood that test. Love must be added to freedom for that mortar to hold and for this day to be celebrated by our yet unborn descendants in a cobblestone country. By the grace of God, let us live free! Amen.