

Jesus: “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Holy, Loving, Forgiving God, thank you so much for the beauty of this day. Thank you for this season of summer in which there is color and growth, where there is warmth and sun, and where we can enjoy the outdoors and relish the creation you have given us. And Lord, today, we pause to remember to be grateful that we are free to worship you as we please. We too often forget that there are Christians in parts of the world that are not free to worship you. There are Christians in places like Nigeria and India who are persecuted, beaten and even killed. And so forgive us when we take our freedoms so lightly, when we take them for granted. We lift up to you all who have and who continue to fight for our country, who make supreme sacrifices to uphold our freedoms and our lifestyle. And we thank you once again for Jesus Christ who made the ultimate sacrifice for our greatest freedom – freedom from sin and death, so that we can live with you eternally in your kingdom. And Lord, we thank you that here and now, your truth does set us free. For it is a different truth than that of the world. Your truth sets us free to forgive, when the world says to seek revenge. Your truth reminds us to be thankful and content with what we have, when the world says we need to obtain more. Your truth enables us to be free to trust in your sovereignty and rule, when the world says political leaders are in control. Your truth says we are free to rest in that peace that passes all understanding when the world around us would have be fearful and worried. Yes, we are free indeed, and we thank you.

Lord, we come to you also to lift up those who are in need this day. We pray for the families and victims of yet another senseless shooting. We pray for families at the border seeking to be reunited with one another. And we pray for those we know and love and care for – those needing to feel your love and healing and care. Lord, we come together as brothers and sisters in Christ to uphold and support one another, and so, in order that we can all hear and pray in unity together, listen now as people in this congregation lift aloud the names of those for whom we ask your blessing.

As people together in Christ, we close now with the prayer he taught us, saying,

Lord's Prayer