

Freedom to Worship our Lord

Summer is in full swing. And most families are, have been, or will be on vacation. And it's good and highly recommendable that families take some time off to be with friends and relatives, while kids are on vacation.

It's a common experience that during the summer, less people come to church, which does not mean that they're not worshipping at all. It just means that they're not here with us. Because worship is such a vital ingredient of our Christian life and is embedded in our declaration of faith and our souls, most of us look for ways to be in connection with our God, even when we're away from our worship place. We thank God that we live in a country that has religious freedom and the opportunity to worship God in different ways. Freedom of religion is a fundamental human right that protects the conscience of all people. It allows us to think, express and act upon what we deeply believe.

But it must be said that the Christian church does not depend on a law or legal statement to gather to worship God. For many centuries, the church was a persecuted and illegal institution and did not enjoy the freedom we have today. And even though the threat of death was always upon the church, they always found ways to get together for worship. And many of them paid the highest price for their faithfulness: their own lives were taken away.

The story of Perpetua and Felicity gives us a glimpse of what it means to risk your life for your faith in Christ. They were Christian martyrs who lived during the early persecution of the Church in Africa by the Emperor Severus. Perpetua was a pregnant young lady that refused to recant her faith, and, in spite of her father's pleas, she preferred to be a martyr rather than to deny Christ as her Savior. You can read her interesting story [here](#).

We highly value our liberties, and the Day of Independence is an occasion on which we stop to remember the sacrifices that others did to fight for our freedoms. But too often we take it for granted and do not really pay our dues to God because we have other commitments, or we're distracted with whatever is around us. If we could only reflect on the high cost of our freedom, and the price others paid for the freedom we now enjoy, we would be more grateful and more dedicated to our worship of God, because in the end, it was Jesus, the Son of God who paid the highest price for our freedom. With His death on the cross, He paid for our forgiveness, so that we would be able to "approach the throne of God with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:16).

The same author urges us to be regular in gathering together, saying, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Our worship does not depend on the "religious freedom" right, which we highly value, but on the gratitude, we have for all of God's mercies. Amen.

~ Pastor Borges | Associate Pastor

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