

Good morning everyone, thank you for the introduction Mark.

Back in the early months of the pandemic, we were all really looking forward to freedom from restrictions, weren't we? I remember longing for the day when I heard the announcement from the government that everything was now fine, and we could go and hug our friends again. But, although we have had restrictions lifted in such a way that there is no longer any restriction on hugging our friends and family, it's never felt like the great cry of freedom has properly arrived. This is the way the pandemic ends, not with a bang, but with a whimper.

And 21 June came and gone without anything really changing, and now, the long-awaited freedom day, is coming on Monday. But I'm personally not feeling too great about it. Yes we'll no longer have any limits on who we can see inside, and we'll be allowed to all sing together in Church, but I feel like the spectre of the pandemic is going to be looming over us for a while longer. We'll still have the laws on self-isolation if you get a positive covid test, or are in contact with someone who does. So I'm aware that any plans I make could be cancelled at a moment's notice. So I can't make too many plans, we've very much got to go with the (lateral) flow.

So we may be free, but we're not fully free. But I personally rejoice at the fact that when Jesus sets us free, there's no asterisk, or footnote – we are fully free. John 8v36 says "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed". Jesus doesn't set us free from Covid restrictions, it's much more than that, He sets us free from the power of sin. Have you ever felt like you keep doing things that you hate? Keep treating people in your life unkindly, or acting selfishly, or returning to habits that you know are wrong? I certainly have. But the good news is, if we come to Jesus, sin, all these bad things, no longer have any power over us. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I'm not saying Christians never do things wrong, but we know that we are no longer slaves to sin, but forgiven and made free by Jesus. If you've never looked into it yourself, why not read the rest of John's gospel, find out what it means to be made free

Thank you for listening. I'll leave it to Kanye West to play us out, a man who discovered what it means to be free, made clean, when in His words – "Jesus Christ did the laundry".