

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Acknowledge

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

"In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6). This month we are called to acknowledge the dimensions of our relationship with God. Beautifully, we begin with the *intimacy and awe* that are bound up in the words, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name." On the second Sunday, we will be led into understanding *the choice* of temptation, and God's faithfulness in our struggle against evil.

September 21 is the International Day of Peace, which we will celebrate using the Divine Service Guide written for that day, which teaches us the responsibility and commitment that *His peace* brings into our lives.

The month will be completed with an exposition on the beginning of Ephesians 1, where Paul reveals the vault of *spiritual blessing* that God bestows on us.

Since the Day of Peace DSG was originally scheduled as a midweek service, it has been moved to the day of its observance, Sunday, September 21. The DSG that was scheduled for September 21, will now be used for Sunday, September 28. The remaining Sunday DSG (from September 28) becomes our midweek DSG, where we will learn from Abram how we can acknowledge our relationship with God *with gratitude* and generosity.

The Divine Service Guide and Study Guide have been adjusted to account for the changes mentioned above, so that it will be easy to follow and utilize.

May this month bring new relational dimensions with our God to the forefront of our minds and hearts, and may we immerse ourselves in His peace, so that we can become peace-builders in our communities.

SEPTEMBER 2025

September 7

Acknowledge:
intimacy and awe

September 14

Acknowledge:
the choice

September 21

Acknowledge:
His peace

September 28

Acknowledge:
spiritual blessing

September midweek

Acknowledge:
with gratitude

(based on the Sept 17/18 DSG)

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER 7

ACKNOWLEDGE: **intimacy and awe**

Where are we in the Bible?

Matthew 6:1-18 consists of instruction for the proper practice of three ritual acts: alms-giving, prayer, and fasting. It also contains, as a model, the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is a valuable legacy that Jesus gave to those who believe in Him. The prayer is also found in Luke with slight variation, where we come to understand why Jesus provided this prayer for His disciples: *"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples'"* (Luke 11:1). The disciple didn't ask that Christ teach them a prayer, but rather that He teach them how to pray. The Lord's Prayer, then, is a model, or "how-to" prayer that provides a structure that can be followed. It's a pattern for prayer, and a pattern for living. Praying the Lord's Prayer correctly also means understanding the gospel. We pray with this knowledge and desire it to shape our life accordingly..

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

We will consider how this first phrase of the Lord's Prayer teaches a new understanding of the following relational dimensions between God and humankind:

1. Transcendence - *Our Father in heaven*
2. Holiness - *Hallowed be Your name*
3. Intimacy and community - *Holy Communion preparation*

Matthew 6:9

In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be
Your name.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Matthew 6:1-18

Catechism
12.1.7.1-12.7.2.2, 5.3.3-5.3.3.4

Discussion Questions

"To name God as Father becomes a summons to live as a child of God, to live from an awareness of this reality." How can you respond to this "summons" practically?

How does the "our" at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer overcome all boundaries and make us one family of God?

What is one new thought you left this divine service with?

"Abba" is only a little word, and yet contains everything. It is not the mouth but the heart's affection which speaks like this. Even if I am oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from Your presence, yet am I Your child, and You are my Father. For Christ's sake: I am loved because of the Beloved. So this little word... Father, deeply felt in the heart, surpasses all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and the most eloquent speakers that ever lived. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings, and these groanings cannot be uttered with words of eloquence, for no tongue can express them. - **Martin Luther**

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER 14

Where are we in the Bible?

Our Bible verse comes at the end of the Lord's Prayer, where Jesus teaches His followers a humble plea for God to guide us away from situations that could lead to sin and to rescue us from the influence of Satan. In other words, we could consider this prayer to be: *"Do not lead me to situations where I am tempted, because they are opportunities where I may fail, but if You do lead me to that choice, if You allow evil to challenge me, then deliver me. Help me to choose Your will. Stay near me and protect me."*

This prayer gains deeper meaning when viewed alongside Luke 4:1-15, where Jesus Himself is tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus is not spared from testing, but He resists by relying on God's Word. His victory shows that while temptation is inevitable, it is not insurmountable. Thus, in praying Matthew 6:13, believers follow Jesus' example of trusting God's power to protect, strengthen, and deliver them from evil.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. God doesn't tempt, but leads us to a choice
2. Temptations can appeal to various needs
3. God provides a way to overcome

ACKNOWLEDGE: the choice

Matthew 6:13a

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Luke 4:1-15

Catechism
3.4.8.3, 12.1.7.2.7

Discussion Questions

How have you thought of this phrase in the past? How would you say it in your own words?

Discuss how temptations are choices.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:13 and share how you have experienced God's escape routes.

What are "opportune times" for the devil to tempt you (Luke 4:13)? How can you find strength in those moments?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER 21

Where are we in the Bible?

Isaiah 57 is addressed to the people of Israel, some of whom, having returned from captivity in Babylon, are trying to rebuild the temple and their community in Jerusalem. The verses from 14-21 can be understood as a prophecy of salvation. In the context of Isaiah 57:15, the humble are those who are lowly in their own estimation, or that of the world and the contrite are those who are crushed under life's burdens. God does not leave His people in these depths, but promises to revive and renew them, in *spirit* and *heart* (that is, both the active life force of a person and the center of their consciousness and contemplation).

The word "For" at the beginning of verse 16 sets up the explanation of how God will lift His people from their current state and deliver them. In a brief exposition we learn that humanity's brokenness and pursuit of sinful greed and self-interest roused the anger of God, His hostility, and His withdrawal. But to no effect, for the people "went on backsliding in the way of his heart" (57:17). Yet, even as God sees the sinful ways of the people, He desires to share His high and lofty home with them (57:15). This eternal fellowship must be accomplished without any compromise to His transcendence and holiness. Therefore, God brings an end to His own anger through the Suffering Servant, and bestows healing, peace, and praise on His people.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. Seeking peace - *shalom*
2. Receiving peace
3. Cultivating peace

ACKNOWLEDGE: His peace

Isaiah 57:19 (excerpt)

"Peace, peace to him who is far off and to him who is near," says the Lord. "And I will heal him."

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Isaiah 57

Catechism
13.5

Discussion Questions

Discuss the Hebrew word "shalom" (often translated as peace) and its expanded definition.

How can you take practical steps in seeking and pursuing peace (Psalm 34:14)? Why is this important today?

Isaiah 57:14-21 tells a disappointing, yet beautiful story. God desires to be with humankind eternally. He pursues us, loves us, smooths the path to Him (57:14), and yet man continues "backsliding in the way of his heart." Why is this a story that continues to be relevant?

In this framework of the International Day of Peace, what does the promised "peace of the Risen One" mean to you?

International Day of Peace - First declared by the United Nations 43 years ago, the International Day of Peace is meant to bring attention to the importance of peace-building. "In a time of turbulence, tumult, and uncertainty, it is critical for everyone to take concrete action to mobilize for peace... We must speak up against violence, hate, discrimination, and inequality; practice respect; and embrace the diversity of our world... we can all do our part to build a more peaceful world. Let our actions for peace resonate louder than words." un.org/en/observances/international-day-peace

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER 28

ACKNOWLEDGE: **spiritual blessing**

Where are we in the Bible?

Ephesians, a letter written to believers who, though rich in Christ, were living far beneath their privileges (blessings). Paul writes to remind them of the incredible wealth they possess in Jesus Christ. In chapters 1 through 3, Paul opens the vault of their spiritual inheritance: adoption into God's family, full acceptance, redemption through Christ's blood, complete forgiveness, divine wisdom, an eternal inheritance, the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, new life, saving grace, and heavenly citizenship.

Unlike the material blessings promised to obedient Israel in Deuteronomy 28, these blessings are spiritual as they reach into the soul. They transform the heart, renew the mind, and anchor their identity in Christ. Paul's letter calls the believers to stop living like spiritual beggars and start walking in the truth of the riches they already have. *So where are we in the Bible?* We're standing at the vault of God's spiritual blessing, chapter 1 of Ephesians, and it's time to unlock it with faith.

NOTE TO MINISTERS: In the original Greek, Ephesians 1:3-14 is composed as a single, extended sentence. This is not a structured argument but rather a rich, lyrical doxology; a spontaneous outpouring of praise. Paul is not progressing through logical points; instead, he is overwhelmed by the cascading blessings of God.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

Our spiritual inheritance (blessings):

1. Divine election
2. God's will
3. Christ's sacrifice
4. Childhood in God
5. The power of the Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:3-4

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Ephesians 1:1-23

Catechism
4.6.3

Discussion Questions

List and discuss the spiritual blessings evident in Ephesians 1:3-14 (feel free to use the key themes).

How is it possible to be "holy and without blame" before God?

How does the power of the Holy Spirit empower us? What does it empower us to do?

How did the sermon inspire or instruct your understanding of the Bible verse and/or its context?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPTEMBER MIDWEEK

ACKNOWLEDGE: with gratitude

Where are we in the Bible?

In Genesis 14, we find ourselves in the early chapters of biblical history, during the patriarchal period. Abram (later Abraham) has just rescued his nephew Lot from captivity after a coalition of four powerful eastern kings defeated five local kings, including those of Sodom and Gomorrah. Following his victorious return, Abram encounters a mysterious figure, Melchizedek, king of Salem (later referred to as Jerusalem) and priest of God Most High. It is here that we witness the first recorded instance of a tithe in Scripture. Melchizedek blesses Abram, acknowledging that God delivered his enemies into his hands. In response, Abram gives Melchizedek a tenth of everything. This act is highly significant, not only because it precedes the Law of Moses, but also because it reveals a heart posture of worship, gratitude, and recognition of divine authority. Abram's tithe was not an obligation; it was an act of honor toward God through His priest. In this passage, we are reminded that giving to God is not merely transactional (ritual) but relational (an expression of devotion). The tithe, at its core, is about recognizing God's provision, expressing worship, honoring the One who is greater than us, and giving back to God what is His.

What are the key themes based on the Bible verse, its context, and the DSG?

1. Overlooking generosity
2. Recognizing blessings
3. Expressing gratitude
4. Standards of Tithing

Genesis 14:20

And he gave him a tithe of all.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Genesis 14: 1-24

Catechism

13.2.3

Discussion Questions

Share an experience where you have overlooked generosity in your life, either from God or from another person.

As we approach our Season of Thanksgiving in October and November, how can you begin to think about expressing gratitude?

Discuss the concept of tithing and your experience with it.

What is one new thought you left this divine service with?