

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

And this I pray...

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

There is a beautiful correspondence between the content of the Lord's Prayer and the content of our lives — a mingling of eternity and the everyday, the majestic and the mundane, the glorious and the common, the lofty and the lowly. Along with specific phrases of the Lord's Prayer, this month will also add, two other petitions that can become part of our ongoing conversations with God.

July 5: In this Service for the Departed, we pray that God would **make us alive** in His spirit. Rather than being bound to an earthly perspective of life, we know that Christ is Lord of life and death and He brings freedom, identity, endurance in suffering, and eternal life.

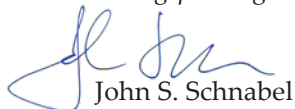
July 12: This Sunday begins our focus on the Lord's Prayer with the phrase, "**Your kingdom come.**" We will come to know that the kingdom is *at hand* - it is within our space, time, and being.

July 19: Encapsulating all we need to exist, we pray that God would "**Give us this day our daily bread.**" It a prayer for earthly sustenance, for Christ - our spiritual nourishment, for communal responsibility, and for daily dependence and trust.

July 26: Praying that God would "**Forgive us our debts,** as we forgive our debtors," reveals the need for both recognition and response.

July midweek: In praying to **love more and more**, we recognize that any outpouring of love from us is rooted in God's love, revealed in Christ. We are called to respond to this grace with tangible acts of love towards God and our neighbor, that reveal His love in our lives.

And this I pray... We simply pray because, as God's children, we have been commanded to, and because it glorifies Him and enriches us. God is glorified when we are obedient to His commands and His name is kept holy. He is glorified when His children revere Him and seek to know Him. In this month, I encourage you to seek a more intensive and extensive discipline of prayer that causes each one to never neglect the opportunity that has been opened to us by God, to approach and commune with Him. *Is it not an amazing privilege?*


John S. Schnabel

JULY 2026

July 5

And this I pray...
Make us alive

July 12

And this I pray...
Your kingdom come

July 19

And this I pray...
Give us this day
our daily bread

July 26

And this I pray...
Forgive us our debts

July midweek

And this I pray...
To love more and more

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 5

Where are we in the Bible?

1 Peter offers consoling and constructive words of encouragement to followers of Christ who are suffering for being “Christian” (4:16). One of the distinct problems 1 Peter addresses is how disciples should engage the dominant culture while disengaging from prevailing practices and attitudes that are at odds with Christ’s teachings. Chapter 4 begins with an exhortation to a moral life that distinguishes Christians from those around them. Followers of Christ have to say goodbye to their former ways. A selfish life based on pleasure, pride, and satisfaction is gone, and godly priorities have begun. This is by no means easy. As we can see from our verses, the former associates of the Christians laughed at their restraint. However, judgment will come. Death in itself is a judgment of our sinful humanity (Romans 5:12), which 1 Peter reminds us of in saying that all, the living and also the dead, are judged *“in the flesh as everyone is judged”* (1 Peter 4:6 NRSVUE). But in spite of that, Christ descended to the world of the dead and preached the gospel there, giving those in eternity a chance to live according to God in the spirit. In some ways, this is one of the most wonderful verses in the Bible - a breathtaking glimpse of a God who pursues every soul to the edges of life, death, and eternity with His love.

Summary:

This prayer, to be made alive according to God, applies to both the living and the dead. Christ descended to the world of the dead and preached the gospel, revealing Himself as Lord of death and life, thereby giving the dead the opportunity to come alive. In contrast to a life lived merely according to human desires—selfish and fleeting—God calls us to live according to His Spirit, receiving the life He offers through His word and sacraments, trusting that death is not the final word and that He has promised an eternal future for all who respond to His grace.

AND THIS I PRAY... **Make us alive**

SERVICE FOR THE DEPARTED

1 Peter 4:6

For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

1 Peter 4:1-6

Catechism

2.2.1, 3.4.10, 9.6.3

Discussion Questions

One of the central messages of this passage is that Christ's saving work extends to both the living and the dead. What does this reveal about God's character? How does it affect your understanding of His love and commitment to you personally?

Which of the characteristics of "living according to men" do you find most tempting or challenging: avoiding suffering, being ruled by impulses, focusing on material things, or seeking human approval?

Is your sense of identity primarily shaped by God's view of you or by the opinions and expectations of others? What evidence do you see of this in your life?

What does it mean for you personally to pray each day that God would make you "alive in the Spirit"?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 12

AND THIS I PRAY... Your kingdom come

Where are we in the Bible?

The question many people wrestle with is both simple and profound: When will the kingdom of God come? Scripture answers with a tension that stands at the heart of Jesus' teaching. It has come, and it will come more fully in the future. It is here now, but also not yet.

Jesus speaks of a future kingdom when He says, *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself"* (John 14:3). This promise points to a future fulfillment when God's rule will be fully established, and the world will be free from sin, suffering, and brokenness. It assures believers that a perfected reality still lies ahead.

Yet Jesus also declares, *"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"* (Mark 1:15). Here, the kingdom is not distant or in the future; it is already present. Through Jesus Christ, God's saving rule entered human history and began transforming lives. The kingdom of God has a distinct culture and is governed by love and peace.

The kingdom of God, therefore, is both present and future. It has already dawned through Christ's teaching, death, resurrection and ascension, yet it awaits its complete fulfillment at His return. We now live in the tension between what has begun and what is still to come. According to this reality – to live in the kingdom, we must live under the reign of the King. This must be our burning desire.

Summary:

We live as witnesses to both the present and the coming kingdom of God. We stand in the tension between the "now" and the "not yet," experiencing the beginnings of God's reign while longing for the day it will be fully realized. The kingdom of God—the central theme of Jesus' preaching—is present within our space, time, and being when we follow Him, yet it also points us toward the future fulfillment of our prayer, "Your kingdom come," when a just and peaceful world, free from evil, will be fully established.

Matthew 6:10

Your kingdom come.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 6:5-15

Catechism

12.1.7.2.3, 6.2.3.4

Discussion Questions

When you pray, "Your kingdom come," what are you usually thinking about—the future return of Christ, God's work in your life today, or both?

Are there attitudes, priorities, or habits that may be creating barriers between you and a fuller experience of God's kingdom?

How do you intentionally "breathe in the kingdom's atmosphere" and remain connected to Christ throughout the week?

Can you identify a situation where your response has changed over time because God's kingdom has become more deeply rooted within you?

If someone observed your daily life, what evidence would they see that the kingdom of God is already at work within you?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 19

Where are we in the Bible?

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us first to pray for God's name to be hallowed, for His kingdom to come, and for His will to be done. Only then do we pray for our needs, the ordinary realities of life: bread, forgiveness, temptation, and deliverance. The order matters. God's reign and God's will must shape every earthly concern, every daily decision, and every human desire. The Lord's Prayer reminds us that dependence on God is not reserved for spiritual moments alone; it belongs equally in the kitchen, the workplace, the marketplace, and the quiet anxieties of daily living.

In its original context, the request for daily bread reflected a posture of dependence on God rather than long-term self-sufficiency. Bread was the most basic necessity of life. Many laborers earned only enough for a single day's needs, so "daily bread" meant trusting God to provide what was necessary one day at a time. The phrase also echoes God's provision of manna in the wilderness, where Israel received only enough bread from heaven for each day. Through this, God taught His people reliance rather than self-security.

Summary:

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread," we confess our daily dependence on God for both earthly provision and the living Bread, Jesus Christ, while committing ourselves to seek first His kingdom and become instruments of His care and provision for others. We pray for what we truly need—bread for today, not merely for ourselves but for everyone included in the "us" and "our" of the Lord's Prayer—trusting God with our future and overcoming fear through faith in His faithful provision.

AND THIS I PRAY... Give us this day our daily bread

Matthew 6:11

Give us this day our daily bread.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 6

Catechism

12.1.7.2.5

12.1.5.2 - for Holy Communion

Discussion Questions

Why do you think God often provides "daily" rather than giving us certainty about the future? What spiritual lessons can be learned from this dependence?

How can we discern the difference between needs and wants, especially in a culture that constantly encourages consumption?

What "bread" are you currently relying on most for satisfaction—success, comfort, possessions, relationships, or Christ Himself?

Have there been seasons when God provided exactly what you needed, even if it was not what you wanted? What did you learn from that experience?

If you sincerely prayed, "Lord, make me part of Your provision for others," what practical action might God be inviting you to take this week?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 26

Where are we in the Bible?

The petition for forgiveness is the fifth petition included in the model prayer Jesus gave to His disciples. It follows the plea for provision of daily bread, highlighting a connection and balance between bodily needs and spiritual cleansing.

Just as bread is needed for daily physical survival, forgiveness is required daily to maintain spiritual health and relationships with God and each other.

Summary:

Our capacity to forgive is a barometer of spiritual health and demonstrates whether we have truly embraced the grace extended to us by God. When we withhold forgiveness, we reveal that our hearts may not fully understand or appreciate the enormity of the forgiveness we have received. Recognition of God's mercy must lead to a response of extending that same forgiveness to others; unlike the unforgiving servant who failed to pass on the grace he received, we are called to reflect the gospel in our daily lives, asking God for the strength to forgive even when it is difficult and painful.

NOTE:

Scan this QR code to review the District Apostle's Minister Group Discussion Guide on forgiveness: *The Ability to Forgive as a Barometer of Spiritual Health*



AND THIS I PRAY... **Forgive us our debts**

Matthew 6:12

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 6:5-15, 18:21-35

Catechism

12.1.7.2.6

Discussion Questions

Sin can be described as both "missing the mark" and "a debt." How do these two images help us better understand our need for God's forgiveness?

The parable of the unforgiving servant contrasts an enormous debt forgiven with a much smaller debt withheld. What is Jesus teaching about grace, gratitude, and forgiveness?

Which is easier for you: accepting God's forgiveness for yourself or extending forgiveness to others? Why?

Forgiveness often comes at a cost to the one forgiving. What "costs" (pride, resentment, desire for justice, etc.) do you find most difficult to surrender?

Have you experienced the healing power of forgiveness—either by forgiving someone else or by receiving forgiveness yourself? What was that experience like?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 8/9

Where are we in the Bible?

Philippians is a letter written by Paul the Apostle while he was imprisoned in Rome. It was sent to the Christian church in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia and the first Christian congregation established in Europe, founded during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16). In this early stage of the church's expansion after Jesus' resurrection and Pentecost, Paul writes to encourage believers facing pressure and persecution. Philippians 1:9 is part of Paul's opening prayer, asking God to grow their love, wisdom, and spiritual understanding in Christ.

If the Apostle Paul prayed for the Philippians' love to increase, it was not because they lacked it. In fact, Paul knew and experienced the love of the Philippian Christians. It was Paul who had founded the church in Philippi. The faithful in Philippi supported him with their prayers and gifts.

The Apostle knew that it was still possible to love better and more. Our goal is to become more and more like Jesus Christ, whose love for God and humankind was perfect. Paul knew that God blesses those who love Him in a special way (John 14:21).

Summary:

Loving God and loving our neighbor are inseparably rooted in God's own love revealed in Christ and made active in us through the Holy Spirit. Our love for God is a response to His love for us, and through the Spirit, we come to understand both the depth of His love and how to reflect it toward others. As we receive His grace, we are called to respond through trust, obedience, forgiveness, and tangible acts of love, participating in Christ's work and seeking the salvation and well-being of our neighbor as His kingdom becomes visible through us.

AND THIS I PRAY... **To love more and more**

Philippians 1:9

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Philippians 1:1-11

Catechism
5.2.1-3

Discussion Questions

Paul prays that the Philippians' love would "abound still more and more." Why do you think spiritual growth includes continually growing in love rather than simply maintaining it?

Which truth about God's love do you most need to remember right now?

The sermon encourages believers to break the cycle of repaying evil with evil. How do you usually respond when you are hurt, criticized, or treated unfairly?

The Holy Spirit helps us see both God's love for us and God's love for others. How might your actions this week change if you consciously viewed every person you encounter as someone deeply loved by Christ and invited into eternal fellowship with Him?

If Paul were praying Philippians 1:9 over your life today, where would you most want your love to "abound more and more"—toward God, toward a particular person, toward the church, or toward those outside your circle?