

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Created

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

"The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims His handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge" (Psalm 19:1-2 NRSVUE). The beautiful, sweeping images of creation in the Psalms inspire awe, but also describe our own fragile creaturely condition, compared to them. God is majestic. We are not. The Psalms delight in holding up this majesty and authority, and ask us to reside in their powerful shade. *"There is no speech... yet their voice goes out through all the earth" (19:3-4).* God's grandeur in creation is talking to us. **Created** in His image, He asks us to listen.

The sermons for the month of October, the beginning of our Season of Thanksgiving, will focus on how we respond:

October 4: On the first Sunday, we are in the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden where we find that we were **created to tend and keep**, as stewards of God's beautiful creation.

October 11: For the second Sunday, we move from Genesis to Revelation, and discover that we were **created to praise** God, acknowledging His glory, honor, and power.

October 18: On the third Sunday, the sermon will expound on our being **created to wonder and wait**. The past is full of God's wonderful works, and the future is full of His plans.

October 25: On the fourth Sunday, the well-known verse of John 3:16 confronts us with the truth that we were **created for everlasting life**, reminding us of this declaration of God's unconditional love.

October midweek: Finally, in the sermon chosen for the midweek, the Chief Apostle extends Christ's invitation to **choose freedom**. The narrow gate leads to liberation, peace, and eternal life.

The Season of Thanksgiving brackets a time in the year where we can intentionally make time for reflection, worship, prayer, and gratitude to our Almighty Creator for who He is and what He has done. Approach these coming months with the intent to stir up recognition of God's goodness in your families and congregations.

With thanksgiving,


John S. Schnabel

OCTOBER 2026

October 4

Created...
to tend and keep

October 11

Created...
to praise

October 18

Created...
to wonder and wait

October 25

Created...
for everlasting life

October midweek

Created...
to choose freedom

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR OCT 4

CREATED... to tend and keep

Where are we in the Bible?

Genesis 2 begins with the concluding element of the first account of creation from the first chapter - an explanation of the Sabbath. While the creation account in Genesis 1 focuses on organization and structure, the account in Genesis 2 highlights relationships; between God and humans, humans and the earth, humans with each other, and humans and animals. This second chapter also gives us a humbler view of humanity - one that is grounded in the earth itself, and is given the responsibility to tend and keep.

Summary:

Genesis 2 reminds us that we are not masters of creation but humble creatures of the earth, created “of the ground” to tend and keep the abundant world God has entrusted to our care. Created in God’s image and without shame, we are called to live gratefully and responsibly, recognizing that everyone shares a responsibility to protect, preserve, and care for creation as we look toward God’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

Genesis 2:15

Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Genesis 1-2

Catechism

1.1.1, 3.3.1, 3.3.2

Discussion Questions

Where has God placed you that you can “tend and keep”—cultivating growth, encouraging others, protecting what is valuable, or helping something flourish?

The sermon connects care for creation with rest, generosity, thoughtful consumption, and care for animals. Which of these biblical principles do you find most challenging or meaningful, and why?

Genesis 2 describes relationships between God, humanity, the earth, animals, and one another. What can we learn from this interconnected picture of creation about how our choices affect others?

When you experience shame or feelings of inadequacy, how might remembering that God sees His creation as beautiful, valuable, and worthy reshape the way you see yourself?

What is one practical way you could live more intentionally this week as a steward rather than an owner—of creation, your relationships, your work, or the gifts God has entrusted to you?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR OCT 11

Where are we in the Bible?

The visions in the Book of Revelation reveal Jesus Christ in several profound ways: as the divine Shepherd who cares deeply for the condition of His church, as the righteous Judge who will ultimately punish evil, and as the triumphant King who will establish His kingdom and reign for all eternity.

Chapter 4 opens with a scene in heaven. John is given a vision of God seated upon His throne, surrounded by heavenly beings who worship Him day and night without ceasing. Their worship declares the holiness, majesty, and worthiness of God. Our Bible verse today (4:11) is one of their songs of worship recorded in Revelation.

Chapter 5 continues this scene of heavenly worship, now focusing on the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Angels, elders, and living creatures join together in declaring the worthiness of the Lamb. The worship of heaven therefore moves from the Creator upon the throne in chapter 4 to the Lamb who was slain in chapter 5, revealing that the Father and the Son are both worthy of the worship, glory, honor, and power of all creation.

Summary:

As those created in the image and likeness of God, we are called to recognize His rightful place as Creator and to live in grateful submission to His will. Because everything exists by His will, God alone is worthy to receive glory, power, honor, and worship, and our lives should continually reflect these truths.

NOTE:

"You are worthy... to receive glory and honor and power..." The Greek word *lambano*, translated here as "receive" has a broader meaning. It can mean to take, to take in hand, to seize, to assume, to have in full - giving the connotation that God possesses these attributes. They are His. We do not give them to Him, but rather recognize that He has, in full, glory, honor, and power.

CREATED... to praise

Revelation 4:11

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Revelation 4:1-11

Catechism

1.1.1

Discussion Questions

What does it look like in your everyday life to "make God known" and reflect His glory without simply using words?

What competes with God for first place in your life? What might it look like to intentionally place Him first in that area?

Where might God be inviting you to trust His power and yield more fully to His will rather than trying to control an outcome yourself?

Revelation 4:11 calls us to continually recognize God's worthiness. What is one practice of worship, gratitude, obedience, or service that could help you become more attentive to God's glory, honor, and power this week?

Revelation 4:11 declares that God is worthy to receive "glory and honor and power" because He created all things. How does recognizing God as Creator shape our understanding of who we are and our place in creation?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR OCT 18

CREATED... to wonder and wait

Where are we in the Bible?

Psalm 40 is a psalm of David that combines thanksgiving for God's past deliverance with a renewed prayer for help. David begins by remembering how he waited patiently for the Lord and how God heard him, rescued him, and gave him a new song of praise. In verse 5, David reflects beyond his own experience and recognizes the countless works and thoughts of God toward His people. God's faithfulness cannot be fully measured or recounted because His activity extends far beyond what any one person can see. The psalm then turns toward faithful obedience, emphasizing that devotion to God involves more than outward offerings. Together, these verses invite believers to remember God's past activity and confidently trust His continuing care.

Summary:

God's works in the past give us reason to praise Him today and confidence to trust His promises for the future. This reminds us that His wonders express His will to save and that He continues to preserve and draw us to Himself, even in times of uncertainty and tribulation. In response, the transformed heart sings a new song of praise to a God whose nature and saving work transcend all that the human mind can conceive.

Psalm 40:5

Many, O Lord my God, are Your wonderful works which You have done; and Your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Psalm 40

Catechism

8.2.8, 8.2.11, 12.1.5.1

Discussion Questions

When you look back on your life, what is one situation where you can now recognize that God was present, even if you did not see it clearly at the time?

David describes God as one who "inclined" toward him and heard his cry. What does this image communicate about God's character and His relationship with His people?

Psalm 40 reminds us that remembering God's past faithfulness does not mean that difficulties disappear. How can you hold both realities together: "God has helped me before" and "I am still facing difficulty today"?

What might it look like for you to practice "waiting on God" right now—not simply waiting for circumstances to change, but actively trusting and remaining attentive to His presence?

What is one "new song"—an experience of God's faithfulness, gratitude, or hope—that you could share with someone else to encourage their faith?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR OCT 25

CREATED... for eternal life

Where are we in the Bible?

The 3rd chapter of John begins as a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus. Even though Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night in an effort to conceal his connection with Christ, he quickly expresses his awareness of Christ's significance in verse 3: "...we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him." From there, the conversation centers on what it means to be born again, and highlights the eternal implications of being born of water and the Spirit (3:5).

Some biblical writers consider the final section of the chapter (3:16-21) as a shift from a dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus to a monologue centered on Jesus alone. It opens with one of the most well-known verses in all of Scripture, where the divine intention embodied by Jesus and His mission is summarized, and God's fundamental love for the world is declared.

Summary:

Even though God created us for eternal life, the choice is ultimately ours: we may choose to live eternally with God or without Him, making this freedom both a wonderful and weighty responsibility. Out of His love and mercy, God reaches out to humanity first, giving His most precious gift, Jesus Christ, and opening the path to Himself; whoever accepts Christ in faith and follows Him receives the gift of eternal life, with faith in Him as its condition.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
John 3:1-21

Catechism
9.6-9.6.3

Discussion Questions

How does the broader understanding of God's love expressed in John 3:16 shape the way we view people who may be distant from God?

What might you need to "give up"—such as pride, recognition, comfort, or control—in order to follow Christ more faithfully?

How is your faith in Jesus being expressed through your actions, relationships, and care for others?

John 3:16 reminds us that God's desire is that people experience life rather than perish. Who in your life might need to experience God's love through your words, actions, or presence?

How do God's love, gift, and mercy work together in John 3:16? What does each reveal about God's character?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR OCT 21/22

Where are we in the Bible?

If we start at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, everything that we would have read so far leads us to expect the conclusion that following Jesus is going to be demanding. Jesus' teaching to "enter by the narrow gate" reveals that the way of discipleship is the difficult road. From the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, we know what characterizes this choice; it is a way of life that is extraordinary. This is the life of the Beatitudes; it is the city set on a hill; it is the life of going the second mile, turning the other cheek, love, purity, truthfulness, and meekness. It is a way of life known by its fruits.

The narrow gate and the difficult way are what it means to have an exclusive attachment to Jesus, for He is the only way. But this way is paved with grace, because it is Christ who calls us to it.

The Chief Apostle has taken a pastoral frame of reference for this verse in casting it as an invitation to the nobodies, to those who have lost trust, to the burdened, to the overwhelmed. As preachers, notice that he speaks to the emotion or feeling behind individual situations. As we consider the condition of the souls in our congregations, we should take care not to preach to specific circumstances of life (schooling choices, illnesses, job loss, etc.), but rather directly to the felt emotions of those circumstances. For instance fear, pride, guilt, or grief.

Further, we should not get too caught up in the warnings of the wide gate or false prophets. The Chief Apostle acknowledges the difficulty of the narrow gate, but points to the solidarity of Christ and reassures us, that we are not alone on this difficult path. His message is filled with liberation, hope, and encouragement. We are called to enter the narrow gate, not as a once-in-a-lifetime decision, but rather in moment-by-moment experiences of life. Again and again we make the conscious commitment to Christ, who guides, sustains, and gives us joy on the journey.

Summary:

The Sermon on the Mount leads us to expect that following Jesus will be demanding, and His invitation to "enter by the narrow gate" reveals that discipleship is a difficult yet extraordinary way of life. The narrow gate represents an exclusive attachment to Christ and an invitation to communion with Him, but this difficult way is paved with grace. Christ Himself has walked it before us and continually guides, sustains, and gives us joy as we choose Him moment by moment. No one walks this path alone, and on the other side of the narrow gate are freedom, peace, and eternal life.

CREATED... to choose freedom

Matthew 7:13 (excerpt)

Enter by the narrow gate.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 7:13-14

Catechism

3.4.8.4

Discussion Questions

Jesus describes the way of discipleship as a "narrow gate" and a difficult road. What characteristics of the Sermon on the Mount help us understand what this way of life looks like?

Which of the emotions described in the sermon—feeling insignificant, losing trust, carrying burdens, or facing opposition—might make it difficult for someone to enter or remain on the path of discipleship?

How does knowing that Jesus understands suffering and difficulty affect the way we approach our own struggles?

Following Christ is described as a moment-by-moment commitment rather than simply a once-in-a-lifetime decision. What might it look like to consciously choose Christ in the ordinary decisions and challenges of daily life?

Who might need to hear the message that they **are** wanted by God, loved by Christ, and not walking alone? How could you communicate that to them this week?