

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

Undeserved

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

“Eternal God, as a loving Father, You have heaped on me innumerable blessings; and I have heaped up many sins.” Could not each of us begin our daily prayers with these words? When we pause to recognize the abundance of God’s blessings, we also become more aware that none of them are earned. Every grace we receive is a gift of His love and mercy. This month, we will reflect on the **undeserved** gifts God pours into our lives.

September 6: The focus of our first Sunday is on the sacraments, **acts of God** on an individual. They testify of the work of Jesus Christ in our lives, as we in turn testify of our Savior to the world.

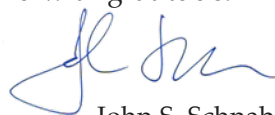
September 13: On the second Sunday, we’ll discover how the first apostles found public and private ways to share the gospel of Christ, and will be encouraged to find our own avenues of sharing the **messages of God**, the good news, in meaningful and relevant ways.

September 20: On the third Sunday, the sermon will expand our understanding of blessing. As we receive **blessings of God**, we are called to live as faithful disciples whose lives reflect His blessing and become instruments through which His grace extends to the world.

September 27: The fourth Sunday will explore Isaiah 40 and what it means to wait on and experience the renewed **strength of God**.

September midweek: The sermon provided for the midweek focuses on the **peace of God**, in contemplation of the International Day of Peace on September 21. Colossians 3 provides a framework for believers to invest in the peace of their community through new life in Christ.

Undeserved might seem negative to some, but additional words from Catherine Parr’s prayer (1512-1548) frame our theme in a different light: *“Shall I fall in desperation? No, I will call upon Christ, the Light of the world, the Fountain of life, the relief of all careful consciences, the Peacemaker between God and man, and the only health and comfort of all true repentant sinners.”* We are undeserving, but our Savior does not leave us in that condition. May we respond with gratitude.



John S. Schnabel

SEPTEMBER 2026

September 6
Undeserved
Acts of God

September 13
Undeserved
Acts of God

September 20
Undeserved
Acts of God

September 27
Undeserved
Acts of God

September midweek
Undeserved
Acts of God

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPT 6

Where are we in the Bible?

1 John is a pastoral letter (epistle) which emphasizes sanctification in the present. In the letter, the author encourages believers to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and to discern truth from false teaching. The writing addresses those who were denying that Jesus truly came in the flesh and questioning His identity as the Son of God. Throughout the letter, the marks of genuine faith are emphasized: believing in Christ, loving one another, and living in obedience to God. In chapter 5, he points to testimony that confirms Jesus as truly human, truly God's Son, and truly the Christ (5:1-12).

Summary:

The triune God testifies that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior, and through His sacrifice He continues to work in our lives as we receive His saving grace through the sacraments - undeserved gifts that lead us toward the fullness of salvation. As the Spirit, the water, and the blood all bear witness to Christ, we are called to respond by living worthy of our calling, remaining faithful to the promises we have made to God, and keeping our hope fixed on His return.

NOTE:

1 John 5:7-8 contains a disputed extra clause that explicitly mentions the Trinity, which is not included in many Bible translations, study Bibles or commentaries. Also called the *Johannine Comma*, the debated clause states - "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*" This text is included in the King James Bible (and NKJV), but is missing from almost all early Greek manuscripts and modern translations. The first known reference is from a 4th-century Latin text.

UNDESERVED Acts of God

1 John 5:8

And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree as one.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

1 John 5:6-13

Catechism

8.1.6, 8.2.20, 8.3.9

Discussion Questions

Why is it important that God Himself testifies about who Jesus is, rather than leaving His identity to human opinion or experience? How does this shape our faith?

How do the sacraments continue to point us to Christ today?

Faith in Christ gives us power to overcome the world. What influence, temptation, or struggle do you most need Christ's help to overcome right now?

What is one practical way you can testify to Jesus this week - not through something dramatic, but through a faithful, everyday act of love, integrity, forgiveness, or service?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPT 13

UNDESERVED Messages of God

Where are we in the Bible?

As the church continued to grow through the preaching of the risen Christ, many signs and wonders were performed by the apostles (Acts 5), who found themselves imprisoned on more than one occasion. Yet each time, they demonstrated remarkable boldness in proclaiming Christ despite the opposition they faced (4:8–13, 5:29–32). Even after being commanded not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (4:18, 5:40), they refused to remain silent. Instead, upon each release, they resumed preaching Christ with unwavering courage.

After their second arrest, trial, beating and release, the apostles responded in a surprising way. Rather than rejoicing because they had escaped imprisonment, they rejoiced because they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name (5:41). This energized them to continue sharing the gospel (5:42).

Summary:

Just as the first apostles found unique ways to share the good news of Christ, we too are called to communicate the gospel in meaningful and relevant ways today. Rooted in the conviction that Jesus Christ - His death, resurrection, and return - is the heart of the gospel, we proclaim Him through both public witness and personal discipleship, ensuring that His message takes root through our teaching, conversations, pastoral care, acts of kindness, and daily lives.

Acts 5:42

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Acts 5

Catechism
1.2.5.2

Discussion Questions

What stands out to you most about the apostles' response after being beaten and threatened (Acts 5:41–42)? Why do you think they were able to rejoice instead of becoming discouraged?

The apostles never stopped teaching that Jesus is the Christ. What is the core of the gospel we are called to share, and why is it important to keep Christ—not ourselves—at the center of our witness?

Where has God placed you to be a witness for Christ right now?

Who is one person God may be inviting you to intentionally invest in "house to house"? What is one simple step you could take to encourage or disciple them this week?

What sometimes keeps you from sharing your faith—fear of rejection, lack of confidence, uncertainty about what to say, or something else? How can the example of the apostles encourage you?

The early church grew through both words and transformed lives. How can our actions reinforce the message we proclaim without drawing attention to ourselves?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPT 20

UNDESERVED Blessings of God

Where are we in the Bible?

The biblical theme of blessing unfolds progressively throughout Scripture, moving from the covenantal promises of the Old Testament to their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ and the hope of the new creation. Deuteronomy 28 establishes the foundational framework by presenting blessings and curses within the context of God's covenant relationship with Israel. Blessing is portrayed as the consequence of faithful obedience to the covenant, emphasizing that life, prosperity, security, and flourishing are experienced through attentive submission to the voice of the Lord. The curses are the consequence of their disobedience, not an activity that God initiates. This covenantal paradigm provides the theological backdrop for understanding the nature of divine blessing throughout the remainder of Scripture.

In the New Testament, Jesus redefines and deepens this understanding of blessing. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–12) shift the emphasis from primarily external and temporal manifestations of blessing to the inner spiritual realities that characterize citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Those who are poor in spirit, mourn, hunger and thirst for righteousness, show mercy, pursue purity of heart, and endure persecution are declared "blessed," demonstrating that true blessedness is rooted in a right relationship with God rather than merely in material prosperity or earthly success. This theological development reveals that blessing is fundamentally Christ-centered and kingdom-oriented.

Summary:

Scripture reveals that God's blessings are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who inaugurates a new era of blessing and transforms the covenant promise into the fullness of life found through faith, obedience, and communion with God. As we receive His gracious blessing and look forward to the day when He returns, we are called to reflect His grace by faithfully pointing others toward the blessings offered in Christ and the hope of sharing in God's glory forever.

Deuteronomy 28:2

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

Catechism

4.6

Discussion Questions

When you think of God's blessings in your own life, what comes to mind first?

How does Deuteronomy 28 describe the relationship between blessing and obedience?

How does the New Testament deepen or reshape our understanding of what it means to be blessed?

Jesus' Beatitudes redefine blessing in surprising ways. Which Beatitude challenges your understanding of blessing the most, and why?

True blessing is anything God uses to draw us closer to Himself. How does this perspective change the way we view seasons of suffering, disappointment, or unanswered prayers?

Who in your life could experience God's blessing through you this week?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPT 27

Where are we in the Bible?

Isaiah 40 marks a turning point in the book of Isaiah. After chapters of warning and judgment, it begins with divine consolation: “*Comfort, comfort my people*” (40:1). God declares that He has not abandoned His covenant people, and their suffering will not have the final word.

The chapter magnifies the majesty of God. He is the Creator who measures the waters in His hand, numbers the stars, and governs nations as dust on the scales (40:12-17). Yet this same sovereign Lord is also tender: He gathers the flock like a shepherd and carries the lambs in His arms (40:11).

Isaiah 40 closes by confronting Israel’s fear that God has forgotten them: “*Have you not known? Have you not heard?*” (40:28). The Lord is everlasting, unwearied, and infinite in understanding. Therefore, His people need not despair. God, who never grows tired, is able to sustain those who do.

Summary:

Weariness is real, but it is not final. Our limitations are not the measure of God’s ability. As we patiently wait on the Lord in trust, we discover that He has never lost sight of us and continually renews our strength - lifting us above trials, sustaining us through every season, and giving us grace for today, hope for tomorrow, and faithfulness for each step of the journey.

UNDESERVED Strength of God

Isaiah 40:31

But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Isaiah 40

Catechism
3.1.4

Discussion Questions

The Israelites believed that God had forgotten them (Isaiah 40:27). Why do people sometimes feel this way, and how does Isaiah respond to that fear?

How would you describe the difference between waiting faithfully and simply waiting for circumstances to change?

Isaiah uses three images—soaring like eagles, running without growing weary, and walking without fainting. What do these images teach us about the different ways God strengthens His people?

Which reminder do you most need today: that God sees you, knows you, or cares for you?

Where are you currently experiencing weariness? How might God be inviting you to rely on His strength rather than your own?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR SEPT 23/24

Where are we in the Bible?

Colossians gives present-day readers a glimpse into the life of the first-century church. The letter introduces the people who made up the Christian community, the challenges they faced, and the questions they wrestled with. It also shows how believers were called to live out their faith in the world and in their daily lives.

Throughout Colossians, faith is shown through the way believers live. Chapter 3 begins with the call to “seek those things which are above” (3:1–4), urging believers to live according to their new life in Christ. This new way of life is seen in the virtues they practice and in how they treat one another within the community (3:5–15). Their conduct reflects their identity as those who have been raised with Christ and now belong to Him. Colossians 3 teaches that this new life, grounded in baptism and union with Christ, is marked by peace, which should shape the life of the entire congregation.

Summary:

In Colossians 3:1–15, Paul reminds believers that because they have been raised to new life in Christ, they are called to put away their old way of living, put on Christlike character, and let their new identity be seen in loving relationships, forgiveness, unity, and the peace of Christ. As Christ’s peace rules our hearts and shapes the life of the whole church, we are moved to pursue what promotes peace, live with gratitude for all God has given us, and truly act like the new people He has made us to be.

NOTE:

On 21 September, the world marks the International Day of Peace. Today, amidst staggering volatility, the search for peace feels overwhelming—but it has never been more urgent. Peace is more than the absence of war; it is the foundation necessary to collectively tackle humanity's challenges. It is the lived experience of safety, dignity, opportunities and cooperation in our daily lives.

Under the theme *Invest in Peace: For Everyone, Everywhere, Every Day*, this year's Day of Peace honours the 'everyday architects of peace' - people driving local action, laying the groundwork for stability, and building a lasting peace from the ground up.

UNDESERVED Peace of God

Colossians 3:15

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Colossians 3:1-15

Catechism
6.2.3.1

Discussion Questions

What does it mean to "put on your new life" and "put away your old life"?

Verse 15 says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts." How is Christ's peace different from the peace the world offers? What does it mean for His peace to "rule" in our hearts and in the church?

Love is described as "the bond of perfection." How does love hold together all the other Christian virtues, especially during times of disagreement or conflict?

Which Christlike quality listed in verses 12–15 do you most want the Holy Spirit to strengthen in your life? Why?

If someone observed your life this week, what evidence would they see that you are living out your new identity in Christ rather than your old way of life?