

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Kingdom

How does each sermon connect to this theme?

According to the Synoptic Gospels, proclamation of **The Kingdom** of God, in word and deed, was central to Jesus' teaching. As evident in the Gospels, the kingdom originates with God, it draws its character from God, and it precedes any human response to it, even though its presence invites (or demands) a response. In the time of Jesus, it was difficult for the Jewish people to understand how God's kingdom could be present while they were living under foreign rule, yet the Hebrew Bible attests to the understanding of God's rule as everlasting and real even when it was not self-evident. Jesus built on this understanding found in Jewish Scripture: God's kingdom is God's activity - creating, providing, leading, sending, calling, liberating, caring; God's kingdom is God's domain - inclusive of the whole cosmos; God's kingdom evokes a response from its subjects; and God's kingdom is already-present and will be revealed in its completeness in the future. God's rule is revealed through Jesus Christ, and the nature of God's kingdom is exhibited through Jesus' engagement and interactions with people and His teachings.

On the first Sunday (Service for the Departed), we will come to understand the wonderful promise that **the kingdom is for sinners**; though sinfulness came through Adam to all, the gift of grace came through Jesus Christ all the more.

On the second Sunday, through the question of the Pharisees, we will discover that **the kingdom is near**, and perceive its evidence. On the third Sunday, we will experience **the kingdom is peace** through members who edify one another and walk in the Spirit. On the last Sunday of June, **the kingdom is proclaimed** along with our responsibility to live as witnesses and proclaimers of it.

The midweek service will focus on how **the kingdom is grace** - the sufficiency of "the God of all grace" in our suffering and struggle with the evil one.

JULY 2025

July 6

The Kingdom
is for sinners

July 13

The Kingdom
is near

July 20

The Kingdom
is peace

July 27

The Kingdom
is proclaimed

July midweek

The Kingdom
is grace

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 6

THE KINGDOM is for sinners

Where are we in the Bible?

In the first five chapters of Romans, Paul walks through the dimensions of sin and grace. In chapter 1, he exposes the wickedness of the Gentiles. Then in chapter 2, Paul utilizes a new format where he speaks with an imaginary conversation partner (an interlocutor), which allows the audience to learn from their discussion. Perhaps some people thought after listening to chapter 1 that they were doing good, but Paul chides, “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man (the conversation partner), whoever you are who judge... you condemn yourself” (2:1). He reminds them that “there is no partiality with God” (2:11).

In chapter 3, Paul further emphasizes the point that “both Jews and Greeks... are all under sin” (3:9). In the biblical context the grouping of “Jews and Greeks” or “Jews and Gentiles” refers to all people. Paul furthers this argument in chapter 5 where he reaches back to Adam’s disobedience in the garden of Eden to make it very clear that sin effects all of humanity. But there is hope. “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (5:17 NRSVUE). The gift of grace outweighs the sin.

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

1. The universality of sin
2. The universality of grace
3. Characteristics of the gift of grace
4. Jesus Christ reaches out to both the living and the dead

Service for the Departed

Romans 3:22-23 (excerpt)

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Romans 3, 5:12-21

Catechism

4.1, 4.2, 4.4

Discussion Questions

Why is understanding the pervasiveness of sin key to realizing the magnitude of God's grace?

Discuss the characteristics of God's grace.

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

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

How is God's kingdom for sinners?

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 13

THE KINGDOM **is near**

Where are we in the Bible?

In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus is questioned by the Pharisees about when the kingdom of God will come. The Pharisees were one of possibly four Jewish sects in the first century (the others being the Essenes, Sadducees, and Zealots). Each of these groups had different views of the Torah (the first four books of the Bible), different eschatological views (beliefs about the future), and possibly different views about the Messiah. Jesus' teachings align quite closely with those of the Pharisees, whose main role was to explain to the people how to apply God's commands to their lives. Even within the Pharisaic group there were differing opinions and subgroups, so debate and questions about belief and practice were a normal part of synagogue practice and conversation between Jewish leaders. The question that the Pharisees ask Jesus is a really important one. Asking questions was not their downfall; even the disciples had questions. Most of the Pharisees did not acknowledge God's authority in Jesus Christ, which is why they didn't experience the kingdom in Him (they wanted to observe it first).

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

1. The kingdom of God is experienced wherever Jesus Christ is present.
2. When we love Jesus Christ and obey His word, the kingdom of God lives within us.
3. If we seek the kingdom of God first, He will complete His work.

Luke 17:20-21

Now when he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
Luke 17:1-37

Catechism
3.4.8.4, 6.2.3.4

Discussion Questions

What has your understanding of Pharisees been? Can you strive to see them from a new perspective?

How would you describe the kingdom of God? Where is it?

Discuss markers or evidence of God's kingdom being within a person.

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

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 20

THE KINGDOM **is peace**

Where are we in the Bible?

The 9th chapter of Acts highlights the story of Saul's conversion from a committed persecutor of Christians to a powerful preacher of Christ. In a short amount of time, much transpires: Saul is awakened to his sin by the appearance of the risen Christ, and loses his sight (verses 3-9); led into the city, a disciple named Ananias baptizes Saul, per instructions from the Lord (verses 10-19); after regaining his sight, Saul begins preaching Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues, causing both amazement and confusion (verse 20-22); Saul is persecuted in Damascus, and narrowly escapes with his life (verses 23-25); when he later arrives in Jerusalem, Barnabas intercedes on Paul's behalf and states Paul's case before the apostles, and Paul is admitted into their circle (verses 26-30).

Paul's conversion marks a shift in the early church's trajectory—from widespread persecution to a season of peace and edification. During this time, the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria experiences growth and spiritual strengthening.

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

1. The activity of the Holy Spirit creates opportunities for growth and renewal in the congregations.
2. The kingdom of God develops by promoting faith.
3. The fear of the Lord is a basic attitude that brings us into a special relationship with God.
4. The Holy Spirit is the driving force in the congregation who brings about internal and external development.

Acts 9:31

Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Acts 9:1-31

Catechism

6.2.3.4, 5.3.2.3

Discussion Questions

What is the difference between a cease of conflict and divine peace?

How can we edify one another?

Discuss what it means to fear the Lord. What steps can we take to "walk in the fear of the Lord"?

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

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

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR JULY 27

THE KINGDOM is proclaimed

Where are we in the Bible?

The passage in Matthew 10:7 is situated within Jesus' commissioning of His twelve Apostles. After selecting them (Matthew 10:1–3), He sends them out with specific instructions, directing them to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" — those who had strayed from God's covenant. The central message they are to proclaim is both simple and profound: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" ("The kingdom of God has come near" NIV). This moment marks a critical juncture in Jesus' ministry. It is the formal beginning of the apostolic mission and a turning point in salvation history, where the long-awaited kingdom of God is not only announced but inaugurated through Christ Himself.

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

1. Jesus Christ is the King sent by God
2. The kingdom of God is accessible now
3. Living as witnesses of the kingdom

Matthew 10:7

And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture

Matthew 10: 1-15

Catechism

4.5.2

Introduction - 1 Professions of the New Testament

Discussion Questions

Discuss the "proof" of Jesus' kingship during His earthly existence.

What is necessary to enter the kingdom?

What are the responsibilities of being sent out as a witness of the kingdom? What should we do?

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

SERMON SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

MIDWEEK SERVICE BASED ON JULY 9/10 DSG

THE KINGDOM **is grace**

Where are we in the Bible?

In 1 Peter 5:8-11, the Apostle Peter offers powerful encouragement to believers facing the devil, persecution, and hardship. Written during a time of intense suffering - likely under Emperor Domitian's rule in the late 80s AD - this letter addresses Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These believers were experiencing social rejection, slander, and political hostility because of their faith and refusal to worship the emperor. Peter reminds them that their suffering is temporary and purposeful. The "God of all grace" who has called them to eternal glory in Christ will, after their trials, "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle" them. This progression highlights spiritual growth through suffering - a refining process central to the Christian journey. The cultural context of Roman opposition and pagan misunderstanding deepens the verse's meaning: believers are not forgotten but being shaped for eternal significance. Peter echoes Christ's own pattern of suffering before exaltation, offering assurance that God's grace sustains and completes His work in them.

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

1. The works of the devil
2. The sufficiency of God's grace
3. The purpose of suffering

1 Peter 5:10

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

FOUNDATIONAL READINGS:

Scripture
1 Peter 5:8-11

Catechism
3.1.7

Discussion Questions

How have you experienced purpose in suffering?

What are your thoughts on the effects of evil in this world? In your life?

How does the divine title "the God of all grace" strike you? Do you believe God's grace is sufficient?

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