DIVINE SERVICE STUDY 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
Messages of God

September 20
Undeserved
Blessings of God

September 27
Undeserved
Strength of God

September midweek
Undeserved
Peace of God

page left blank intentionally

DIVINE SERVICE STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR:

Sept 6, 2026

FIRST SUNDAY

UNDESERVED

Acts of God

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).

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

1. God testifies of Jesus Christ.
2. God's acts testify of Jesus Christ.
3. We testify of Jesus Christ.

Expanding the key themes & relevancy for the life of the believer:

God testifies of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is true God and true man, the eternal Son sent by the Father for humanity's salvation. His identity is not established by human opinion, but by the testimony of the triune God. At Jesus' baptism and again on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Father declared, *"This is My beloved Son"* (Matthew 3:17; 17:5), affirming His divine Sonship and authority. The Holy Spirit also testified by descending upon Jesus at His baptism. Together, the Father and Holy Spirit reveal Jesus Christ as the promised Savior of the world. (See ***God's testimony concerning His Son*** from the DSG). If someone does not believe God regarding who He says Jesus is, Scripture warns that this person has made God a liar (1 John 5:10).

1 John 5:8

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

Foundational Readings:

Scripture
1 John 5:6-13

Catechism
8.1.6, 8.2.20, 8.3.9

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 clauses 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.

God's acts testify of Jesus Christ.

The sacraments are God acting upon us as human beings. Certainly, we prepare ourselves to receive them, though we must understand that it is not our preparation that creates the sacramental act, but rather it is God alone who is acting.

The life and person of Jesus are the foundation of sacraments. Through His perfect sacrifice, Jesus Christ reconciled our broken relationship with God and made salvation accessible. Today, the sacraments continue to testify of Christ through the Spirit (Holy Sealing), water (Holy Baptism), and blood (Holy Communion). When we participate in the sacraments, we testify of Christ! (See ***God's ongoing activity of salvation in the sacraments*** from the DSG)

We testify of Jesus Christ.

Receiving the sacraments has a practical element in our relationship with Christ and others. They allow Christ to work in us and through us, aligning the inner testimony of our lives (our love, motives and priorities) to match the outer testimony (having received the undeserved acts of God). This can be most evident when we:

- *"Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"* (1 John 5:5): In our confirmation vow, we promise to *"…renounce Satan and all his work and ways..."* How can we possibly do such a thing? Our belief faith in Jesus Christ gives us the power to overcome the world, to overcome Satan, and all his influences. This is what the verses promise to us!
- *"These things that I have written to you who believe... that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God"* (1 John 5:13): God has given us the promise of eternal life through His Son, and God always fulfills His promises. The author here knows that we believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Redeemer - this belief makes eternal life a fact; something that we can know, that we can be assured of and continue believing. We already now carry eternal life and, if it develops within us, drives us toward God's mission already today. We begin to see our life differently and aim to live one that God is "well pleased" with. Nothing is outside of commitment to God and we are not surprised when hardships arise.
- *"Walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called"* (Ephesians 4:1). We're called and invited into relationship with Jesus Christ. Additionally, regardless of the situation of life we may find ourselves in, we are called to reflect Him in those spheres and situations. We show this, not by spectacular deeds, but through little acts, every day. Depending on the season, one may ask, "Am I a godly parent?" "Am I a godly neighbor?" "Am I a godly student?" Know that we have been called and the Holy Spirit affirms and reminds us of this calling.

Conclusion: The triune God testifies that Jesus Christ is the promised Savior, and through His sacrifice He continues to work in our lives and believers receive His salvation through the sacraments. These gifts are undeserved acts of God. As such, we respond by walking worthy of our calling, remembering the promise we've made to God, and keeping future return in focus for today.

How can we prepare the congregation for Holy Communion?

Just as God testifies of the Son, we too testify of who He is and what He has done when we celebrate sacraments and verbally respond with "Amen". The word, "Amen," translates as: "So be it!" (Catechism 12.1.7.2.10) and is also an affirmation of agreement. Approach these moments of Holy Communion with a renewed eagerness to affirm that you agree with who Jesus is, and what He has done.

DIVINE SERVICE STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR:

Sept 13, 2026

SECOND SUNDAY

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).

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

1. Calling and Conviction
2. Teaching and Preaching
3. Public and Private

Expanding the key themes & relevancy for the life of the believer:

Calling and Conviction

Nothing could deter the apostles from their calling to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ. They had seen too much, and they had heard too much (4:20). They had been with Jesus, and this was evident (4:13). In addition, they were also accompanied by the Holy Spirit since Pentecost, and His power was on full display through them.

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

We are also called by and for Christ. We see this clearly in the Great Commission, where Jesus commands His disciples to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations…"* (Matthew 28:18-20). How convicted are we in this calling? Can we say, like Peter and John, that we can't help but speak of what we've seen and heard of Christ? After all, we too have experienced much through our relationship with Him, and we are filled with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Calling grows into conviction as we experience faith and live through His relelation in our lives.

Teaching and Preaching

The conviction of the first apostles was made known through their teaching and preaching, and the authority with which they taught and preached. But it was the object of their teaching and preaching - namely Christ and His gospel - that caused thousands at a time to join the church (Acts 2:41, 4:4, 4:14). He became the object of their faith. Christ is also the object of *our* faith! His gospel is the good news of salvation - the certainty that He died for our sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will return in glory. It's not a theory, but a message of life that touches and transforms us and gives us hope and renewed perspective (from DSG).

We, too, are called to proclaim the gospel. When we hear the preached word of God with faith, it compels us to profess and change. As we grow in our understanding of Christ, we are to help others know Him more fully through our teaching and encouragement. At the same time, our transformed lives serve as a living testimony to the power of the gospel, without judgment. This makes visible the work that Christ has accomplished in us without centering ourselves.

Public and Private

So, where should we - in response to our calling, and with conviction - proclaim Christ? The answer is provided in our Bible text: *"in the temple, and in every house."* The first apostles did not live out their faith in one fixed place or according to a single pattern. Their witness unfolded in a dual approach: with public proclamation and, at the same time, in personal investment made privately. This is how the gospel spread into every aspect of peoples' lives.

We are also called to share the gospel in both public settings and privately, from house to house. First and foremost, the public proclamation refers to the congregation that gathers in church for God's word and sacrament. Here we publicly share and confess that we believe in Christ, and strive to align our lives with His teachings. Our witness, however, should not stop there. There is no hidden Christianity. We should be speaking of Christ and reflecting His light in our communities, at our workplaces, and in any public setting where there's an opportunity to make Christ known, regardless of whether those who hear us come to our Church.

In addition, we should be inspired to share Christ "from house to house." These are settings where we can personally invest in others in a more intimate nature, in other words, intentional discipleship. God places us in specific places to reach specific people. Gathering with one or two in our homes, within our family circles, with a work or school colleague, at a coffee shop, and especially in small groups, is the most authentic way we can imitate Christ and His relationship with His disciples.

Conclusion: Just as the first apostles found unique ways to share the good news of Christ, we too are to find our own avenues of sharing His good news in meaningful and relevant ways today. In both public and private settings, and through conversations, pastoral care, acts of kindness, and social engagement, we can ensure that the gospel not only has its place in our own lives, but also that it takes root in the lives of those around us.

How can we prepare the congregation for Holy Communion?

Karl Barth summarized the gospel as: *"Jesus Christ is the grace of God."* Jesus Christ is the message of God that we do not deserve. What God accomplished through His incarnation, life, death, and resurrection for us - reconciliation, forgiveness, and new life - will never stop being "good news." We don't deserve these gifts, and our response can only be to receive them, *to receive Him*, with faith, gratitude, and to live shaped by the gospel and find every way to share it with others.

DIVINE SERVICE STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR:

Sept 20, 2026

THIRD SUNDAY

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.

What blessing is not:

For many of us, our understanding of blessing has been shaped by a transactional way of thinking: *if I give to God, God will give to me.* We have often assumed that if we serve the Church, remain faithful, offer financially, or perform certain acts of obedience, then God will respond by blessing us with health, prosperity, happiness, relief from hardship, or favorable circumstances. In this way of thinking, blessing becomes something we can initiate, barter, or earn through our actions.

Scripture presents a very different understanding (Ephesians 2:8-9) . Our greatest blessing has already been given to us through the grace

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

of Jesus Christ. In Him, we have received forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and the sure hope of eternal life. These blessings are gifts of grace, not rewards for our actions *(Holy Communion preparation expounding on these "undeserved blessings")*. From this perspective, blessing is not primarily measured by temporary happiness, material prosperity, or relief from life's difficulties. Rather, true blessing is anything God sovereignly uses to draw us into a deeper relationship with Himself. Whether through seasons of abundance or seasons of suffering, God's purpose is the same: to bring His people closer to Himself until He sends His Son for us.

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

1. Blessing and obedience
2. A new era of blessing begins
3. Blessed in order to be a blessing

Expanding the key themes & relevancy for the life of the believer:

Blessing and obedience

Deuteronomy 28 connects blessing with obedience to the voice of the Lord. The emphasis is not on earning God's favor, but on responding to His grace with faithful living. Hearing God's voice means aligning one's life with His word. The blessings described include protection, peace, success, and a future, showing that God desires the spiritual well-being of His people.

- Obedience becomes a practical expression of faith, shaping decisions, relationships, and daily conduct.
- We can live with confidence that God's blessings are rooted in His grace and loving sovereignty.

A new era of blessing begins

Jesus broadens the concept of blessing beyond material or earthly measures. In the Beatitudes, blessing is linked with God's favor toward those who are humble, dependent on Him, and allow Him to shape their character. Through His sacrifice on the cross, Jesus removes the curse of sin and reveals the fullness of blessing in eternal life and fellowship with God.

- We learn to evaluate blessing not primarily by material success, comfort, or social status.
- Blessing is still linked to obedience, expanded by the teachings of Christ. Spiritual qualities such as humility, faith, generosity, and faithfulness become marks of a blessed life.

Blessed in order to be a blessing

The principle from Genesis 12:2 shows that God's blessings are given with an outward purpose. Believers are not called to keep blessing to themselves, but to become channels of blessing for others. This is expressed in the life of the Church through preaching, sacraments, prayer, and the trinitarian blessing.

- We are called to share God's blessing through acts of love, service, and witness.
- Our life gains a missional purpose: to point others toward the opportunities for blessing found in Christ and His church.
- The trinitarian blessing is power granted by God to go forth and experience His love, grace, and activity in our lives.

Conclusion: Scripture reveals that God's blessings are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who transforms the covenant promise of blessing into the fullness of life found through faith, obedience, and communion with God. As we receive God's gracious blessing in Christ, we are called to live as faithful disciples whose lives both reflect His blessing and become instruments through which His grace is extended to the world.

DIVINE SERVICE STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR:

Sept. 27, 2026

FOURTH SUNDAY

UNDESERVED

Strength of God

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.

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

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

1. God has not lost sight of you
2. What it means to wait on the Lord
3. Renewed strength for today

Expanding the key themes & relevancy for the life of the believer:

God has not lost sight of you

(See in ***Introduction*** from DSG). The people of Israel are struggling in hardship and weariness and also the mistaken belief that God is absent. They say: *"My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God"* (40:27). Many still feel that they are "passed over" in the eyes of God today.

Yet, into this discouragement, the prophet speaks words of profound hope: *"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength"* (40:28-29). Isaiah reminds us of three vital truths to combat our despair:

- **Remember Who watches over <u>you</u>** - God is omnificent, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent. *Who can we liken Him to? Who is His equal?* (40:25). There is no one like Him. The words of chapter 40 make this clear in enumerating all that God has created and done. Underline each description of God in the chapter and let it bolster your trust in Him.
- **Remember that He knows <u>you</u>** - *"His understanding is unsearchable"* (40:28). There is nothing God does not know, nothing that is hidden from His gaze. He knows what is in your heart.
- **Remember that He cares for <u>you</u>** - *"He gives power to the weak"* and strength to those with no might (40:29). He cares about us enough to not only see and know what we need, but to then act on it. God is our great Provider.

What it means to wait on the Lord

(See relevant section from the DSG). To wait on the Lord means:

- To rest in His wisdom, even when we do not understand His timing.
- To trust His character, even when our emotions are unsteady.
- To trust in His promises, even when answers seem delayed.
- To expect and know that He is working, even when unseen.

Waiting is difficult because it requires surrender. Yet waiting on God is never wasted time. It is often the place where strength is renewed.

Renewed strength for today

Isaiah does not say that God merely gives a temporary boost of energy. He says that He renews our strength - our weakness exchanged for His sufficiency, our exhaustion for His sustaining grace.

Many today need this renewal:

- For the overworked: God gives strength when responsibilities feel endless.
- For the discouraged: God restores hope when progress seems slow.
- For the caregivers and parents: God gives grace for hidden labor and daily sacrifice.
- For the grieving: God upholds those carrying sorrow quietly.
- For the anxious: God grants steadiness when the future feels uncertain.
- For the faithful servant: God strengthens those who continue doing good without recognition.

His strength does not remove burdens immediately, but it enables us to bear them with peace and perseverance. (See DSG for <u>Isaiah's three images of a renewed life</u> - 40:31).

Conclusion: Weariness is real, but it is not final. Our limitations are not the measure of God's ability. If we turn to Him, wait on Him, and trust Him, He will renew what exhaustion has diminished. He still gives strength for today, hope for tomorrow, and grace for every step along the way.

DIVINE SERVICE STUDY GUIDE

BASED ON THE DIVINE SERVICE GUIDE FOR:

September 23/24

MIDWEEK SERVICE

UNDESERVED
Peace of God

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.

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

1. Put on your new life (3:1-4)
2. Put away your old life (3:5-11)
3. Act like it! (3:12-15)

Expanding the key themes & relevancy for the life of the believer:

Put on your new life (3:1-4)

Colossians 3 begins with the truth of baptism: through Christ, you have been raised to new life. Because of this, Paul calls believers to "seek the things above" and "set your minds on things above." This means living with a new focus and a new way of thinking shaped by Christ. The "things of the earth" represent values and priorities

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

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.

that ignore the new reality of His life, death, and resurrection. Since we have been given new life in Christ, our attitudes and actions should reflect that new reality. The residual effect of living harmoniously with God's will, is God's peace. We flourish in this peace the more as we align ourselves with the working of His kingdom.

Put away your old life (3:5-11)

In these verses (3:5-10), Paul lists attitudes and behaviors that believers are called to leave behind. This change is so complete that he describes it as "putting to death" the old way of life. Instead, we are continually being renewed to become more like Christ. Paul also reminds us that our identity in Christ is greater than any ethnic, cultural, social, or religious differences (3:11). In Him, we are one.

Act like it! (3:12-15)

Because we have been raised to new life in Christ and have put away our old life, Paul calls us to live in a way that reflects our new identity. These verses show what life in Christ looks like in practice. They teach us how to invest in relationships, build a healthy community of believers, and pursue the peace that Christ gives. As God's chosen, holy, and beloved people, we are called to live differently from the world around us.

- Verse 12: *Put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering...* - These are not simply good character traits—they are the qualities of Christ Himself. We are called to treat others with heartfelt compassion, genuine kindness, humility that puts others first, gentleness that accepts correction, and patience that remains gracious even in difficult situations..
- Verse 13: *...bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.* - Paul moves from attitudes to actions. Believers are to bear with one another and forgive one another, just as Christ has forgiven us. Even when disagreements or conflict arise, we are called to respond with grace rather than resentment. This instruction was given to a church experiencing real tensions, reminding us that forgiveness and reconciliation are essential marks of Christian community
- Verse 14: *But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection*. - Above all these virtues, Paul says to put on love. Love is the bond that holds every other Christian virtue together and enables them. Without love, the rest lose their purpose. Love unites believers and strengthens the church.
- Verse 15: *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body...* - Christ's peace is unlike the peace offered by the world. While earthly kingdoms often achieve peace through power, force, and oppression, Christ brings peace through reconciliation with God. His victory over sin and the powers opposed to God's will creates a new reality of peace (Colossians 1:13, 20; 2:15). This peace has two dimensions: an inner peace that comes from knowing we belong to God, and a shared peace that shapes our relationships with one another. Because our identity is found in Christ rather than in social, cultural, or ethnic distinctions (3:11), we are called to live together, unified in one body. This is what it means to set our minds on things above and to live out the new life Christ has given us.

Conclusion: In Colossians 3:1–15, Paul reminds believers that because they have been raised to new life in Christ, they are called to leave behind their old way of living and reflect their new identity through Christlike character, loving relationships, forgiveness, unity, and the peace of Christ.

How can we prepare the congregation for Holy Communion?

Our Bible verse ends with the Greek word *eucharistos*, meaning "be thankful." It is closely related to the word *Eucharist*, the sacrament of Holy Communion. Contemplation of Christ's sacrifice leads to thanksgiving. Through His sacrifice, we receive a new identity, forgiveness, and the peace that comes from being reconciled to God. Christ has set us free from the powers that once held us captive, and the fitting response is to live our new life with grateful hearts.