

Seek First the King and His Character **II Peter 1:2-7; I Corinthians 6:9-11; Romans 8:29**

Let me get my greeting, all of you. Time of worship together today. We are glad to have you if you're visitor here today. If you're not a regular at this church, you are hearing about the theme of the year 2025, which is **Seek first the Kingdom**, which includes seeking first the king. And when we seek first the king, we seek him in prayer. And we also seek his character, his godliness. So that's our theme. Today. We're going to look at, in a way, the whole Bible and what the whole Bible has to say about godly character, Holy character, virtue, if you will, that people seek and sometimes don't seek. But if we seek first the Kingdom, that's our theme of the year. We want to seek first the King. We're going to look at secular concepts, concepts out in the culture, which many of you probably have embraced to some degree, that are out there that are not in line with the Bible. And we're to look at what the Bible has to say about being like God. That's the essence of a godly character. I'll say it a different way. 15, 18 years ago, a lot of people walked around Christians with double sided bracelets that said WWJD (what would Jesus Do?) and some people were very enamored, and a lot of people made fun of it. They said, it's naive, it's moralistic. I want to say, I think there's a lot more truth to it than maybe people who are critical would acknowledge. But I'll adjust it a little bit. Suede could be WIGL "wiggle." *What is God like?* And if we know what God is like, then we'll know what it means to seek the Lord and seek his character. So listen to God's Word as I read it to you from three passages from Second Peter chapter one, first Corinthians six, Romans eight. And we're really serving the whole Bible, God's word.

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence. That word means moral excellence, moral virtue by which he has granted us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire for this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness, a steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly reflection with love. And Paul calls us to lay aside sin, saying this, do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor reviled, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God? And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified.

And Paul gives us the vision of what will become one day and where we're moving throughout our lives. Even now, he says, *for those whom God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.* That's you and me.

Let's pray for a moment.

Lord, give us not only ears to hear. Give us a desire to seek your moral excellence, to know you, to know what you're like, to partake in your divine nature, your beautiful

character. Lord, help us to be who we are. You washed us. You sanctified us. Now you're making us like Christ. Give us a desire for that.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen. And you may be seated.

At the first service. I hesitated to say it, but I actually have eight short points about what secular culture says about virtue today. So if you like the numbers I've given to you here at the second service, number one, secular people have given up to a large extent any quest for moral virtue. I would say it this way.

Virtue has fallen on hard times in years past, people used to say, you know, good man, good woman controls her desires, controls themselves, exercises the self-control that Peter described here we rein in our anger and our selfish desires. But today the goal is actually to have enough money, power, and prestige to indulge every desire you have. Christopher Lasch, a man who became a Christian late in life after enormous worldly success, said it this way people assume that psychic health and personal liberation are synonymous with an absence of internal restraints or inhibitions.

So don't even seek virtue at all. That's one other people. Number two actually are wading into the idea that you don't even need to seek to be good at all. New York Times in 2023. On one day in the fall of 2023, published two articles repudiating the idea that it's worthwhile to try to be good. The first time was called I Don't need to Be a Good Person and You Don't Either. The second one was titled The Virtues of Being Bad. The first one, you don't need to be a good person, said, listen to your darkest desires and worst instincts and you'll have a better life. The second one said, through 16 different writers, we're going to confess our crimes. And they started very small. It started with eating junk food. And then and then people said, well, we're going to buy things from retailers that we think are corrupt and shouldn't be supported because we just like it so much that those are minor offenses. But then a 16 different New York time writers continued. They confessed that they lie to strangers in New York City to deliberately mislead them and send them the wrong place.

And they practice shoplifting even though they don't need money and they sleep with their friends at random just because it's transgressive. That's number two. Number three, we have advice columnists, advice columnist whom I do read. So I find out what secular people are saying have very few moral rules. Don't break your promises to people you like. Don't cheat on your spouse.

Don't exploit a power differential over someone you have power. They don't. Those are the rules. And then be happy. And if someone makes you unhappy, by all means cut them off. That's what you read over and over again in number three, rejection of virtue A for you says, you know it's actually better to appear to be virtuous than to be virtuous.

This idea was actually first stated 2300 years ago by a man named Glaucon, who advocated in front of Socrates. And Plato said, you know, the main thing is not to be good is to look good, and that people think well of you. And the truth of the matter is,

there are people who advocate that very point today. If you're a professional, by all means do pro bono work.

So people think well of you. If you're in a drinking club, do some public service so people don't think you're just in a drinking club. It's important to look good more than to be good. Number five, we have psychologists who talk about virtue fatigue. Have you heard of decision fatigue? If you have to make ten decisions in one day, you're going to start making bad decisions and give up.

By the end of the day, we have only so much energy to make good decisions. Virtue fatigue says. We have only so much ability to be good. And if you try too hard to be good, you're just going to give up and explode. So just indulge yourself and do the wrong thing. Sometimes you'll have more inner peace that that's actually a very old idea too.

You may know that in the Middle Ages, there were many societies that had a day of carnival when anybody could do anything with impunity, and the idea was, there's so much pressure. Try to be good, let people blow off steam and do evil for a day. Number six people are skeptical when I say, you know, it kind of makes sense that we talk about virtue today.

How predictable is that in a culture that is consumed with achievement and self-development and self-image, that people would start looking at virtue because you know, it's a little fitness program for the body and a little fitness program for the soul. And after I go through my Virtue Fitness program, I'll be a better person. I can feel I can admire myself, even as I can admire my hair, my clothes, or my achievements.

I want to admire how good I am, how generous and kind I am. And really, it's just self-promotion. A seventh down is the way I say it, the neo-Marxist doubt about virtue. And it goes like this when anybody gives you a moral standard, the first thing you should do is ask, what are they gaining by putting that standard forward?

You know, anybody who's in charge is going to come up with an ideology that justifies their position in power. So, for example, long time ago, Kings came up with a theory called the divine right of kings. All kings are appointed by God. So you should submit to me. You see how self-serving that is? Not only that, but capitalism.

That's why it's neo-Marxist. Capitalism says, you know, the market economy, the capitalist system works best. And who's advocating that? But the people who have already accumulated capital and are gaining from the system. So be skeptical of everybody. And finally, number eight, even Christians are getting doubtful about any desire to seek real virtue or godly character. And they doubt it in a couple of ways.

The first way they do it is they say, you know, Christian life isn't about character, just about God who gives us commands. And we should just do what God says. Rather doesn't talk about virtue that much or character that much, which is false, by the way it

does. The Bible has lots and lots of rules and just follow the rules and you'll be a good person.

Don't talk about character, just do the right thing. And finally, there's a group. And they're not wrong entirely by any means that says the quest for moral excellence, the quest for character can lead to pride, and pride can lead us away from God. Martin Luther said it this way when we pursue virtue, we look at little incremental steps to become a better person.

And that obscures the enormous leap from sinners saved by grace and turning to God. Now, there's truth in that. If you focus too much on my growth as a person, you can forget how desperately sinful we are and how much we need the grace of Christ. In fact, if you ask who are the greatest opponents of Jesus in his ministry, it was actually people who thought they were really virtuous.

They're known as the Pharisees, and they scorned Jesus because they didn't follow their rules. One person, one Christian wrote a poem about this, and I'm just going to quote the end of the poem. He said this I pray incessantly for the conversion of the prodigal son's brother. Ever in my ear rings the dreaded warning. This one the prodigal has awoken from his life of sin.

When will the other awakened from his life of virtue? And so it's true. There is a kind of a quest for goodness or virtue that can be terribly destructive. There's an old movie. It won a bunch of awards about 40 years ago called Amadeus. It's named after Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, who was maybe certainly one of the greatest composers of all time. And he had a rival. His name was Salieri. It's a fictionalized account, but it imagines that Salieri, who was a composer and a respected composer at the same time, is consumed by envy of Mozart and his skills because, as the movie tells the story and it was a play first, as the movie tells the story, Salieri was just perceptive enough to know the magnitude of Mozart's genius, and he was just honest enough to admit that his own work was far inferior, and he was just mean enough to hate Mozart for it. But he didn't just hate Mozart, he was actually angry at God. In a crucial a crucial scene in the movie, he rails against God, despises God for giving talent so much talent to Mozart, who's a superficial, self-indulgent ninny, and giving him a virtuous man, so much less talent. He says, I've never I've never touched a woman. It's true. He never did touch a woman. He certainly hurt women. I'm a good man. I never take anything from anyone. I toil, I work hard, I even pray that you would give me favor, Lord. And you don't. And I hate you. Now, that's a kind of virtue. Imagine virtue that takes somebody away from God. So what does the Bible have to say?

Well, back to Second Peter, chapter one, verses 3 to 7. God has given us everything that pertains to life, eternal life, salvation, and to godliness. That is to say, to be more like God. And how do we gain that? We gain that through the verse. Verse three says, through knowledge of him and a vision of I'm paraphrasing now his own moral excellence, his glory and his excellence.

And as you believe in him and behold his excellence you can become. Verse four says, partakers of his divine glory, his divine nature become more and more like God. And then he specifies the way we become more like God. We have self-control and steadfastness and brotherly affection to people that are near us, and also love to goes out to anybody, even to our enemies.

So God's character, this is what Peter is saying. God's character is the essence of virtue. And if we know God and love God, he's going to transform us so that we partake of his nature, partake of his moral nature. Now, this is not just a quest that we pursue. You know, I'm going to try to become more and more like God.

You become more and more like God as you spend more time with God, spend time in His Word. Reflect on what he does but what it shows about who he is. More about that in a minute. And as you pray and as you weigh yourself against His Word, you can become slowly more and more like the one you spend time with.

If I may illustrate, 20 years ago or more by now, one of my children was nurtured by a young woman who was in seminary and was put in charge of the discipleship of nine, ten and 11 year olds. And after this woman spent a little bit time with my daughter, who was ten at the time, she came up to me and said, Dr Doriani, I knew she was your daughter when she used the term non sequitur correctly again, she was ten years old. Now, who uses Latin terms when they're ten? The answer is somebody who has a parent who uses Latin terms, and they pick up the words. You become like the one you spend time with. As we spend time with God and His word and in prayer and with his people, who also show us what God is like, we become more like him and we become what Paul calls imitators of God.

But Paul describes the excellent moral life. He presents the goal of imitating Christ. Now, no one would have the nerve to stand up in front of the congregation and say, you all ought to imitate Christ, to be more and more like Christ. No one could ever come up with that on their own unless God's Word said so. And because the Word of God says we should aim to imitate, to be like Christ more and more, then I say to you, we should aim to be like.

Christ will also always fall vastly short, but we should aim for it. What does Paul say? He says, be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. We forgive as Christ forgave. He then says, be imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

Love as Christ loved. Philippians chapter two, very well-known passage calls for humility and put the interests of others ahead of your own interests and put their reputation ahead of your own reputation. And why do we do that? Because Christ humbled himself and took the form of a human and put our interests ahead of his own. That's why we put others ahead of ourselves.

We're like Jesus, and you can actually become more like Jesus. It's actually within range. God gives us the grace to do so. Now there's a holism to that, that people back to secular ideas don't always understand or don't believe. For many, many years, people thought that virtues were discrete things, kind of like a candy in a jar or or kinds of chocolate in a bin.

You could choose whatever you wanted. So they thought Greeks and Romans and Middle Ages people thought Christians in religious thought. Well, you know, you can be generous, but also a coward because you can have one, but not the other. Now, what's a coward? A coward, they said, someone who fails to find virtue by their own wisdom and insight.

Specifically, they said virtue is avoiding the two mistakes on either side. So if you're a soldier, one mistake is to be rash and just rush into battle and you'll be killed within ten minutes. And the other mistake is to be a coward, and you'll avoid battle cost, and you'll be ashamed, and you won't help your friends in the war.

Which, by the way, is not an act of generosity. So actually, all the virtues do hang together. If you're with me, you set the steer between the extremes. That's a secular idea. Two. But no, the biblical vision is pursue the character of God. I don't use alliteration here very much at all. In fact, I think it's the first time in my 13 months with you.

So don't hold your breath for the next one. You're ready. This is what it takes to have virtue. You have to have, first of all, a desire for virtue. And then you have to discern what the right path is, what God's will is. You have to want it. You have to want to be like Christ. You have to discern what it means to be like Christ, and you have to do it.

You have to practice it. Now, let me give you an example that, Christians have wrestled with, very intently a long time ago, about 85 years ago. And then they've used it as a sort of a test case for many years about what's the right thing to do. And the question comes from World War two, when the Nazis took over much of Western Europe and were bent upon destroying the Jews, if they possibly could, and people in various places, including eastern France and throughout the Netherlands or the Dutch countries, would hide the Jews.

And the question came up, what do you do if you're hiding Jews trying to get them out of the country? We can't get them out right away. Waiting for transportation. What do you do if you're hiding the Jews and not just come to your door and say, are you hiding any Jews in your house? Well, let's just imagine a community of people that are wrestling with this question.

We got five people or five families that are that are hiding Jews in their home in World War two. So what should we do? And one person says, we'll call him Hans hunt says, you know, the Bible's very clear we should never lie. Don't bear false witness against your neighbor. So it's our job just to tell the truth.

And if God wants to save those people, he's sovereign. And he'll rescue them from the hand of the Nazis. And, Liam says, boy, I'm not sure I agree with that. That's kind of like a death sentence for them. Maria hops up. She says, you know, if we admit regarding Jews and Hannah, the murderers, I just can't do it.

I, I know that, you know, I heard in church that when people ask Jesus a bad question, he would sometimes ignore it and answer a different question. And so maybe we could just say something like, do I look like a hero to you and let them draw the conclusion that I don't look like a hero? And then somebody else speaks up and says, you know, I've searched the scriptures and I've found that when you look at God's law and there's truth in this, when you look at God's law, what you find is preserving life is the most important.

The signal command of all the commands. And what we have to do is think, how can I preserve life? Because you know what can the Old Testament remember when Pharaoh wanted, she says, everyone. Pharaoh wanted to have the midwives kill all the Jewish babies. Remember that? And they lied. They said, oh, they give birth so fast nothing can be done.

And they're commended for that. Or how about Rahab? Remember her? She also lied. She said, oh, the spies went out that way. And they didn't. They were right there. And she's in the in the list of the faithful in Hebrews chapter 11. So she says, I think we're allowed to lie to save a life. And somebody else says, you know, what we need to do is look at the truth holistically.

And the question that the Nazis are asking is not, are you hiding Jews? The question that really asking is, can we kill people because of their ethnicity, because they have the wrong genetic code? Or we're like, well, you give us people so we can kill them. And so we have to look holistically at it and say, no, we are not.

We do not have any people in our house that you can kill. We don't have that. Somebody else says, you know, I got to tell you something. We're not a bunch of liars. And we got to think about results here. And we're actually very honest people. And if we try to lie in this situation will be bad at it, will sweat or faces will flush and the Nazis will know.

And so somebody finally says, okay, I've got it, I've got it. We got to preserve their life and tell the truth. So we have to be kind because God is kind and generous and merciful. So here's what we going to do. We're going to offer them tea when they come. And we're going to say, you know, it's cold out there.

And those are really good chance you are forced to do this. You probably didn't sign up to be in the Army patrolling neighborhoods. Have a seat, take a rest, have a cupcake, have some tea. And maybe this act of kindness will make them not search so hard. Now what's going on here is a desire to do the right thing right. Desire to be godly. Desire to

heed God's ways. That's one. Number two, they understand it's hard to discern sometimes. And so they want to know what to do. But they're going to work hard to figure out the right way. And if I can add one more point, and that is it's a communal affair. You can't just decide on the right thing by yourself sitting still.

We read. We maybe go to articles or books, but we also stay in community and ask each other. I've got a tough problem. Helped me make the right decision. Of course, you're not going to make that decision anymore. We have hard decisions and we make them well. When we stand together. The result of this is that in a time, if you keep on pursuing this in times of stress.

One theologian named David Jones says that the godly, the character virtuous person, is the one who loves the right, hates evil, and can be counted on under stress to do the right thing. We think of ourselves, yeah, I want to do the right thing under stress, and I want to do the right thing when it's easy all the time, I want to do it under stress.

And one of the ways is by searching God's Word, knowing God's character, knowing what you're aiming for, you're aiming for the character of God. Now, a while ago, I said that some people, some Christians, think that virtue is a crazy concept. Just do what God says. But here's what I want to add. God's law does not simply tell us what to do.

It tells us who he is. All of God's commands rest on God's character. Think about it. Take the fourth commandment six days you shall labor. Do all your work. Seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work. You should rest right. God worked six days and rested because God knows there's more to him than his work product.

And what do you accomplish as God works and he sits back. And so we should work and sit back. So when we're not just working machines, we shouldn't be. We're being like God who has a life apart from his work. And if we ask the question, why should we not kill? Well, the best answer is because God is the life giver.

God created this vast universe and created our lives just because he wanted to. God didn't need us. He wasn't lonely or sad or wondering where everybody was. God created a human life, an angel life, and he gives us eternal life because he loves to give life. And that's why we don't kill. We preserve life because God is the life giver.

And if we ask the question, why are we faithful to our marital vows? The answer is because God is faithful to all of his promises. He made promises to Israel, his people, but he also calls Israel and also calls the church his bride. God is loyal to his bride as a lot of you and me, when we violate his law, when we walk away from him.

And so if we are seeking to be like God, we don't just say, oh, I've got to keep my vows. We know that God is a vow keeper and God is a promise keeper. And if we ask the question, why should I tell the truth? That's nice for him. Why should I not bear false witness against my neighbor?

The answer is very simple because God is true and every word he says is true. His word is truth. He is the true God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. That's why we tell the truth. And if we ask why we don't envy and why we don't steal is very simple. God is generous and he gave us all the gifts we need and all the capacities we need to earn a living.

And God has given us what we need. If somebody else has more, we shouldn't envy them because God gave them what he chose to give them. And God in his goodness gives us what we need to live a good life. And so we trust God's generosity and God's good provision. And that's why we don't steal. And that's why we don't covet what our neighbor has.

We're seeking to be more like God. Let me do it a different way. If you look at Jesus teaching in the sermon on the Mount, it starts with something we've called the Beatitudes. You all know about the Beatitudes, right? Blessed are our blessed. Our blessed are the first one is. Blessed are those who mourn. It's blessed to mourn when you see sin and evil and pain and suffering.

It's better to mourn than it is to be indifferent to suffering. Right? It's painful, but it's better. Jesus knew how to mourn. He mourned when his friend Lazarus died, he wept. The Bible says he wept over Jerusalem because of their sins. He wept. He mourned when he looked at the people of Israel who were scattered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus knew how to mourn. He mourned. And we mourn because Jesus mourned. Or how about this one? Jesus said, blessed are the peacemakers. Well, Jesus made peace between God and fallen humanity through the cross, reconciling us to God and he also said to people, when they're in distress, go in peace. When they repented, go in peace and no more.

Jesus gave people peace. He gives peace in Christ eternal peace. He also gives us peace in the here and now. Or how about one more? Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Isn't Jesus merciful? If you ask the question, when Jesus bumped into people on the street, what's the most common thing they said to him? The most common thing is Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us.

Who said that people who are blind people are crippled? People who had a friend who was on the verge of death. Who had a servant on the verge of death. A woman came to Jesus, said, Son of David, have mercy on me, because she was. Thunderstruck as to what to do with her daughter, who's suffering terribly. And it seemed to be demon possession.

Jesus, have mercy on me. Jesus had mercy. We know what mercy is by watching Jesus act. But of course, it's not just that. If we want to be merciful, blessed be the merciful. We want to be mindful that Jesus shows mercy by going to the cross for our

sins. When we fail to be merciful. So again, in all the Christian every aspect of the Christian life, God is constantly saying, this is what I'm like.

These are my laws that reflect who I am obeying my laws. You become more like me when he says in the Beatitudes, blessed are the meek, blessed are the poor. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the merciful. He's saying, that's who I am. I'm inviting you into my interior life. And if you look at if I may use one more, I know I'm covering a lot of ground.

I know that, and I thought about it a lot before I did this to you today. But I remember that one of my mentors 40 years ago gave a sermon in which he covered the entire Bible in 35 minutes so I can cover character in 35 minutes.

If you look at the big issues of life, the great areas of life, and ask, how shall I live a good life? The answer is look to God's character. How do I conduct my marriage? Well, here's a good starting point. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church. If you know how Christ loves the church, how he loves you, then you have a pretty good idea about how to love your wife.

You may have to read the Gospels and meditate on it takes a little time to figure it all out.

It also says, let's talk about this tiny bit tonight as well. It also says Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her. So the goal of loving your wife is not just to make her happy or to make your husband happy, although that is a goal. It's also to make them more holy, and you may have to have a chat as an act of love.

Saying, I'm concerned about something. We need to talk about something that's not harshness, that's love. Because you want them to become a better person. How about parenthood, boys? A lot of questions about parenthood. One of my grandchildren is being potty trained right now. It's exciting. It's a topic for conversation. Every phone call. How's it going? What's the methodology?

And then their question questions about discipline. You know, what do you do when your child is pulling the hair of his or her siblings over and over again? What's what's the proper treatment here or. What's how do you find the space between being a helicopter parent and a free range parent? Well, let me tell you something about parenting.

If you are as a parent, at least roughly like God, our father in heaven, you're going to be a pretty good parent. What does God say about himself as the Lord and Father of Israel? He says, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and fast faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgressions.

But he will by no means clear the guilty. What do you hear? There? I hear mercy, love, steadfast love. God is loving. So parents love your kids. I also hear that he doesn't clear the guilty, the slow to anger which means he does get angry, but he's slow to get angry. So that means he's just. God is loving and just.

And folks, if you're a parent and you just and you're just loving and just you can mess up a lot of things with regard to potty training, if your children know they love you, they also have to know that you're protecting them. So if you have a child is pulling hair, you warn them. You talk to him about it.

You try to teach him, instruct them, eventually say to the siblings, you're going to have to pull your hair back because it's just not fair. It's not just for her to pull your hair over and over again. Something has to happen. We did that once in our house. Worked perfectly. Never pulled any hair again. A good parent is loving and just.

If you're loving and just. You can make a lot of little mistakes because you're being like God. Last one friendship. What kind of a friend should we be? Well, what kind of friend is God to us? That's a good question. Is there any teaching on that? There is. Jesus says he is a good friend. He says specifically, no one has greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

Now, of course, we can't lay down our life for our friends the way Jesus did. Jesus laid down his life as a sacrifice for our sins, for all the times we don't follow him and don't follow his ways. But it is true that Jesus sacrifice for his friends is instructive to us, because a true friend is willing to sacrifice for their friends.

And Los Angeles right now, what are people doing? They're bringing their friends, and they're sacrificing for their friends whose homes were burned. I guarantee you that friends lay down their lives for each other. And friends also tell the truth to each other. Jesus told his disciples, I have called you, my friends, for all that the father has told me, I have made known to you.

Friends tell each other what's going on in their life. It's all about knowing who God, father, son, and Holy Spirit is. That's the godly life. That's the good life. As we seek the kingdom, we seek the kingdom. Seek his ways. Seek to be more like him, not as proud steps. I'm going to take steps and steps and steps and become a wonderful person.

Everybody will admire me. No. Rather, it's simply a desire to know God, to become more like him. And when we fail, which we inevitably do. God loves us. He's merciful. He's gracious to forgive because he's faithful even when we're not. He keeps his covenant of love when we don't. And that's our hope when we fall short of a good goal to be more like God.

Let's pray together.

Father, I thank you that we can join together this year with our pastors from times past. We thank you for Pastor Barker and Pastor Reeder who made Seek First the Kingdom their Life verse. What a joy to stand with them and to look to the future together as we seek the Kingdom as we think today and seek today and seek to this year you in prayer and service and in godliness, grant us the grace we need. Hold us fast. This we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.