



Gospel of  
Luke

# **Jesus the Liberator**

Release &  
Rescue

Leaders notes

## Introducing “Jesus the Liberator: Rescue & Release”

Luke’s nick-name since the first century is “the beloved physician”. His account of Jesus’ life is the longest of the four Gospels. Along with his second book, the Acts of the Apostles, he contributes more verses in the New Testament than any other human writer.

His Gospel is most likely finished before the apostle Paul is executed in 64 AD. It is carefully and accurately ordered and yet bulges with many of the most popular and moving stories of Jesus. Without Luke we would not have access to the beautiful stories of the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, the Rich Fool, the only death bed conversion in the Bible and many others. There are more stories about or starring women than in the other gospels and he has the only story of Jesus as a post-baby child.

Jesus says that he enters our world as the great Liberator, joyfully announcing that he has come to “release the captives”, to bring good news, to make the lame walk and the blind see. His teaching here is powerful to release us from fear, greed, hatreds, grudges and anxiety. He says He comes “to save” – to save means to rescue from terrible dangers and it also means to heal or restore us to our fullest and healthiest humanity.

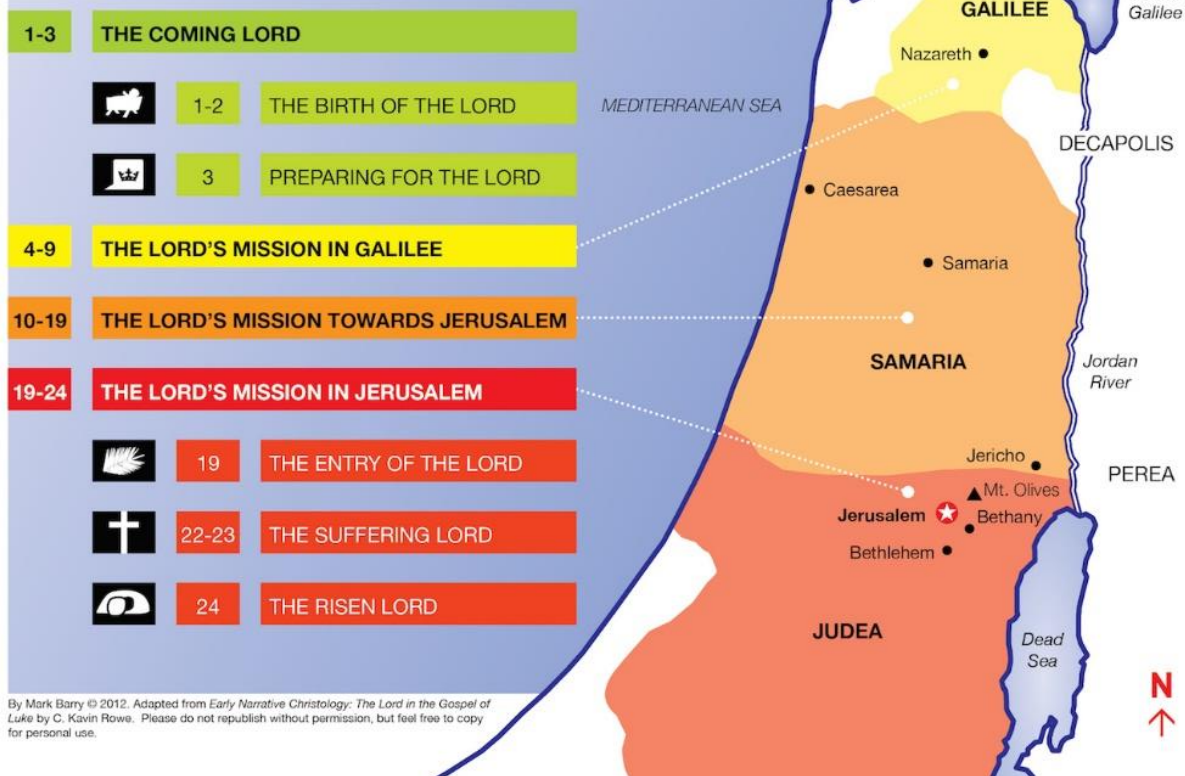
I hope you share our excitement as we prepare to plunge again into Jesus as painted by the careful historian – Luke.

Can I invite you to pray that your group and the whole church would have our lives renewed as we watch Him together.

Your brother and servant – Ian Powell



## LUKE OVERVIEW



## About Life Groups @ St Matt's

At St Matt's we understand that healthy, God-honouring community doesn't happen by accident. We're committed to the work of nurturing community through what we call Life Groups.

Life Groups primary focus is how the boundless riches of Christ can meet us and renew us amidst the realities we face each day. At Life Group you can expect to eat, pray, study the Bible, and share celebrations and struggles and how God is working in each other's lives.

For more info, contact our Connect Pastor, Steve Nation

[Steve.nation@stmattswanniassa.org.au](mailto:Steve.nation@stmattswanniassa.org.au) or 0407 294 411



## **A note of thanks!**

To Bill Forgeard and the team at Lakeshore Church of Christ @ Buderim, Queensland for the use of their study booklets. Steve Nation, the Connect Pastor of St Matt's Wanniasa is responsible for the final form of this booklet – with heavy reliance on Lakeshore's work. Praise God for good friends and partners in the gospel!

## **Suggested Reading** related to the content and themes of Luke:

1. **Luke: An Unexpected God** by John G. Mason. *A helpful and readable introductory commentary on the book of Luke, written by the founding minister at St Matt's!*
2. **The Gospel:** By Ray Ortlund. *A short, readable book that looks at the way the gospel should be lived out in the life of a church.*

## Sermon #1. The birth of the gospel and childhood of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4 & 2:39-52)

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**Kick Off:** What things in life are you certain of? What gives you certainty?

**Key Verse:** Luke 1:3

**Big Idea:** You can be certain about your faith in Christ because it is based on historical facts we have reliable accounts for.

**Investigate:**

1. *Read Colossians 4:14; Acts 16:10 and Acts 28:16*

a) Who is Luke?

Luke was a travelling companion of the apostle Paul (Acts 16:10, 28:16)

Luke was a physician and a dear friend of the apostle Paul (Col. 4:14).

b) b) What aspects of his experience add to the credibility of what he has written?

Time with the inner circle of the apostles

*Read Luke 1:1-4*

2. Does Luke claim to be an eyewitness as John does in his Gospel? What does his honesty here indicate?

No, he's not an eyewitness. He reports what eyewitnesses have reported. He is honest, wanting to communicate the truth of Jesus as well as the process in which we can know the truth. He's an honorable writer!

3. How did Luke get his information?

Information handed down to him by eyewitnesses and servants of the word. *Careful* investigation

4. How did he write his account? Luke went back to the start of the Christian movement, the events surrounding the birth of Jesus – all the way through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He wrote an orderly account – clear, chronological...

5. Why did Luke write his account? Christian assurance – for Theophilus and all who would read this Gospel.

a) What in your life right now calls for certainty, security and stability?

b) How do you think you might find it as you fix your eyes on Jesus in Luke?

*Read Luke 2:41-52*

6. What aspects of Jesus' life and behavior in this passage are unique to him as God's Divine Son? What aspects of his life and behavior are examples for us to follow?

Jesus was the unique Son of God (John 1:18), who had a very special relationship with God. Only because of Jesus' relationship with the Father, and His work of grace, do we become the adopted children of God.

### Think & Apply:

7. Luke assumes that believers have doubts and need help being 'certain' of what they believe in. How is this an encouragement to you?
  
8. Jesus knew that he must first and foremost obey God as his Father, even if it caused pain for his earthly parents. Are there situations in your life where you need to obey God in ways that will cause inconvenience, distress or confusion for people that you care about? What is your plan to obey this call in your life at present?

### Prayer:

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group – perhaps especially being Christ-like with your family.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 5:1-16.



## Sermon #2. Calling: The Interrupting Inviter (Luke 5:1-16)

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**Kick Off:** Do you naturally tend more towards being optimistic or more towards being cynical in your responses to people?

**Key Verse:** Luke 5:10

**Big Idea:** Jesus graciously sends his unworthy people on the mission of spreading the good news of his kingdom.

### Investigate:

1. *Read verses 1-5.* What do you think about Peter's response to Jesus' command in verses 4 & 5? Do you think he really trusts Jesus, or does he just have nothing to lose by obeying his command?

The passage doesn't say – could be either

2. *Read verses 6-11.* What does the miraculous catch of fish reveal about Jesus' power and authority?

Jesus' knowledge of the world and how humans can flourish is comprehensive – he is worthy of both our humble confession and our obedience.

3. What do you make of Peter's response to Jesus in verse 8 after the miraculous catch of fish? Why do you think that Peter suddenly becomes very aware of his sinfulness?

By witnessing Jesus' power, Peter was suddenly aware that he was in the presence of the holy God (see Isaiah 6:1-7). His heart is opened and thus the graciousness, forgiveness and invitation of Jesus to follow Him is ready for the receiving.

4. As Jesus' fame and popularity grows (v.15) he withdraws to isolated places so that he can be alone to pray (v.16). Why do you think that Jesus makes sure that he has some time away from the crowds to be alone? What does this reveal to us about the importance of prayer? Jesus' agenda is not what people expect or demand. He works with His Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. This relationship of love and mission shaped all Jesus did. It enabled Him to hold the line amongst the trials of His life. Prayer is the same for us. Prayer is not primarily about getting stuff done, but walking with God, aligning our hearts and minds and wills with God, and living out the togetherness Christ won for us with the Father.

**Think & Apply:**

5. In your life, are you quick to respond to Jesus' teachings with faith that leads to obedience? Do you ever find yourself being reluctant to hear and obey Jesus's words to you? Try to think of a concrete example to share from your life in the last week.
6. What does it look like for us to "fish for people" in our world today?
7. Think of one person in your life whom you would love to see coming to faith in Jesus. What is one thing you could do to be more proactive in sharing life and the gospel with this person over the next month?

**Prayer:**

Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group – especially of one person God may use you to help meet Christ.

Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 5:17-32.

## Sermon #3. From Sickness to Banquet Luke 5:17-32

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## Study #3. From Sickness to Banquet Luke 5:17-32

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**Kick Off:** If you had to choose between spending a weeknight mixing and mingling with a large group of people or chilling out at home on your own which would you usually prefer?

**Key Verse:** Luke 5:32

**Big Idea:** Jesus saves those who realise that they can't save themselves. Jesus's grace to us transforms us into people who are gracious with others.

### Investigate:

1. *Read verses 17-26.* Why is “your sins are forgiven” the first thing that Jesus says to the paralyzed man in verse 20? Why doesn't Jesus heal the man's most presenting physical need (that he can't walk) first?

Our reconciliation with God is at the core of the good news. Our Maker becomes our Father. The gospel of reconciling grace is more than immediate struggles, but promises that our physical and mental and emotional and social and environmental troubles will be healed completely in the new creation (Romans 8:18-25, 1 Corinthians 15:50-57)

2. What does the response of the scribes and the Pharisees in verse 21 reveal about their hearts?

They are more interested in getting the doctrine of God correct than seeing if God was actively present in front of them.

3. *Read verses 27-28.* From the sermon, who was Levi, and what is our church's connection to him?

Levi was a tax collector, a servant of Rome (Israel's conquerors), who took more than was required, financially crippling individuals, families and communities.

St Matthew's was named after Levi's other name (Matthew, see Matthew 9:9-13) who worked for the government collecting taxes. St Matt's is in Canberra, with many public service workers. Thus, our prayer is to be a church where people like Levi/Matthew encounter Jesus, are gripped by His love, and move from strangers to His love to believers is Him

4. What do you think was so compelling about Jesus' call to follow him that Levi was prepared to leave his wealth and his old way of life behind?

5. *Read verses 29-32.* Why do the Pharisees have a go at Jesus and his disciples for spending time with Levi and his friends?

They were more interested in being holy/separate from sinners than seeing the holy God come and enter the sinfulness of people and bringing healing and redemption.

6. Are you ok with Jesus' statement in verses 31 and 32 being applied to you? Are you ever tempted to think of yourself as being better than others? As Christians, why is it wrong for us to look down on others because of their behavior?

### Think & Apply:

7. How does Jesus' authority and readiness and heart to forgive sins help you as you battle against sin in your life each day? What is one thing you can do this week to encourage someone else from the group to remember and apply the good news of Jesus to their life?

### Prayer:

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.



**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 6:12-49.

## Sermon #4. Apostles and the way of the released (Luke 6:12-49)

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What struck you from last Sunday's sermon?

**Key Verse:** Luke 6:20

**Big Idea:** Because our ultimate treasure is not in this world or this life, we are free to love our enemies.

**Investigate:**

1. *Read verses 12-16.* Why do you think that Jesus stayed up all night to pray before he chose the twelve apostles?

Because Jesus' earthly ministry was one of active partnership with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

2. *Read verses 20-26.* What is the main point that Jesus is making with his contrasting pronouncements of blessings and woe?

Human flourishing under God is the opposite of our natural inclinations: blessings rest upon people who acknowledge their need, not boast in their wealth or popularity. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.

3. Do you find verses 24 & 25 confronting seeing as we live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world? How can we guard our hearts against materialism? Share a practical way that you can be more generous with your possessions or money.

4. *Read verses 27-39.* What is the big point that Jesus is making in these verses?

Verses 27-31

The ethic of the Christian life is reconciling love, not self-preservation.

Verses 32-39

The ethic of the Christian life is gracious other-person centred generosity.

5. What potential danger could there be for us if we read these verses without remembering how Jesus has treated those who were his enemies?

The gospel alone offers the resources for this other-person centred behaviour. Without the secure and all-encompassing love and care of Jesus, we wouldn't have mental or emotional or social strength to love like this.

6. Who do you find easy to judge and hard to love? Jesus has rescued us from this life, and released us to a whole new way of living. Who will you love this week in a new way?

**Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group – perhaps of one ‘enemy’ you could seek to do an act of love for this week.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt’s prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week’s sermon and Life Group, read Luke 9:10-36.

## Sermon #5. The Eclipsing Uniqueness of Jesus (Luke 9:10-36)

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**Kick Off:** Who or what would you lay down your life for? Why?

**Key Verses:** Luke 9:20 & Luke 9:23

**Big Idea:** Jesus embodies all the glory of God while being a King who will suffer and die for his people – giving his people a pattern to follow.

**Investigate:**

1. *Read Luke 9:10-27.* What is so significant about Peter's answer in verse 20? Read also:

Genesis 3:15 – the offspring of Eve who would crush the head of Satan

Deuteronomy 18:18 – the Prophet greater than Moses

2 Samuel 7:14 & Psalm 2:7-9 – God's Anointed King over the world

Isaiah 7:14 – God in the flesh

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 – the Suffering (sin-bearing) Servant of God

Malachi 3:1 – the LORD who would come to visit His temple

Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ – the one who carries the hopes of the Jewish world! Here is the one who will turn history on its head. Here is the one Peter read about and longed for his appearing

2. What things has Peter seen in Luke so far that might have led him to this belief?

Luke 1:76-79, 2:10-12 - The birth of the promised Messiah

Luke 4:16-21 - The fulfiller of the redemptive plan of God

Luke 4:33-35 – The Victor over evil and demons

Luke 6:17-49 - The Prophet (spokes-person from God) greater than Moses

Luke 7:36-38 – The Anointed One

3. What do you think it means to “take up your cross daily”? (Verses 24-26 will help with this)

Verse 23 is essentially one command said in three different ways; then verses 24-26 are three reasons why we should be very keen to do verse 23.

In the words of John Newton: “our pleasure, our duty, though opposite before, since we have seen His beauty, and joined to part no more: it’s our highest pleasure, no less than duty’s call to love Him beyond measure, and serve Him with our all”.

4. *Read Luke 9:28-36.* List the different things that occur/ are revealed in this passage which demonstrate Jesus’ glory. What does each reveal about him?

9:28, 30 (see also Exodus 19:1-3; Hebrews 12:18-21 and 1 Kings 19:8, 12). Jesus goes up the mountain, a picture of where God revealed Himself to both Moses and Elijah in the Old Testament. Jesus is God meeting with His people –

9:29 (Daniel 10:4-6 and Revelation 1:12-16). Jesus’ divine glory in it’s dazzling beauty is revealed. Jesus is more than just a profound teacher and human Messiah. He is the 2<sup>nd</sup> member of the Trinity, who if you saw Him in all His fullness would be blindingly glorious.

5. This passage is rich in Old Testament imagery. What is the significance of each of these Old Testament themes in connection to Jesus?

a) The appearance of Moses and Elijah?

in Jesus the Law (represented by Moses) and the Prophets (represented by Elijah) are fulfilled.



b) The description of Jesus' mission in Jerusalem as an "exodus"? (See footnote on verse 31)

Jesus is going to bring about a new exodus, via something He calls a departure (He is going to go away for a time); a great redemption of people from slavery (see Hebrews 2:14-15)

c) The appearance of a cloud? (See Exodus 13:2; Exodus 40:34-35, 1 Kings 8:10-11 and Ezekiel 10:3-4, 18 & 11:22-23)

The cloud represents the manifest/clear presence of God in their midst. God dwelling with His people, surrounding His people, and soon to fill His people (in the coming of the Holy Spirit)

### **Think & Apply:**

6. Because Jesus is SO glorious, the Father directs the disciples to "listen to him".

a) What is a big decision in your life (now or in the future) where you need to decide between the way of the cross and the way of the world?

b) What is a small thing you do everyday where you need to decide between the way of the cross and the way of the world?

**Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 9:51-62.

## Sermon #6. The Way of the Cross (Luke 9:51-62)

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## Study #6. The Way of the Cross (Luke 9:51-62)

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**Kick Off:** Do you think you would be a Christian today if you lived in a country where Christians were severely persecuted?

**Key Verse:** Luke 9:51

**Big Idea:** Following Jesus means adopting the same attitude of sacrifice and humility that caused him to go the cross.

**Investigate:** *Read Luke 9:51-56.*

1. James & John's desire for revenge in verse 54 shows that they haven't understood Jesus' way and plan to die on the cross (verse 44-45 & 51). How does trusting in Jesus as our suffering Saviour stop us from seeking revenge on people who offend or hurt us?

Because mercy received should lead to mercy given (this doesn't mean we should become insipid pushovers; it means we are not people captivated by revenge, spite or bitterness)

2. *Read Luke 9:57-62.* Why is Jesus so harsh with these would-be followers? Couldn't he have been nicer with people? Is there something wrong with following Jesus but still valuing family, comfort and possessions?

No, these are all good things (and good gifts from God to be received with thankfulness) – until they become the ultimate thing and displace Jesus from being the Lord and love of our lives. Family, comfort and possessions are all gifts from God, but are never to become gods themselves.

### **Think & Apply:**

3. Do you sometimes have similar attitudes to the disciples (in verse 46 & verse 49)? How/where are they revealed in your life?
4. How can you obey Jesus' command to welcome insignificant people and see yourself as "the least" (verse 48)?
5. Do you feel a desire for revenge sometimes? Does this passage help you know how to respond to that desire?
6. Do you think we are really counting the cost of following Jesus? Is it possible to truly count the cost of following Jesus without surrendering our comfortable, affluent lifestyles?

### **Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.
2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 10:1-11:1.

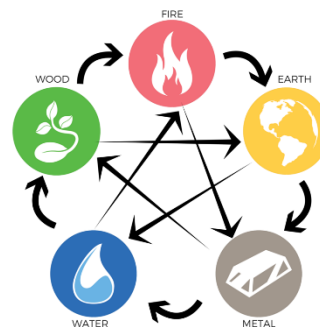
## Sermon #7. The Four Elements of the Christian Life (Luke 10:1-11:11)

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**Kick Off:** Which of the elements are you most attracted to? Why?



In today's passage, Luke gives us four elements of the Christian life in quick succession.

Depending on how many people there are in your group, split up into groups of two and each group take one of the elements. Answer the questions, then each group report back to the group.

### Element #1: Witness.

*Read Luke 10:1-24.*

#### 1. Summarise the job Jesus gave the 72 messengers?

In verses 1-4, Jesus speaks of a time of crisis with great potential. People are ready to come into God's family. They need to hear of His gracious invitation. That's the goal of the job. The job given to the 72 is being the prayers and inviters: pray to God for more workers, go and give people the invitation to enter God's family.

#### 2. In what ways do you think Christians today are like the 72 messengers, and in what ways are we not?

All of the above is commanded of us in Matthew 28:18-20 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. We are Christ's ambassadors, imploring others to be reconciled with God.

## **Element #2: Being a Good Neighbour.**

*Read Luke 10:25-37*

3. Who does Jesus say is our neighbor?

Anyone who has need

4. Jesus moves from speaking about who is our neighbor, to what is a good neighbor? What is a good neighbor according to Jesus?

The one who shows mercy to anyone in need

## **Element #3: Listening to Christ**

*Read Luke 10:38-42*

5. Both witness and being a good neighbor are acts of service. Why does Jesus speak like he does to Martha in verse 41?

We can be so caught up in service that we miss why we serve – we serve in the home and work and church not to get stuff done but out of love for God and love for people. Martha was so busy that she became bitter (v.40).

6. What is the one thing needed (v.42)? See also John 15:4-5. Why is this true?

Quality time with Jesus. Staying connected to Jesus through Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and the sacraments leads to Him doing through us what we cannot do ourselves in our own strength. Remaining close to Jesus will produce much fruit, showing that we are His disciples, and bringing glory to God.



## **Element #4: Prayer**

### **7. Summarise what and why Jesus calls us to pray.**

Jesus reorients us to focus on God first (v.2) and then ourselves/others (vv.3-4). With God in the right place in our hearts and minds, then everything else flows. God deserves glory, and we are to pray for this. This world needs to know Jesus as He is the only hope, so we pray for His will and kingdom to come. We need provision because all good things come from God, so we pray for our daily needs. Sin divides and destroys, so we need ongoing, relational forgiveness and restoration with God and others constantly. We are battered from temptation and trials, and we need protection – God is sovereign, and so we ask Him for this. We pray because Christ died for us, and through prayer God will give us what we need—mainly more of himself, and everything else we need.

### **Think & Apply:**

Choose two elements that you can be working on to cultivate a more thoughtful, persistent, & expectant life in:

- a) Witness
- b) Being a Good Neighbour
- c) Listening to Jesus
- d) Prayer

How will you do this?

**Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 19:11-27

## Sermon #8. The Arrival to Jerusalem (Luke 19:11-48)

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## Study #8. The Arrival to Jerusalem (Luke 19:11-27)

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**Kick Off:** In your opinion, what makes a good boss?

**Key Verse:** Luke 19:17

**Big Idea:** Jesus the triumphant King calls us to faithfully serve him with the life and resources that he graciously gives to us.

**Investigate and Apply:** *read Luke 19:11-27*

1. What might the people have been expecting “the kingdom of God appearing at once” to look like?

Something like Daniel 7:13-14. The conquering King who’ll get rid of Israel’s enemies and bring the hoped for paradise they were longing for.

2. What similarities are there between Jesus and the nobleman in the parable? (v.12-15)

A person of noble (honourable) birth who went away for a time, and comes back to settle accounts with those who live in His land.

3. What applications does the principle given in verse 17 have for life today?

To be a Christian is to trust in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. Jesus calls His people to be producers rather than lazy or consumers. We are to produce what He brings forth in us (such as the fruit of the Spirit, service to others etc).

4. How has the third servant's actions demonstrated that he has been unfaithful? (v.20-23)

5. Do you think that the master's reward of the good servants, and punishment of the bad servant, is fair? Why or why not?

6. Who are the enemies of the nobleman that are mentioned in verses 14 and 27?

People who live in his land, receive all the benefits of living in his land, and reject the owner/king and his rights as owner/king.

7. God calls us to give generously. How would you work out what is generous for you – in time, energy, resources?

**Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 22:1-38



## Study #9. Passover (Luke 22:1-38)

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**Kickoff:** "A helpful way to think about forgiveness is absorption - that is, the swallowing of evil, preventing it from going further, saying it ends here!" Have you ever experienced this in a relationship? Share if you have.

### Investigate:

1. Read through the following and describe why the Passover was necessary for the Israelites redemption:

Joshua 24:14 – though Israel were slavery bound down under suffering, they were also sinners whop proactively worshipped and served gods other than the LORD in Egypt)

Ezekiel 20:4-10 – see especially verse 8 – rebellious, stubborn and committed to idols in Egypt.

2. Why was the Passover worth celebrating?

### *Read Luke 22:1-38*

3. What struck you from last Sunday's sermon about the Passover?
4. In light of the sermon on Sunday, what is the significance of Jesus' words and actions in the following:
  - a) 22:14-16  
Jesus is eager to eat this food with them. This meal was the centre of the Israelite calendar, remembering and celebrating their redemption from slavery and them becoming the loved people of God.
  - b) 22:17-18  
The meal is to be shared amongst the people – for the people. Jesus will take part of drinking and eating with His people when His kingdom finally comes in all it's fulness (Revelation 19:9)



c) 22:19-20

Jesus changes the Passover from the body of a lamb, with a new lamb being killed every year – to His body, killed once. This new, once-for-all sacrifice brings complete cleansing, forgiveness and reconciliation.

5. What is the relevance of the Passover for us today? What might it look like for us as individuals and as a church grow in this practice?

**Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 22:1-38

## Sermon #10. Invitation to the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-24)

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## Study #10. Invitation to the Great Banquet (Luke 14:12-24)

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**Kick Off:** What is the best party you've ever been to?

**Key Verse:** Luke 14:15

**Big Idea:** Only the humble will be included in Jesus' kingdom.

**Investigate & Apply:**

*Read Luke 14:12-14*

1. a) What contrasts do you observe between the two kinds of parties Jesus describes? (Think both about the event and the results.)

Party #1 is all about the in-crowd with mutual benefits

Party #2 is about gracious, other-person centred generosity which doesn't bring present benefits for the host but leads to long-term blessing for the host in the future.

- b) Who falls into the category of "poor, crippled, lame and blind" in your life? When and how do you plan to invite them to your house?

They are those who can't give us anything in return – no benefit to us socially, economically, practically

*Read Luke 14:15-24*

2. What message does Jesus intend his Jewish hearers to take from this parable?

The Father's aim is to celebrate. His aim is to have a full house. He is generous beyond all measure. But Jesus is defamed when people choose something 'better' than Him and His kingdom – no matter what this 'better' thing might be. There are no excuses for rejecting Jesus' invitation to join His family. If we say no to Him now, He will say no to us on Judgement Day.

3. What must be true of us if we wish to be present at this great banquet in the kingdom of God?

Say yes to His invitation to repent, believe and rejoice.

4. How does this parable about who will be part in Jesus' kingdom add weight and urgency to the commands of verses 7-11 and verses 12-14?

Who are we connecting with in life – only those who we like and can give us something (affirmation, social respectability, fun in return)? Or are we also actively connecting with the outsider, unlovely and un-beneficial to us? Inviting them to our livers, Jesus...

5. What can you do to fight against sinful pride and cultivate humility in your attitude and in your actions?

### **Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 15:1-32



## Study #11. Coming Home. Luke 15:1-32

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**Kick Off:** Have you ever lost something valuable but then found it again? How did you feel afterwards?

**Key Verse:** Luke 15:10

**Big Idea:** God rejoices whenever lost sinners return to him in repentance and faith.

### **Investigate & Apply:**

*Read 15:1-2.* How do these verses set the scene for the parables that follow?

Jesus "receives sinners and eats with them." People were disgusted – that 'a prophet' of God would eat with scum - with the religious, moral and social outcasts. That's why Jesus tells this parable: to explain why He ate with sinners.

*Read Luke 15:11-32.*

1. What does the son's request reveal about his attitude towards his father in verses 11 and 12?

He is essentially saying to his dad: "I wish you were dead. I want your stuff, but not you". The son is the only one who can decide what's right & wrong for him; the father has no place in his life. The son is going to live as he wants to live, rejecting his father, family, and family tradition..

2. What does the son do and what are the results in verses 13-16?

He leaves home, lives a self-indulgent life, paying for sex, is used and abandoned by his 'friends', losing everything, and ends up being ashamed and alone.

3. Do you think the son is more sorry about his desperate situation or his broken relationship with his father in verses 17-19?

Verses 17-20 show both

- Verse 17- he is sorry for himself

- Verses 18-19 – he goes home knowing he’s dishonoured his dad and has broken the relationship beyond human retrieval

4. What do the father’s actions reveal about his love for his son in verses 20-24?

5. What does the older son’s response reveal about his heart in verses 25-30? Do you think that he might represent any of the groups of people that Jesus was speaking to?

The older son’s heart was similar to the younger son. He too wanted the father’s goods rather than the father. His way to get control was not to go far away, but to stay close. Both used the father for their own self-centred ends, rather than loving, enjoying and serving him for his own sake.

The elder brother represents the Pharisees and scribes who were standing by suspiciously and condemningly, while Jesus is eating with tax-gatherers and sinners (v.2).

6. How can this story bring us hope as we think about:

a) Ourselves and our relationship with God

We need to see that our search for significance, security and hope is not found in self-discovery or moral conformity but in Jesus.

Jesus didn’t end these parables with "Go and do likewise." And Luke didn’t end this chapter with: "Go and imitate Jesus." The first point is: look at him. Consider Jesus. Know Jesus. Learn what kind of person it is you say you trust and love and worship. Saturate your soul with the ways of Jesus. Watch him. Listen to him. Stand in awe of him. Let him overwhelm you with the way He is.

b) People in our lives who seem miles away from God

The younger brother couldn’t have treated his father worse. And he had nothing to bring to his father that could make his father reinstall

him as a son. He has do bargaining chip. But the father doesn't want stuff – just wants him. The father not only welcomed him, but given a big party in his honour - with a fattened calf!!! Nothing our friends/family have done removes them from the welcome of the gracious father. Nothing. They can be welcomed with bigger and more lavish open arms that they can ever imagine!

### c) People we know who are religious but may not truly know God

The anger and superiority of elder brothers grows out of insecurity, fear and inner emptiness. This can create a huge body of guilt-ridden, fear-ridden, spiritually blind people (this is one of the great sources of social injustice, war and violence).

How can the inner workings of the heart be changed from a dynamic of fear and anger to that of love, joy and gratitude? By seeing and then being moved by the sight of what Jesus did to make us right with God the Father.

### **Prayer:**

1. Share prayer requests and pray for one another in your group.

2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.



**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 16:19-31

## Sermon #12. Money and your life (Luke 16:19-31)

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**Kick Off:** What things do you like about money? What things about money do you dislike?

**Key Verse:** Luke 16:13

**Big Idea:** How we use 'our' money now has explicit connection to the quality of our eternal future.

**Investigate & Apply:** *Read Luke 16:19-31.*

1. What contrasts does Jesus give between the earthly status of the rich man and Lazarus? (v. 19-22)

Rich man: dressed in purple and fine linen (most elegant and expensive clothes in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD). Lived in luxury all day.

Lazarus: a beggar, depended on the charity of others to survive, covered with sores (dogs felt sorry for him, soothed him), hungry for scraps from anothers dinner.

2. What contrasts does he give in the rest of the parable about their eternal status?

Rich man: in Hades, torment/agony, sought the pity of Abraham (wanted Abraham to sooth his pain like the dogs soothed Lazarus' earthly sores), separated from paradise by a great chasm (he is completely in doom)

Lazarus: Carried by angels to Abraham's side – the patriarch of Israel (beside Abraham would've been as high an honour as a Jew could imagine), comforted (v.25), separated from Hades by a great chasm which cannot be crossed (he is completely safe)

3. Do you ever find yourself unaffected or turning a blind eye towards the desperate need of others?

4. What does Abraham's response to the rich man reveal about the way

that hard hearts will respond to miraculous signs (v. 27-31)?

They won't listen to words or deeds from God. They are completely hardened to any offer of mercy and grace.

5. What is our only true hope of seeing hardened hearts turned back to God?

People being convinced of the risen Lord Jesus and the testimony of His grace.

**Prayer:**

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2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

**Read Ahead:** For next week's sermon and Life Group, read Luke 23-24

## Sermon #13. Good Friday (Luke 23)

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## Sermon #13. Easter Sunday – Jesus is Risen! (Luke 24:36-53)

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## Sermon #13. Easter Sunday – Jesus is Risen! (Luke 24:36-53)<sup>1</sup>

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The belief in Jesus' resurrection arises from two collections of first-century events. First, the grave in which his body was laid was found to be empty. Secondly, the risen Jesus appeared to many people, giving "many proofs" (Acts 1:3) that he was the one who was crucified, but has now risen from the dead.

This is such an incredible event that it is really no surprise at all that people have found it difficult to accept. Dead people do not normally rise from the dead—this phenomenon is unknown to ordinary human experience. But the Christian message recognizes this and proclaims that this was not an ordinary event, because Jesus was not an ordinary man. He was the Christ, and the Scriptures had predicted that the Christ would suffer and then enter into his glory (Luke 24:26).

There have been sceptics, since the early days, who have had a great deal of difficulty with the resurrection of Jesus. Some have been happier to talk about some kind of spiritual resurrection, in which the body of Jesus did not leave the tomb. But this is not the view put forward by Luke. He stresses the fact that the body was not found in the tomb. He provides details that show the disciples discovering that the body of the risen Christ was the flesh and bones of the once crucified and buried Jesus. The empty tomb and the appearances meld together to point towards one conclusion: Jesus Christ has risen from the dead!

### **The risen Christ becomes the Proclaimer**

The fact that a man rose from the dead is certainly worth speaking about in its own right. But there is another reason why the resurrection of Jesus resulted in the great time of proclamation being launched on the world. The risen Christ himself is the one doing the proclamation!

### **Investigate**

1. Read the following verses. Who is the one taking all the initiative?
  - a) Luke 24:49; Acts 2:32-33 – Jesus and the Holy Spirit
  - b) Acts 3:26 – God the Father
  - c) Acts 26:23 – Jesus the Messiah

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<sup>1</sup> This study is an edited version of chapter 1 of Peter Bolt's *Proclaiming the Risen Lord* (Luke 24 - Acts 2), Matthias Media

## **The Proclaimer behind our proclamation**

The good news of Jesus Christ is certainly worth the telling. From the beginning, Christians have overflowed with that news. As they have believed the gospel, they have proclaimed, spoken and conversed the gospel to others (cf. 2 Cor 4:13).

But behind all this human speaking there is a far more powerful force at work. Jesus himself—the long-awaited Christ, now risen from the dead—is the one who proclaims this good news. As the first to rise from the dead, he now proclaims “light [to his own] people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:23).

Now, that is some backing!

Think it through

2. List the different networks of people that you come across in your life (e.g. family, sporting).
  
3. When you think about ‘chatting the gospel’ to these people, what are
  - a) the things that would make it hard?
  
  - b) the things that would make it easy?
  
4. How has this course helped you think about the opportunities you have for proclamation amongst all these people?



**Prayer:**

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## TERM ONE UPDATE FORM

This form is filled out by group members at the end of the first term of Life Groups. Please email it to Steve Nation. You can fill it out electronically or via paper copy (steve.nation@stmattswanniassa.org.au)

Name:

Group:

What have you most enjoyed about being a member of this group?

What has been most difficult?

How have you seen God at work in the yourself and other group members?

Do you plan to continue as a part of this group into next term?

Please provide any additional comments or questions here.