A close-up photograph of a human hand reaching upwards, its fingers slightly curled. Above the hand, a thick, rusted metal chain hangs vertically. The chain is composed of large, interlocking links that show significant signs of age and corrosion. The background is a solid, deep black, which makes the metallic texture of the chain and the skin of the hand stand out. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the contours of the hand and the rough surface of the chain links.

Gospel of
Luke

Jesus the Liberator

Release &
Rescue

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.

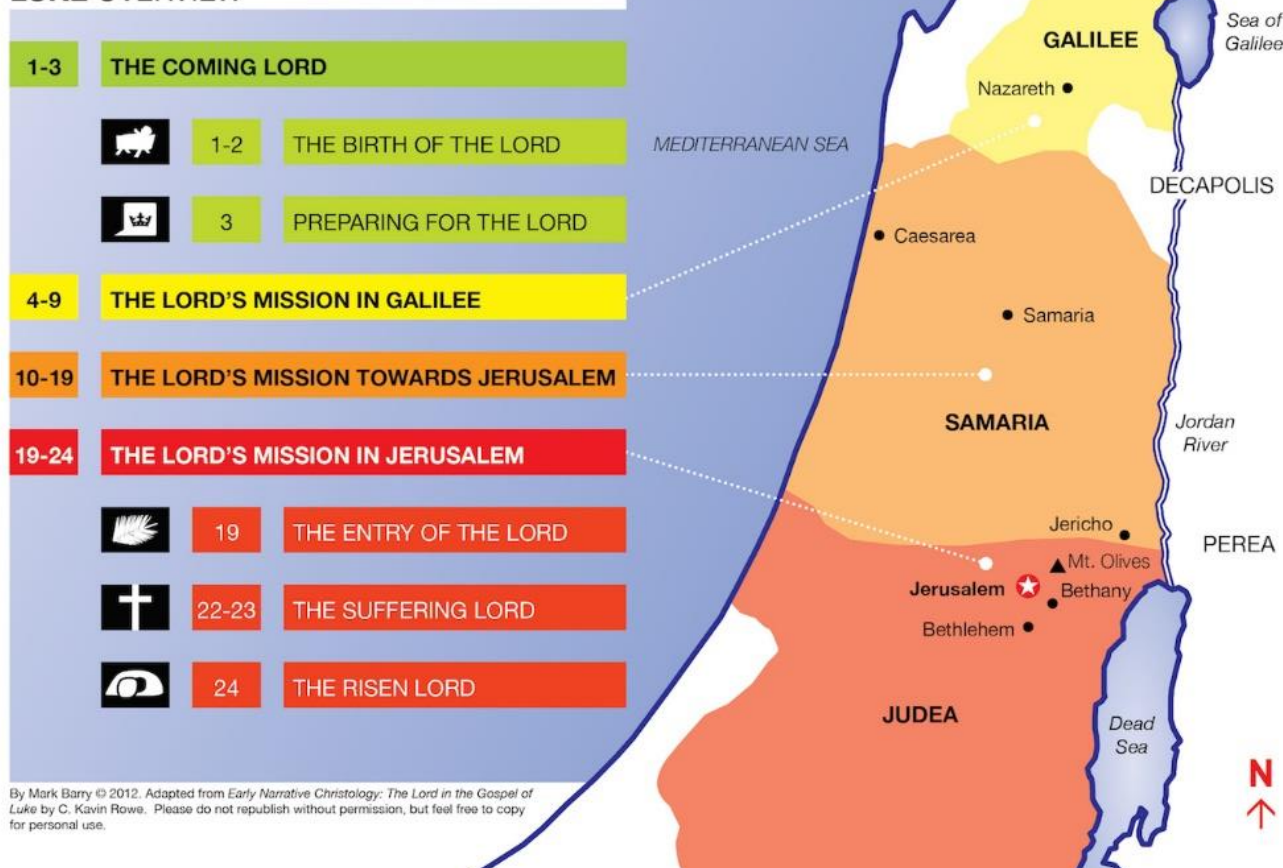
I hope you share our excitement as we prepare to plunge again into Jesus as painted by the careful historian – Luke.

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 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!

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

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

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?

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

Read Luke 1:1-4

2. How did Luke get his information?

3. How did he write his account?

4. Why did Luke write his account?

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

5. 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?

Think & Apply:

6. Luke assumes that believers have doubts and need help being 'certain' of what they believe in. How is this an encouragement to you?

7. Jesus knew that he must 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.

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)

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

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

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.

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

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

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?
2. What does the response of the scribes and the Pharisees in verse 21 reveal about their hearts?
3. *Read verses 27-28.* From the sermon, who was Levi, and what is our church's connection to 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?

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)

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

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?

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

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

Verses 32-39

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?

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.

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)

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

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

Deuteronomy 18:18

2 Samuel 7:14 & Psalm 2:7-9

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Malachi 3:1

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

Luke 4:16-21

Luke 4:33-35

Luke 6:17-49

Luke 7:36-38

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

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).

9:29 (Daniel 10:4-6 and Revelation 1:12-16).

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?

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

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)

Think & Apply:

6. Because Jesus is 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)

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

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' 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?
2. *Read Luke 9:57-62.* Why is Jesus so harsh with these would-be followers? Is there something wrong with following Jesus but still valuing family, comfort and possessions?

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.

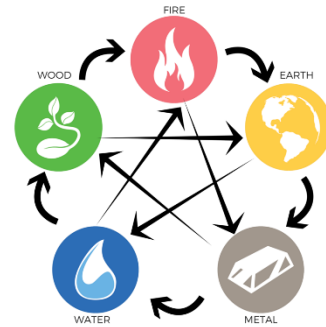
2. Use a copy of the **St Matt's prayer points** (from the weekly e-news) to pray for people and events across the church – including missionaries.

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)

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

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

Element #2: Being a Good Neighbour.

Read Luke 10:25-37

3. Who does Jesus say is our neighbor?

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

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

Element #4: Prayer

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

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)

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

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?
2. What similarities are there between Jesus and the nobleman in the parable? (v.12-15)
3. What applications does the principle given in verse 17 have for life today?
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?

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)

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

Ezekiel 20:4-10

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

b) 22:17-18

c) 22:19-20

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)

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

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.)

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?

Read Luke 14:15-24

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

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

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?

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

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?

Read Luke 15:11-32.

1. What does the son's request reveal about his attitude towards his father in verses 11 and 12?
2. What does the son do and what are the results in verses 13-16?
3. Do you think the son is more sorry about his desperate situation or his broken relationship with his father in verses 17-19?
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?

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

a) Ourselves and our relationship with God

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

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

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)

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

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)
2. What contrasts does he give in the rest of the parable about their eternal status?
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)?
5. What is our only true hope of seeing hardened hearts turned back to God?

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 23-24

Sermon #13. Good Friday (Luke 23)

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

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

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!

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

Investigate

1. Read the following verses. Who is the one taking all the initiative?
 - a) Luke 24:49; Acts 2:32-33
 - b) Acts 3:26
 - c) Acts 26:23

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:

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.

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.