



# ST MARK'S

## LUTHERAN CHURCH

### Caloundra

### **Following Jesus in Matthew's Gospel**

*Growing Space for Faith and Community 2026*

This study invites us to journey through Matthew's Gospel and discover how Jesus meets us in everyday life.

Designed for conversation, reflection, and encouragement, this study helps us grow to be young at heart, strong in faith, and develop genuine friendships.

#### **About Matthew's Gospel**

Traditionally attributed to Matthew the Apostle, a former tax collector and one of Jesus' twelve disciples, this Gospel was likely written for early Christian communities with strong Jewish roots.

It was probably written in the eastern Mediterranean region, possibly Antioch, at a time when followers of Jesus were learning what it meant to live as God's people in a changing world.

Matthew presents Jesus as the promised Messiah — the fulfilment of God's promises in the Old Testament — and as a teacher who shows what life in God's kingdom looks like.

The Gospel is shaped around Jesus' teaching and actions, inviting us to:

- follow Jesus in everyday life
- trust God's presence and provision
- live with faith, forgiveness, and hope

Above all, Matthew reminds us that Jesus is **"God with us"** — from beginning to end — and calls us to walk with him in faith.

#### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we open the Gospel of Matthew, walk with us on the journey. Help us to hear your voice, grow in trust, and follow you in everyday life. Shape our hearts, strengthen our faith, and draw us closer to you and to one another. Amen.

## Following Jesus in Matthew

### Matthew's Gospel - Session 1

#### Meeting Jesus: Called into the Kingdom

Matthew 4:18–22; Matthew 5:1–12

#### Purpose of This Session

To introduce Matthew's Gospel and explore:

- Jesus calling ordinary people
- What it means to follow Jesus
- How Jesus defines blessing in the Beatitudes

This session sets the tone for the whole series: Following Jesus in everyday life.

#### Background

Matthew introduces Jesus as teacher and Messiah.

Early in the Gospel, Jesus calls his first disciples.

They are:

- fishermen
- working
- ordinary
- not religious leaders

This is important — discipleship begins with invitation, not qualification.

Immediately after this, Matthew presents the Beatitudes.

These describe the values of God's kingdom.

Jesus calls “blessed” those who are:

- poor in spirit
- mourning
- gentle
- searching
- merciful
- peacemakers

This would have sounded surprising.

Blessing is not about success — but about God's presence in real life.

#### Session Movement

The session flows naturally: Jesus calls → disciples follow → Jesus teaches → kingdom life begins

## Session 1 – Meeting Jesus: Called into the Kingdom

Text: Matthew 4:18–22; 5:1–12

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Read Matthew 4:18–22

Ask:

- What do you notice about Jesus' call?
- What surprises you?
- What do you notice about the disciples?

### Key idea:

Jesus calls people in ordinary life.

### Read Matthew 5:1–12

Different people may like to read.

Reflect:

- Which words stood out?
- Which Beatitude speaks to you?
- What surprises you about these blessings?

### Going Deeper

Explore:

- What does Jesus say is “blessed”?
- How is this different from the world?
- What do these blessings tell us about God?

You do not need to try and explain every Beatitude

### Connecting to Life

Invite gentle reflection:

- Where might Jesus be calling you right now?
- What might following Jesus look like today?
- Which Beatitude connects with your life?
- Where do you long for God's blessing?

## **Key Themes:**

Jesus calls ordinary people

Following begins simply

Blessing is found in real life

God meets us where we are

## **Optional Closing Reflection**

“Imagine Jesus walking past your everyday life and simply saying, ‘Follow me.’”

Pause.

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank you for calling ordinary people.

Help us to hear your voice, trust your blessing, and follow you in our daily lives.

Amen.

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## **Session 2 – Salt and Light: Everyday Faith**

Text: Matthew 5:13–26

## **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

## **Purpose**

To explore how faith is lived quietly in everyday relationships.

## **Background**

Jesus moves from inner blessing (Beatitudes) to outward living (salt and light).

Salt:

- small
- quiet
- essential

Light:

- visible
- guiding
- gentle

Jesus then speaks about:

- anger
- reconciliation
- relationships

Faith is lived in ordinary interactions.

### **Session Movement**

Inner faith → visible life → relationships shaped by grace

### **Read Matthew 5:13–16**

Ask:

- What does salt suggest?
- What does light suggest?
- Where do you see this lived out?

### **Read Matthew 5:17–26**

Reflect:

- Why does Jesus speak about anger?
- What matters to Jesus in relationships?
- What surprises you?

### **Going Deeper**

- What does this teach about living faith?
- Why is reconciliation important?
- How is this different from the world?

### **Connecting to Life**

- Where are you called to be light?
- Where is God inviting peace?
- What does quiet faith look like?

### **Key Themes**

Faith is lived

Small influence matters

Relationships reflect faith

Peace matters to Jesus

**Closing Prayer:** Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

## Session 3 – Trust and Prayer

Text: Matthew 6:5–13; 6:25–34

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Purpose

To explore how prayer shapes trust and how Jesus speaks into worry and daily life.

### Background

These verses come from the Sermon on the Mount.  
Jesus moves from how we pray to how we live without worry.

The Lord's Prayer centres us in:

- God as Father
- daily dependence
- forgiveness
- guidance
- trust

Then Jesus speaks about worry:

- food
- clothing
- tomorrow

Jesus is not ignoring real concerns —  
he is inviting trust in a God who knows and cares.

### Read Matthew 6:5–13

Reflect:

- What stands out in the Lord's Prayer?
- Which line speaks to you?
- What do you notice about how Jesus teaches prayer?

### Read Matthew 6:25–34

Reflect:

- What does Jesus say about worry?
- What examples does he use?
- What do these images tell us about God?

## **Going Deeper**

- Why do you think prayer and worry are connected?
- What is “daily bread” for you?
- What does “seek first the kingdom” mean?

## **Connecting to Life**

- What do you tend to worry about?
- Where is trust difficult?
- What helps you release worry?

## **Key Themes**

God is Father

Prayer builds trust

God knows our needs

Trust grows slowly

## **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## **Session 4 – Jesus Brings Healing**

Text: Matthew 8:1–17

## **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

## **Purpose**

To explore how Jesus meets people in need and how faith responds to his presence.

## **Background**

After teaching, Jesus begins to act in powerful and personal ways. He meets people who are:

- excluded
- suffering
- desperate
- searching

The healing of the leper shows compassion.  
The centurion shows unexpected faith.  
The healing of many shows Jesus' authority.

These stories remind us that Jesus meets people where they are.

### **Session Movement**

Need → Faith → Jesus responds → Restoration

### **Read Matthew 8:1–17**

Reflect

- What stands out in these encounters?
- What do you notice about those who come to Jesus?
- What do you notice about Jesus' response?

### **Going Deeper**

- What do these stories reveal about Jesus?
- Why is the centurion's faith surprising?
- What does this teach us about trust?

### **Connecting to Life**

- Where do people need healing today?
- What kind of healing do we long for?
- What does it mean to trust Jesus in those places?

### **Key Themes**

Jesus meets people in need

Faith can be simple

Compassion matters

Jesus' presence brings change

### **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

## Session 5 – Faith in the Storm

Text: Matthew 8:23–27; 14:22–33

**Opening Prayer:** Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

**Purpose:** To explore trusting Jesus in uncertainty and fear.

### Background

Two storm stories:

- Jesus calms storm
- Peter walks on water

Both show: fear, uncertainty, trust

Jesus is present in the storm.

### Session Movement

Fear → Jesus present → trust grows

### Read Matthew 8:23–27

Reflect:

- What stands out?
- Why were the disciples afraid?
- What does Jesus do?

### Read Matthew 14:22–33

Reflect:

- What do you notice about Peter?
- What helps him?
- What causes him to sink?

### Going Deeper

- What do these stories show about faith?
- What do they show about Jesus?
- What do they show about fear?

### Connecting to Life

- What storms do people face today?
- What helps us trust?
- What does “Jesus is present” mean?

## **Key Themes**

Jesus is present

Faith grows slowly

Fear is normal

Trust deepens

## **Closing Prayer**

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## **Session 6 – Growing Faith**

Text: Matthew 13:1–23; 31–33

## **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

## **Purpose**

To explore how faith grows slowly and often in unseen ways.

## **Background**

Jesus teaches in parables — stories that reveal deeper truth.

The parable of the sower shows different responses to God's Word.

The mustard seed and yeast show how God's kingdom grows:

- quietly
- slowly
- powerfully

Growth is often not immediate — but real.

## **Session Movement**

Word is planted → growth happens → fruit develops

## **Read Matthew 13:1–23**

Reflect

- What stands out?
- Which “soil” do you relate to?

## Read Matthew 13:31–33

### Reflect

- What do these images suggest?
- What surprises you about growth?

### Going Deeper

- What does this teach us about faith?
- Why does growth take time?
- What does this say about God’s work?

### Connecting to Life

- Where have you seen growth in faith?
- Where are you waiting for growth?
- what encourages patience?

### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## Session 7 – Who Do You Say I Am?

Text: Matthew 16:13–20

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Purpose

To reflect on who Jesus is and our personal response to him.

### Background

Jesus asks a direct and personal question:  
“Who do you say I am?”

Peter’s answer marks a turning point.

Following Jesus becomes deeper —  
moving from curiosity to conviction.

### Session Movement

Question → Response → Identity → Faith

## Read Matthew 16:13–20

### Reflect

- What stands out?
- Why does Jesus ask this question?

### Going Deeper

- What does Peter's answer mean?
- Why is this moment important?
- What does it reveal about Jesus?

### Connecting to Life

- Who is Jesus to you?
- How has your understanding grown?
- What difference does this make in daily life?

### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## Session 8 – Forgiveness and Grace

Text: Matthew 18:21–35

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Purpose

To explore receiving and offering forgiveness.

### Background

Peter asks: “How many times should I forgive?”

Jesus answers with a parable: forgiven servant - unforgiving response

### The focus:

We forgive because we are forgiven.

**This is about:** grace, freedom, release

### Session Movement

Receive forgiveness → extend forgiveness → freedom

## Read Matthew 18:21–35

Reflect:

- What stands out?
- What surprises you?
- What is the main message?

### Going Deeper

- Why is forgiveness hard?
- What does this show about God?
- What does this show about grace?

### Connecting to Life

- What helps forgiveness?
- Why is it difficult?
- What does forgiveness look like?

### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## Session 9 – The Servant Way

Text: Matthew 20:20–28

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Purpose

To explore what true greatness looks like in God's kingdom.

### Background

The disciples are thinking about status and position. Jesus gently reshapes their understanding.

Greatness is not about power — it is about serving.

Jesus points to himself as the example.

### Session Movement

Ambition → Reframed → Servanthood

## Read Matthew 20:20–28

### Reflect

- What stands out?
- What are the disciples asking for?

### Going Deeper

- How does Jesus redefine greatness?
- Why is this challenging?

### Connecting to Life

- Where do we feel pressure to achieve or compare?
- What does serving look like in everyday life?
- Where might God be inviting a different way?

### Key Themes

Servanthood – Humility - Following Jesus' example

### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## Session 10 – The Road to the Cross

Text: Matthew 26:26–30; 36–46

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### Purpose

To reflect on Jesus' love, surrender, and the cost of following.

### Background

This is a deeply personal moment in Jesus' journey.

At the table: · Jesus gives himself

In the garden: · Jesus struggles · Jesus prays · Jesus surrenders

This reveals both his humanity and his trust in the Father.

## Session Movement

Love → Struggle → Surrender → Faithfulness

### Read Matthew 26:26–30

#### Reflect

- What stands out?
- What does this meal mean?

### Read Matthew 26:36–46

#### Reflect

- What do you notice about Jesus' prayer?
- What emotions are present?

#### Going Deeper

- What does this show about Jesus?
- What does surrender look like?

#### Connecting to Life

- Where is surrender difficult?
- What helps us trust God's will?

#### Closing Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## Session 11 – Resurrection Hope

Text: Matthew 28:1–10

Opening Prayer: Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

#### Purpose

To conclude with resurrection hope and following Jesus.

#### Background

The resurrection brings:

- fear → joy
- loss → hope
- ending → beginning

The women:

- come grieving
- hear the news
- meet Jesus
- are sent

### **Session Movement**

Fear → Resurrection → Joy → Sent

### **Read Matthew 28:1–10**

#### **Reflect:**

- What stands out?
- What emotions do you notice?
- What changes in this story?

#### **Going Deeper**

- What does resurrection change?
- What does this show about Jesus?
- Why is hope important?

#### **Connecting to Life**

- Where is hope needed?
- What does resurrection look like today?
- How does hope shape life?

**Closing Prayer** Gracious God, thank you for meeting us in your Word. Help us to carry this into our week. Amen.

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## **Session 12 – Sent with Hope**

Text: Matthew 28:16–20

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, as we open your Word, open our hearts. Help us to hear your voice and follow you in our daily lives. Amen.

### **Purpose**

To conclude with purpose, calling, and ongoing faith.

## **Background**

After the resurrection, Jesus gathers his followers and sends them.

This is not pressure — it is invitation.

Jesus promises:

“I am with you always.”

## **Session Movement**

Encounter → Sent → Purpose → Presence

## **Read Matthew 28:16–20**

### **Reflect**

- What stands out?
- What do you notice about the disciples?

### **Going Deeper**

- What does Jesus ask them to do?
- What does this mean for us today?

### **Connecting to Life**

- Where are we “sent” in everyday life?
- What gives confidence?
- What does it mean that Jesus is with us?

## **Closing the Study**

Consider:

- one word reflection
- a responsive prayer
- quiet thanksgiving

### **Final Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank you for walking with us through Matthew.

Help us to continue following you, trusting you, and living your kingdom in everyday life.

Amen.