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Welcome to the New Life Podcast, a ministry of New Life Presbyterian Church in Ithaca, New York. Today we have this week's sermon, preached by Tim LaCroix, our senior pastor. Join us for worship each week at 10 o'clock at 950 Danby Road, Ithaca, New York. You can also visit us on our website, [www.newlifeithaca.org](http://www.newlifeithaca.org). Now here's this week's sermon.

00:43

A reading of the Gospel of St. Luke, chapter 24, verses 13 through 35. Please stand if you're able.

00:54

That very day, two of them were going to a village named Emmaus about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, what is this conversation you're holding with each other as you walk? They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them named Cleopas answered him,

01:20

Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days? And he said to them, what things? And they said to him, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it's now the third day since these things have happened.

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Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back, saying they'd even seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. And he said to

them, oh, foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?

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and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. So when they drew near to the village to which they were going, he acted as if he was going further. But they urged him strongly saying, stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent. So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

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and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together saying, the Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon. And then they told what had happened on the road and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread. The gospel of the Lord.

03:17

I have a question for you. What do you want? Not just, you know, what do you want right now, but what do you really want in the depths of who you are? What are your longings, your desires, your hopes, your dreams? This week someone asked me what I thought was an interesting question. I was at my annual pastors retreat with a group of ten guys that we have a

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Cohort together and we get together once a year to pray with each other Encourage each other and we also have a prayer partner that we meet with over the phone once a week for prayer and encouragement We do some other things to help each other hold each other accountable and so forth But I was there this week and one of the guys asked a very

interesting question. We're probably sitting around the campfire He said if you could wave a magic wand at your church

04:12

What thing would you just magically have fixed, appear, etc.? I thought it was a great question. And my answer would probably be pretty revealing about some of the things that I'm concerned about. But here's my question to you. If you could wave a magic wand and change something in your life, have something fixed or something that happened or appear or whatever, what would it be? What would it be? I think a question like that is important because it gets at our deepest longings.

04:42

Would we wish for achievement and success? Would we wish for healing? Would we wish for relationships either to be restored or to find them? What would we wish for?

04:56

Psychologists address this issue of wanting, they tell us, the psychologists would tell us, I read an article this week about this, that if you have desires, unmet desires and wants, typically makes you unhappy. I don't know that you needed to be a psychologist to know that, but what you'll see psychologists saying is that the answer to your unmet desires and wants is not to...

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always be pursuing those desires and wants, but to get to the place where you are okay not getting the desires and the wants. In other words, the answer is detachment. Now, because you're never going to get everything you desire and want, and so the key to happiness is to not be as concerned with those desires and wants. Now, if that sounds Buddhist, it kind of is. The article that I was reading quoted some scriptures from Buddhist...

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verses from Buddhist scripture. So on one hand we have the idea of detachment. You can't get what you want, so you need to be detached from your wants and your desires. On the other hand we have hedonism, which says we should pursue pleasure, we should pursue the things that we want, the things that we desire. It's interesting because

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I've been talking recently about how lot of people in our culture believe in God, but most people have a view of God that sociologists and philosophers of religion have called moralistic therapeutic deism. Which is basically this, God is there to give us a moral code to in some way judge between right and wrong at the end and to give us gifts. Right? God is a cosmic Santa Claus, He's a gift giver. He gives us things. We go to Him, He gives us gifts.

06:48

And so we see on the one hand the key to happiness is detachment. On the other hand, the key to happiness is getting the things we want.

06:57

But what's the gospel say about this? What is the gospel solution to unmet desires, unmet hopes, unmet needs? Well, in the text today, we find some people who have unmet desires, hopes, and longing.

07:18

We're going to go back to the beginning of chapter 24 of Luke. So if you want to open up your Bibles, you can turn there. I'm just going to set up the second half of that we read today with the first half. Because as I told you on Easter Sunday morning, this whole chapter is a unit. And to divide it in half is a little bit arbitrary. So I'm glad to be able to come back and tie it together. In the first half of Luke 24, Luke presents a problem. And the problem is

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the body of the Lord Jesus is absent. It says in verse 3, when they went in the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. This is the problem. And what's the solution? To find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it's a very practical thing for believers because we don't have Christ physically present with us. Jesus Christ, His physical body, His historical body that was born of Mary, suffered on the cross, rose from the grave.

08:14

is in heaven, Christ is in heaven so we don't have the body of the Lord and several places in scripture it says blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe Lucas addressing this problem we do not have the body of the Lord Jesus we do not have it and then we see the disciples when Jesus falls in with these two disciples on their way to Emmaus they talk about this they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus and the conclusion to the problem is they find the body of

08:44

So that's the problem and the solution that Luke sets up. But as we look at the specifics of the people involved, we see this group of women. And we see them described in verse 10. Now Luke's cataloging of the people that were present at the resurrection is, he describes more people present than any of the other gospel writers. Now one may attribute it to Luke's historical maximalism.

09:14

He says he's trying to put everything together. know, perhaps, you know, some of these folks, after Matthew and Mark wrote their Gospels, were sitting around saying, you know, but I was there too, and maybe that made that into Luke's Gospel. But as I've told you before, the reason why the Gospels have differences in the way they're reported is not because they have discrepancies in what happened, it's because they are intending to articulate different theological purposes.

09:42

And that's true of Luke. Luke does say that he looked at sources, he interviewed people and put together historical account, but I don't think that's why he mentions all these folks. I

think the reason why he mentions all these folks is because this is a diverse group of people with different stories, different desires, and different needs. So who do we see described here in verse 10? The first we see is Mary Magdalene. She's the only person that is described in all four gospels as being present at the resurrection.

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Who is Mary Magdalene? Well, tradition says that Mary Magdalene was a woman who was in prostitution, who was basically delivered by Jesus, but that's nowhere in the scripture, and it could be true, but the first person who mentions that is Gregory the Great in 590 AD in a sermon. I love Gregory the Great, but we don't know where that came from. What does the Bible say happened to Mary Magdalene? That she had seven spirits that tormented her, and Jesus healed her. So what does Mary represent?

10:41

Mary represents people who are longing for healing. Longing for healing, longing for deliverance from either physical ailments, mental, psychological ailments. There's many people who can resonate with the longing for healing. I think that was what Mary represents. She had been healed. She is grateful forever to the man who healed her, and she is seeking him. She longs for him.

11:08

So Mary's longing is for healing. think Mary's longing also represents the longing for leadership. They have lost their leader. And Mary sort of is the leader of the women disciples is kind of the point in the story that emphasizes this. That they are void of leadership.

11:31

Then we see Mary of Clopas. What do we know about Mary of Clopas? Well, if we look at the other passages that mention this Mary, we find that she is the mother of James and Joseph, and she is apparently the sister-in-law of Mary, the mother of Jesus. What we infer from the Gospels is that both Joseph, Mary's husband, Jesus' adopted father, and Clopas, the husband of this Mary,

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had both died young. And so apparently they had joined together as a family in order to help raise the kids in the family. So what does Mary of Clopas represent? She represents family and the loss of relationship. Many of us can relate with that longing, the longing for relationship, either relationships that have been lost due to loved ones dying or relationships that have been destroyed because of sin.

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or the longing for future relationships that we do not have yet. Many of us share in this longing. The longing for human connection, the longing for intimacy, the longing for family. So we have the longing for healing, the longing for lost leadership, the longing for family and relationship. Then we have Joanna. Joanna is not mentioned in any other Gospels. Luke is the only one who mentions her. Who is she?

12:57

Well, we are told elsewhere in Luke that Joanna was the wife of Herod the Tetrarch's steward. So she was in the royal household, so to speak. And we're also told that this Herod, the Tetrarch, is the one who, on top of all his evil that he committed, added to it that he arrested John the Baptist. Then we know later that he added even more to that evil that he, in a moment of...

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I guess you would say a moment of passion, having his niece slash daughter-in-law dance before his friends, giving her, saying to her, you can have whatever you want, and coached by her mother, she says, I want the head of John the Baptist on a plate. I think Joanna then represents the need for atonement. Did Joanna do this? No. But was she a part of the group of people that perpetrated this atrocity?

13:57

Yes, and even though she may not be morally culpable, I think she represents the need to be there. The need to be there for Jesus because of the awful thing that she witnessed. It is a need for atonement. It is a need to make things right.

14:13

We also have in one other gospel mentioned by name Salome. I think Salome is the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, the John who wrote the gospel of John and the letters of John and James, his brother, who was the second martyr of the church. I think Salome also represents atonement to an extent, you know, because she did this really cringey thing of telling her sons to go up and ask to be the first and second at Jesus' kingdom.

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But she also represents the need for family. But then Luke throws in other women. It's interesting to mention there were some other women there. And I think the other women represent all of us, all of our longings and hopes and desires, unmet, that are different and varied. And all of that together is represented by the women coming to the tomb. And what is it that they are told?

15:08

They are told that they are seeking the living one among the dead. They are told that the things they are seeking, the way that they are seeking to meet these needs is dead. They are dead things. And specifically, the method of meeting those needs is following the law. We see the very last verse, the very last word in chapter 23 of Luke is commandment.

15:36

Luke makes an emphasis that they kept the commandment. And that's a good thing. He says, on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But then there's the turn from commandment to life. And isn't it true that in many ways we seek to meet these longings and desires through our own efforts, through our own striving, by doing things. If we have a longing for achievement, by working hard, for wealth, by going out and getting it. If for family and intimacy,



16:05

by pursuing relationships. We do things. We do things. And in this respect, the psychologists are right. You're never going to meet your needs by doing things. You are seeking the living among the dead. It will never happen. It will never satisfy you. That doesn't mean we don't do things that are happy and pleasing. That's not what the Bible teaches. It teaches against asceticism. But we need to keep in mind that those things will never ultimately be the answer. So what is?

16:33

The angels say, you will not find the living one among the dead. We must seek the living one. And how do we seek him? How do we find him? That is the answer. The first part of the chapter sets up that the answer delivers in the part we read for today. Where do we find Jesus the living one?

16:54

Well the first thing we see, and I'm going to cover three things briefly, know, spent most of my time setting that up. The first thing we see is we find the living one in the teaching and preaching of his word. The teaching and preaching of his word. We see that Jesus falls in with these two disciples, they do not recognize him. They ask him some questions which are pretty embarrassing in retrospect. And so Jesus begins on the seven mile journey which would have taken about

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two hours, if you were trying to walk seven miles, it take about two hours, more or less. So, engages in a two-hour long Bible study, beginning with Moses and the prophets explaining how all of it refers to him. And I've referred to this before as the greatest Bible study ever given. And it truly was, and I'm sure we wish we could all be there. So, the teaching of not only the reading of the Word, but the exposition of the Word.

17:51

It is the teaching of the word. Jesus is explaining the word. These disciples had the word before. They were about Judeans. They had been to the synagogue. They had been to the temple. So had all the apostles. So had Mary and all the female companions. They had all gotten the word, but what they hadn't got was the explanation of the word. And the Spirit's action, because later we see them saying, didn't our hearts burn within us?

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So it's not just the reading of the Word, it is the teaching and explanation of the Word and the operation of the Spirit which gives us the presence of the living one. You know, we can pursue Bible reading and we can pursue Bible teaching in all sorts of places. And we should, I mean we can, it's not a requirement, but we can, there's nothing wrong with it, it can be edified.

18:48

But it's not only the exposition of the Word, but secondly, in the context of Christ's body, that the living one becomes present for us. I think this becomes clear when they come to the house, sit at the table. So Jesus gives us this instruction. They sit at the table, and He breaks bread. And what's clear from here, especially as we take it with other passages, for example, from Acts 2, that Luke writes,

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is it is the community of God's people which these things become real. And so what Luke is laying out for us is the living one, the body of Christ can be found when the authoritative teaching of God's word is taking presence in the midst of God's people. And so here we have the social element of the gospel or the social element of the Lord's Supper because that's where we're going if you haven't figured it out, the third point. But the social element is this.

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that Paul, because of this very strong horizontal aspect of the communion that we have with each other, calls the church the body of Christ. He does it in several of his epistles. And we are very familiar with calling the church the body of Christ. And so where can you

find the body of the Lord Jesus? You find it here. You find it in church. When we're gathered together to worship God,

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under the teaching of the word and celebration of the sacrament we find the body of Christ it is all around you as Augustine says look around you you will see the body of Christ and there's some truth to this it's really powerful just give you an example for those seeking healing we can find healing in the body of Christ now can we find medical cures well perhaps if we had a doctor or nurse we might find some medical cures

20:37

But we find much more than that. We find sustenance in our healing. Let me tell you a story. Some of you have heard this story before. About 20 years ago, there was a young couple. He was starting law school here at Cornell. Very first semester in law school, he was diagnosed with cancer. Young married couple, first, imagine this, guys, first semester of law school in a new city. They come from the South. And they have this huge thing dropped on them.

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Now they had been attending this church, New Life Church. And the body did not say, oh, you haven't put in enough time yet. You haven't served us enough. We don't know you well enough. They didn't say any of those things. They just jumped in and served. They just jumped in and started helping. The wife relayed to me that there was not a single day that if it snowed that her driveway wasn't cleared and her sidewalk wasn't cleared. They had food on their table. They had folks to help with.

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with their lives in different ways, taking them to various medical treatments and so forth. This body was not able to offer physical medical cures, but was able to offer healing in the midst of that sickness. Soul healing, heart healing, which of course is important for the body. So can the body of Christ fulfill our longing for healing? Yes, it can. We may not be fully healed until the resurrection. Many of us won't.

22:03

But we can have that longing fulfilled in the body of Christ. We can have that longing for family and relationship fulfilled in the body of Christ. We can have the need for atonement to be fulfilled in the body of Christ as we confess our sins to one another and are forgiven. And people accept us in spite of our sin and our shame. We can find that in the body of Christ. We can find the answer to all these longings here in the body of Christ.

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But thirdly, we see and ultimately what this passage is about as we find the body of the Lord Jesus in the sacrament of the Lord's Son.

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Luke could not be any clearer. We do not have the physical body of Christ present with us. How do we solve this problem? We need the Living One. We need to seek the Living One. Where do we find Him?

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When we get to the end of this little passage, it says that the day was spent, Jesus acted like he was going to keep walking. So they said, no, no, no, please come in with us and eat. And we see in verse 30, it says, when he was at table with him, he took bread and he blessed it and he broke it and he gave it to them. Now we're familiar with that threefold action, bless, break, give. It's every Sunday we hear that in the Lord's Supper.

23:24

And so after he blessed it, after he broke it, remember, fulfilled with the content of the teaching of the Word of God that has been given, blessed, broken, given, and right then, their eyes were opened, they recognized him, and he vanished. Now that is a very interesting and important part of the story, I think. What is it communicating? Why did he vanish? Right at the moment where they recognized him, is to communicate,

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that the body of Christ is not visible to us, He's gone, but He's present through the breaking of bread. They understand that and then they say, whoa, didn't our heart burn within us? I think it is interesting that then they go back to the Word of God after their eyes are opened, right? After their eyes are opened. And I also find it interesting that Luke is communicating that the teaching of the Word alone is not enough. Isn't that...

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I don't think you can escape that. It is the Word and the Sacrament that is necessary for life. And after the Sacrament comes, their eyes are open and they realize they can find the body of the Lord Jesus. You can find the living one amongst his people under the teaching of his Word and the reception of his Sacraments. And I don't want us to escape one last thing about this.

24:51

is that in this sacrament there is a miracle. There's actually two miracles in this text. The first miracle is that these two men who are very familiar with this person do not recognize them. That's a miracle. It may be a small miracle, like turning Coke into Pepsi or something like that, but it nevertheless is one. He doesn't recognize them. He doesn't recognize them. And that's one of them. But the second one, obviously, is the biggest one. Jesus vanishes.

25:22

Now, this is not an illusion. It is not magic. It is a divine intervention, a demonstration of the power of God. It's a miracle. How is it that we can eat ordinary bread? And I'll just give you a little, pull the curtain back. Ordinary bread that we bought from Wegmans, okay? Ordinary port wine that we got from Northside Wine and Spirits, or grape juice that we bought at Walmart. How is it these ordinary things can communicate

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The Living God. It is a miracle, friends. It is a miracle of divine power. Does the power come from me? No, no, no, it does not.

26:01

The church is taught, and we believe that the power in the sacrament comes from the words of Christ. It's all word based. The power of the words of Christ to do this miraculous thing. The power of the words of Christ read and heard, spoken, this is my body, this is my blood. And the church is taught the assent of the people. This is why every Sunday after I pray the prayer, I ask you to say, Amen. Your assent with the word of Christ

26:30

The Spirit works through that to bring us the connection with the Living One, the God of the universe. And though we cannot explain how this happens, we do believe that we have a real connection with Him in this sacrament. You know, our confession teaches that as real as the outward elements are to our senses, so real is the presence of Christ to us in that moment. So as you...

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As real as the bread is to you, as you taste it, as you smell it, as you hold it in your hand, as real as the wine is to you, as you hold it in your hand, as you drink it, as you taste it, as you feel it coming down into your esophagus, as real as all of that is, just as real, are the body of Christ and His blood to you in that moment in His humanity. You want to find the Living One? You find Him with God's people surrounded

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in word and sacrament with the miracle of the Spirit making it all happen.

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What does this say about our longings and desires?

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I want to tell you a story about Thomas Aquinas. So Thomas Aquinas is probably one of the most well-known Christian theologians and teachers. Hopefully you've heard of him, maybe you have. He was a scholastic theologian. taught in the 13th century in the 1200s. He spent his life

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in a pursuit of knowledge. That's what scholastic theology was about, to find the knowledge of all things through faith and reason. This is what they did. And Thomas wrote and wrote and wrote, pursuing answers to things all day long, every week, every year. He pursued answers to theological questions. He pursued answers to big questions like, how do we know God exists? And he gave, actually, I think, one of the best answers to that in the argument from first causes, or the unmoved mover.

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his version of it. But as he was nearing the end of his life, and he shouldn't have been nearing in all accounts because he was only 50 years old, but he was writing a book called, what he would call the Summa Theologica, the sum of theology. And in it was going to contain the fruit of all his labor for all those years. And before he finished it, one day, as he was celebrating the Lord's Supper, something happened.

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He doesn't tell us what happened. But something happened. Was it a revelation of the reality of what he was participating in? Was the curtain drawn back like it was for John or like it was for Elijah, like it was for Paul, like it was for Moses or Isaiah? To see the reality of what really is happening with the eyes of faith? Did something like that happen for him? I think so. Because after he experienced that, he stopped writing.

29:29

He stopped writing and his one of his brothers in the monastery one of his friends Who helped him out with his writings came to him over and over and said brother Thomas? Are you gonna finish your book? Are you gonna finish your book and Thomas says I can write no

more All that I have written is but straw Something happened to him where he realized the heavenly reality that is present when we are together and with as God's people

29:59

This heavenly reality we were told from 2nd Corinthians to see the things that are unseen. And what is the thing that is unseen? Is that when we are gathered as God's people coming to this table, we are entering heaven. And if we could see what is real in that moment, we would see angels and we would see archangels and we would see all the company of heaven and all the hosts saying, holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come. We would see lightning. We would hear peals of thunder.

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we will be awed by the presence of the Almighty. That is the reality. And if we could experience that yet for but a moment, if we could get into our hearts and our minds that that is really what's going on in that moment, we would also say all our pursuits are but straw. All our pursuit of success and achievement is but straw. All our pursuit of pleasure and relationships is but straw.

30:59

That doesn't mean we don't have those things. That doesn't mean we can't experience those things. But what it means is they will never fully satisfy. What will fully satisfy us is the knowledge of the Living God. And that is the point of chapter 24 of Luke. Where can you find the Living One? You find Him in the presence of God's people under His Word, sharing the sacrament of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

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And my prayer for us is that we would either today or some other day have a sense of vision. Not many of us get those. But a really palpable sense of what is going on that will change our hearts and change our lives and fulfill us and satisfy us so that we realize everything else is but strong. Let's pray.



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