



Jesus Is Alive

Goal: To proclaim the risen Christ in the way we live our lives.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In John 20:1–18

It was amazing news! On Easter morning, after the terrible Friday when Jesus was crucified and buried, the disciples were astonished when Mary Magdalene, who had been to the tomb of Jesus, burst in to say: “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they’ve put him” (v. 2, CEB). Peter and another disciple went to the tomb and found the grave clothes there—but no Jesus (vv. 3–7).

Then Jesus appeared to Mary when she returned to the tomb. She thought he was a gardener, but when he said her name—“Mary”—she knew who he was and said, “Teacher” (v. 16, CEB). Then, Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, “I’ve seen the Lord” (v. 18, CEB).

The message of Easter is: Jesus is alive! Outside the empty tomb, Mary had met the living Jesus. This good news made all the difference in the world to her, and to Jesus’ disciples to whom Jesus later appeared. The resurrection of Jesus Christ became the foundation of the Christian church.

Today, we proclaim the living Christ by our words and by the way we live our lives. The life Jesus lived is the model for how we live as his disciples: full of grace and gratitude!

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

The familiar story of Easter is always fresh because it gives us a chance to tell it again with a new group of children. They can hear it and imagine it through the lens of Mary Magdalene—a woman who was a witness to Jesus’ resurrection and met the risen Lord. Children can understand the experience of seeing something happen, of being a witness and then telling about what happened. As they tell about an incident, they then become interpreters of that event. In hearing this story again with children, we can be witnesses, saying with others, “He is risen.” And we can be interpreters, sharing with others the good news of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Because this story is so familiar, there is the danger of thinking, “What new thing can we learn from it since we know it so well?” The challenge of teaching a familiar story with children is approaching it with good questions. Children’s natural curiosity can be engaged with questions like these: Can you imagine what it must have been like for Mary or the disciples when they came to the empty tomb? How do you think Jesus wants us to live today? Invite children to share their own wonderings and questions about this story.

Christ is risen! Thank you, God, for raising him from the dead and saving us from our sin. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 5, 22, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

white tablecloth

plants or flowers

large trash bag

recycled paper

Grace Notes (GN) 1

simple biblical costumes

Responding

Claiming

craft foam cut into
1" x 9" strips, variety of
buttons, plastic needles
that fit the button holes,
thread

Celebrating

plastic Easter eggs

Praying

copies of GN 2

Extra

copies of GN 3

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“Claiming God’s Grace” and “Celebrating God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG

Greet the children by name and with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt the children to respond, “He is risen indeed!” Invite all to make and decorate a construction-paper Easter name tag, since you may have visitors or newcomers joining you today. Attach the name tags to clothing with masking tape.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a candle, a white cloth (white is the liturgical [church] color for Easter), and plants or flowers to go on and around the table. Suggest that some children create the “stone” that was rolled away by providing a large trash bag and plenty of paper from the recycle bin. Place it to the side of the worship table.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities, and suggest that one or two children prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite several volunteers to practice reading today’s Scripture passage.

As children create the space, cut apart the cards on **GN 1** and encourage conversation about their favorite Easter traditions—the ways their families observe the day, special things they participate in at church, or the parts they recall and love about Easter worship in the past.

Singing

Play and sing “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”—**MM 22; SCM 25**.

Praying

MS VI

Turn on the candle. As you pray with your voice, invite the children to repeat your words and motions.

Jesus, you are the risen Lord, and we jump for joy because
you are alive. (*jump or raise arms up high*) /

Jesus, you are the risen Lord, and we clap in delight because
you are alive. (*clap hands*) /

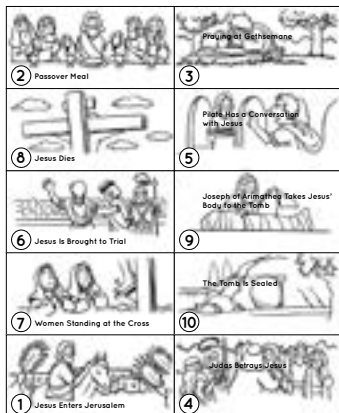
Jesus, you are the risen Lord, and we shout, “Alleluia!”
because you are alive. (*shout, “Alleluia!”*) /

Jesus, you are the risen Lord, and we exclaim, “Thank you,
God!” for God’s power over death. (*bow and say, “Thank
you, God!”*) /



For the grace of the resurrected Jesus, we are grateful. (*touch the tips of your right-hand fingers to your lips and move your hand outward*) /
Amen. /

GN 1 Solution:



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Preparing to Hear the Story

Ask the children to recall Palm Sunday. Exclaim that between Palm Sunday and Easter a lot happened!

Ask the group to gather around the cards from **GN 1** and work together to put the sequence of events of Holy Week—the week between Palm Sunday and Easter—in order. Children who were with you at the last session may remember some of these events. Encourage them to share what they know about the different pictures. End the discussion by reminding them that Jesus was crucified and died. He was buried in a tomb (a cave) and the entrance to the cave was covered with a large stone. Jesus' friends were sad, afraid, and confused.

Hearing the Story

L B

Invite a child to find John 20 in the Bible. Have volunteers read John 20:1–18. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story again using **SCM 5** or listen to the story audio so that you can help lead the children's actions. Prompt the children's participation at these points of the story:

- ✦ Mary Magdalene walked along the road. (*pat hands on thighs*)
- ✦ She was crying. (*make soft crying sounds*)
- ✦ The tomb was open and empty. (*make a shocked face*)
- ✦ She ran to tell Jesus' disciples. (*pat hands on thighs quickly*)
- ✦ They came back . . . as fast as they could. (*pat hands on thighs harder and faster*)
- ✦ Mary heard her name. (*make a surprised face*)
- ✦ Mary ran as fast as she could to tell the other disciples. (*pat hands on thighs quickly*)

Reflecting on God's Grace

A MS L

Invite the children to reflect on the story using the following questions:

- ✦ Why do you think Mary was going to the tomb?
- ✦ What do you think the disciples thought when Mary said she couldn't find Jesus?
- ✦ What do you think the disciples thought as they went back home?
- ✦ How do you think Mary felt when Jesus said her name?



Invite the children to take turns, as they feel comfortable, telling what they would say if they were at the tomb and Jesus called them by name, and then what they would say to their friends as they ran to tell them what had happened.

Singing

SD

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing together “It Is Easter”—**MM 18; SCM 22**. Hand out rhythm instruments and sing the song again using the instruments. Turn off the candle.

SD *Sensory issues may affect one sense— hearing, touch, or taste—or may affect a number of senses. For some children, sounds from rhythm instruments may be painful or overwhelming. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning, allowing them time to process the stimuli.*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.



Claiming God’s Grace

LD VI

Remind the children that, in the story, Mary did not recognize Jesus at first. Ask them to recall what made her recognize Jesus. Then reread this line from the story:

“Mary,” the figure said. As soon as Mary heard her name, she knew who he was. It was Jesus! He was alive!

Offer that Jesus knew and loved Mary. Mary heard Jesus call her name and recognized him as her resurrected Lord. Tell the children that Jesus knows and loves each of them, too, and that they will make a reminder for themselves:

- ✦ Allow the children to select a button and a strip of craft foam.
- ✦ Show them how to sew the button to one end of the foam.
- ✦ Help them wrap the foam around their wrist with the button side up.
- ✦ Making sure it is loose enough to be comfortable, they can mark where the button is with the needle.
- ✦ Have them fold the foam at the mark and cut a slit big enough to push the button through, then round that end of the bracelet.
- ✦ Invite them to write their name on the bracelet and decorate it with the markers.

Encourage each child to wear the bracelet to remind them that Jesus lives and knows each of our names.



Celebrating God's Grace

B MS

Before the session, write each of the following statements on slips of paper and place one slip in each plastic Easter egg, making one egg for each child (you may repeat statements): Jesus is alive! Christ is risen! I have seen Jesus! He is risen indeed!

Invite the children to recall all of the running that took place within the story. Play a Celebration Relay Game.

- ✦ Form two groups, each lining up at one end of the space.
- ✦ Hand the egg with the message to the first person in the line.
- ✦ Allow just that person to open the egg and read the message and then put it back in the egg and close it. That person runs it to the person in front of the line across the space.
- ✦ As they hand off the egg, the person who receives the egg opens it and reads the secret message.
- ✦ Repeat the process until every child has read the message.

Each time a group runs across the room, shout out one of the following suggestions, or one of your own, to make the game more interesting:

- ✦ You are really excited. Run fast!
- ✦ Oh no! You tripped on a rock. Hop on one foot.
- ✦ All this running is tiring. Walk slowly.
- ✦ It has started to rain. Cover your head.
- ✦ Shh! There are soldiers nearby. Tiptoe.
- ✦ Watch out! There are donkey droppings on the ground. Zigzag to avoid them.

When all have seen the message, ask, “What’s the good news?” and invite their enthusiastic response!

MS *Make sure children with mobility issues are included in all activities. Find ways to adapt activities to ensure all are able to fully participate.*

Praying God's Grace

Jesus’ tomb was a place where his followers went when they felt sad and scared. It became a place where they celebrated his resurrection and God’s power.

Play “Gbemi, Jesu (Lift Me, Jesus)”—**MM 15**—while the children work.

- ✦ Provide copies of **GN 2** and colored pencils for each child.
- ✦ Invite the children to write or draw things they feel sad or scared about inside the tomb.
- ✦ Invite them to write or draw things they are happy about and bring them joy outside the tomb.

If a sock drive was planned during the March 10 session, check on progress and wind up the drive. Plan to deliver the socks.



After sufficient time, comment that we all experience times of sadness and joy.

Offer a prayer of thanks to God for being present in and having power over our sadness, confusion, and joy.

Afterward, do this echo reading:

We are the Easter people. /
Our lives are changed forever. /
We know that Jesus lives. /

Extra Activity

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and pencils. Tell the children to help Mary Magdalene share the good news with the disciples. Encourage them to find the correct path from the open tomb to the blank space. Mary will travel over hills and under tunnels.

Invite them to add a picture of themselves among the disciples in the empty space, as they have now heard the good news of Jesus being alive! For more of a challenge, have children either name the eleven disciples or look them up in the Bible (Luke 6:12–16) and write their names in the open areas on the page.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to clean up the worship space.

Invite the children to consider how the risen Jesus changed the lives of his followers. Invite them to consider how the risen Jesus changes their lives too. Welcome all of their ideas.

End with this motion prayer. You will speak the words and the children will respond with their bodies.

Jesus, you're alive! Help us tell others with our words.

(extend hands from mouths)

Jesus, you're alive! Help us show others with our actions.

(extend arms from chest)

Jesus, you're alive! Help us love others with your love. *(cross arms over chest)*

God, we are grateful for the grace of the risen Jesus. Amen.

(place hands in prayer)

Send the children with these words:

(Name), share the good news of Easter! Jesus is alive!

Encourage any visitors to join your group again next week.



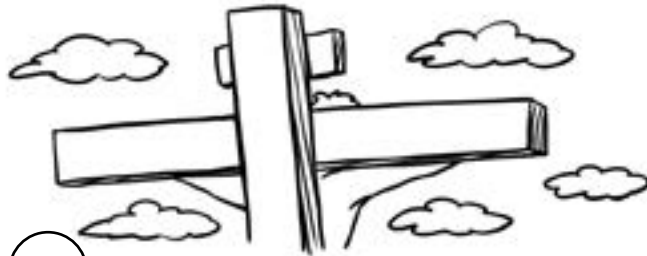
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



Passover Meal



Praying at Gethsemane



Jesus Dies



Pilate Has a Conversation with Jesus



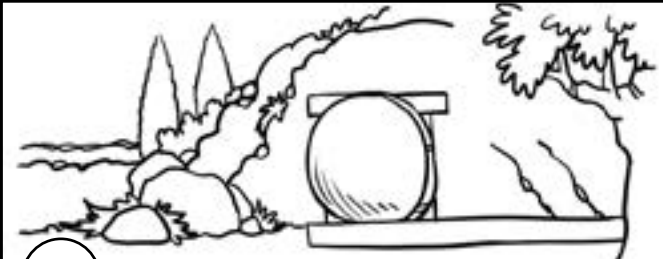
Jesus Is Brought to Trial



Joseph of Arimathea Takes Jesus' Body to the Tomb



Women Standing at the Cross



The Tomb Is Sealed



Jesus Enters Jerusalem



Judas Betrays Jesus

