



Nothing Is Impossible

Goal: To wonder what is possible with God.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 1:37, 39-40, 46-55

Mary hears the most incredible news of her life. She is going to have a baby; but not only that, it is God's Son. "How can that be?" she questions the angel messenger. "Nothing is impossible with God," the angel replies. Truer words could not be spoken. Nothing is impossible with God. Mary quickly goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, whom Mary hears is also expecting a baby in her old age. Nothing is impossible. Mary sings. She is exuberant in her praise. Her first words, at least as they have been translated into and from Latin, are "my soul magnifies the Lord!" Other translations have said "glorifies" or "praises," but Mary's heart, soul, and song burst, enlarge, and increase with praise to God. She acknowledges what a blessing it is to be chosen, to be set apart for such a special purpose. Then the song changes. It's no longer about Mary and her blessing, but she becomes prophetic as she sees that nothing is impossible for God, not even turning the world upside down.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Mary's song may not be familiar to many children, but it has so much children can relate to. First there is the great and enthusiastic feeling of joy, unadulterated happiness. Children aren't so good at hiding their feelings yet. They feel big feels—joy and sorrow. Good news is felt in their bodies and voices, much like Mary.

Children, unfortunately, also understand disparity, although they don't yet identify it quite as such. They see that some have while others have not. In some ways, they experience dominance and power merely by the fact that they are children. However, they know what bullying is, when some exert power over others. When Mary sings about God bringing the mighty down and lifting up the oppressed, poor, and hungry, that probably feels right to a child.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Experience joy with the children. Delight in the season. Talk about those things that make the children wiggle with happiness. Wonder together how God acts in their lives in ways that would make their hearts sing and praise God!

During this Advent season, help the children recognize what is topsy-turvy in our world and how it might be as Mary describes. Wonder together if there are ways we can be God's agents of change to lift up the lowly, embrace the needy, and fill the hungry with good things.

*God of the impossible, thank you for all the things you
make possible that we think are impossible. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 3, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

purple cloth

Advent wreath, candles

angel wings from angel
costume

baby blanket

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

music-notes pictures
from “Welcoming and
Preparing”

Praying

copies of **GN 2**

Offering

lemons, cotton swabs,
iron

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the 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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and joy be with you.” Prompt them to respond with the same words.

On a table, place a purple cloth and a Bible. This is the third Sunday of Advent. Add an Advent wreath with candles. Follow the tradition of your congregation in selecting the number and color of the candles. You will turn on the candles at the end of the session.

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and invite the children to color the music notes in a festive way. Have the children arrange the worship space with angel wings, a baby blanket, and their pictures.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a couple of volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today’s reading.

As children prepare the worship space, engage in discussion about Bible stories they can recall that seem to be impossible, such as the paralytic walking, Jesus walking on water, the feeding of the multitudes, or Jesus being raised from the dead. As they mention stories, prompt them to identify why that story seems impossible.

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*

Singing

MS **T**

Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7**; **SCM 17**—celebrating God’s love and our response. Invite the children to create motions to go with the words, then sing the song again with the motions. After singing, sit quietly for a moment, breathing deeply, inviting the children to do the same.

Praying

C **LD**

Invite the children to repeat your words and actions as you pray together:

(take a deep breath) /

God, you are all around us. (arms out to sides, spin big arm circles)



God, you are within us. (*place hands over heart*) /
You make all things possible. (*use arms to make a circle overhead*)
We give you praise, (*reach up high*) /
and worship you with our lives. (*touch your toes*) /
We love you (*hands to heart*) /
with our whole selves. (*touch heads, then toes*) /
Amen. (*take a deep breath*) /

Preparing to Hear the Story

Ask children to work in pairs or small groups to do the following:

- ▼ Think of an example of some really good news for them to receive, even if it seems impossible. (In fact, the more impossible the better!)
- ▼ Act out receiving that good news for the rest of the group.

Lead everyone to clap wildly as groups present their scenarios. After everyone has had a chance to act out their impossible good news, ask the children which scenario seems most impossible. Wonder together about when news seems impossible: Does that make you more or less likely to want to share it? Why might that be?

Offer that, in today's story, Mary received some news that seemed to be impossible. Encourage children to listen for the "impossible" they hear within the story.

Hearing the Story



Invite a child to find Luke 1 in the Bible. Have volunteers read Luke 1:37, 39–40, 46–55. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship center.

Invite the children to sing the first verse of "Praise God, Praise God"—**MM 7**; **SCM 17**—after each verse of Mary's song marked with an asterisk in **SCM 3**. Read **SCM 3** or listen to the story audio, pausing at the marked places so the children may sing.

Reflecting on God's Grace

Reflect on the story with the children, using the following questions:

- ▼ What was surprising in this story?
- ▼ What parts sounded impossible?
- ▼ Elizabeth responded to Mary's impossible news with joy. Do you imagine everyone did? If you lived in Mary's village and she told you she was going to have a baby who would be the Son of God, how might you have responded to that impossible news?
- ▼ What did today's story leave you wondering about?
- ▼ What does this story teach us about God?



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.



Singing

Show the children the words to “Mary’s Song” on **SCM 18**. Point out that some Bibles use the word *magnifies* while others use *praises* or *glorifies* when Mary begins her song. Wonder together what *magnifies* means and how her heart or soul growing larger might be the same as praising or glorifying.

Sing “Praise God, Praise God”—**MM 7; SCM 17**—remembering Mary’s words as she sang her song. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 17** so the children can follow along.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to one or more children to model and encourage appropriate responses.*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Share the joy! Have the children get their music-notes pictures from the worship table. Remind children that Mary and Elizabeth shared together in the joy of Mary’s news from the angel. Mary didn’t keep this “impossible” joyful news to herself. Ask children to write or draw pictures of things that have recently given them joy. Play festive music while they work.

Have the children move around the room giving high fives or fist bumps to one another as you play “Mary’s Song”—**MM 8**. Stop the music and instruct the children that, when the music pauses, they should share the joy they recorded on their music-notes picture with whomever they are high fiving or fist bumping. Continue starting and stopping the music, giving children the opportunity to share their joy with several others. Have the children place their pictures back on the worship table as a symbol of sharing joy with God.

Praying God’s Grace

Invite the children to consider their own joyful prayers to God. Remind them that Mary received news that seemed impossible but was in fact so joyful. Elizabeth celebrated with her. Mary could not help but respond by singing a song as a prayer to God.

Provide copies of **GN 2** and colored pencils. Point out that this prayer is a part of Mary’s song that they heard in today’s story but with blanks so that they may make it their own prayer. Read each line of the prayer aloud, pausing and describing what the children need to add as their own thoughts. Invite the children to write or draw pictures.



After the children have finished their prayers, invite them to share as they wish. Say to each child, “(Name) is so happy that (he/she) sings a song, but maybe it is more than a song. Maybe it is about the seemingly impossible things God would do—for nothing is impossible with God!”



Offering God’s Grace

LG

Write “All things are possible with God!” on a sheet of newsprint. Tell the children that they will make a sign to share with someone at home when they feel like something is impossible. Explain that this sign will seem sort of impossible too! They won’t be able to see the message until it is shared.

Start with lemons. Form pairs and give each pair a lemon. Give each child a small cup, a cotton swab, and a piece of white paper. Instruct the pairs to roll the lemon back and forth on a table a few times to get it juicy. Go to each pair and cut the lemon in half. Tell the children to squeeze their lemon, dripping the juice into their cup.

Once they have some juice, instruct the children to use the cotton swab to write “All things are possible with God!” on their paper with the lemon juice. Assist with writing as needed. Comment that it may be difficult to see what they are writing, but it is not impossible!

While the children are working, make a lemon juice sign to show the children what to do when they are ready to share their sign at home. Have the children write their names at the bottom of their papers in pencil. Set aside to dry.

Tell the children that, when they need to share their sign with someone, ask for a parent or caregiver to get an iron out and set it to a medium temperature setting. Have them slowly run the iron over the paper to reveal the message. Demonstrate with an iron and the sign you made. Encourage the children to take their signs home and share them with their families to assure them that all things are possible with God!

Extra Activity

LG LD

Tell the children that they will be on a secret mission to do undercover acts of service each day in the following week. Some may complain that, “That’s impossible!” but assure them that, with God, all things are possible. Wonder together what blessings can come when we help others.

Distribute copies of **GN 3**. Read the letter together. Take time to brainstorm things that can be done in service to others. Write the ideas on newsprint or suggest that the children write them on the back side of their papers. Allow time for the children to fill out their plan.

Encourage the children to take their plan home and check off each day that they make their “mission possible” happen.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Lead children in cleaning up the worship space.

Encourage children to take their music-notes pictures and prayers with them to share their joys with someone who lives with them.

Remind the children that today is the third Sunday of Advent, often called the “Joy” Sunday. For each week until Christmas, you will light one candle preparing for Jesus.

- ▼ Turn on the first Advent candle and say, “The first candle of Advent reminds us of Isaiah, who imagined a peaceful world.”
- ▼ Turn on the second candle and say, “The second candle of Advent reminds us of Mary, who said yes to God.”
- ▼ Turn on the third candle and say, “The third candle reminds us of the joy that God brings into the world, especially when the impossible becomes possible!”

Close with the following litany, inviting the children to respond: “Nothing is impossible with God.”



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).

God, we are grateful for your grace. Use us to do your work.

Nothing is impossible with God.

You do such good things for us.

Nothing is impossible with God.

You are so awesome and powerful, loving and kind.

Nothing is impossible with God.

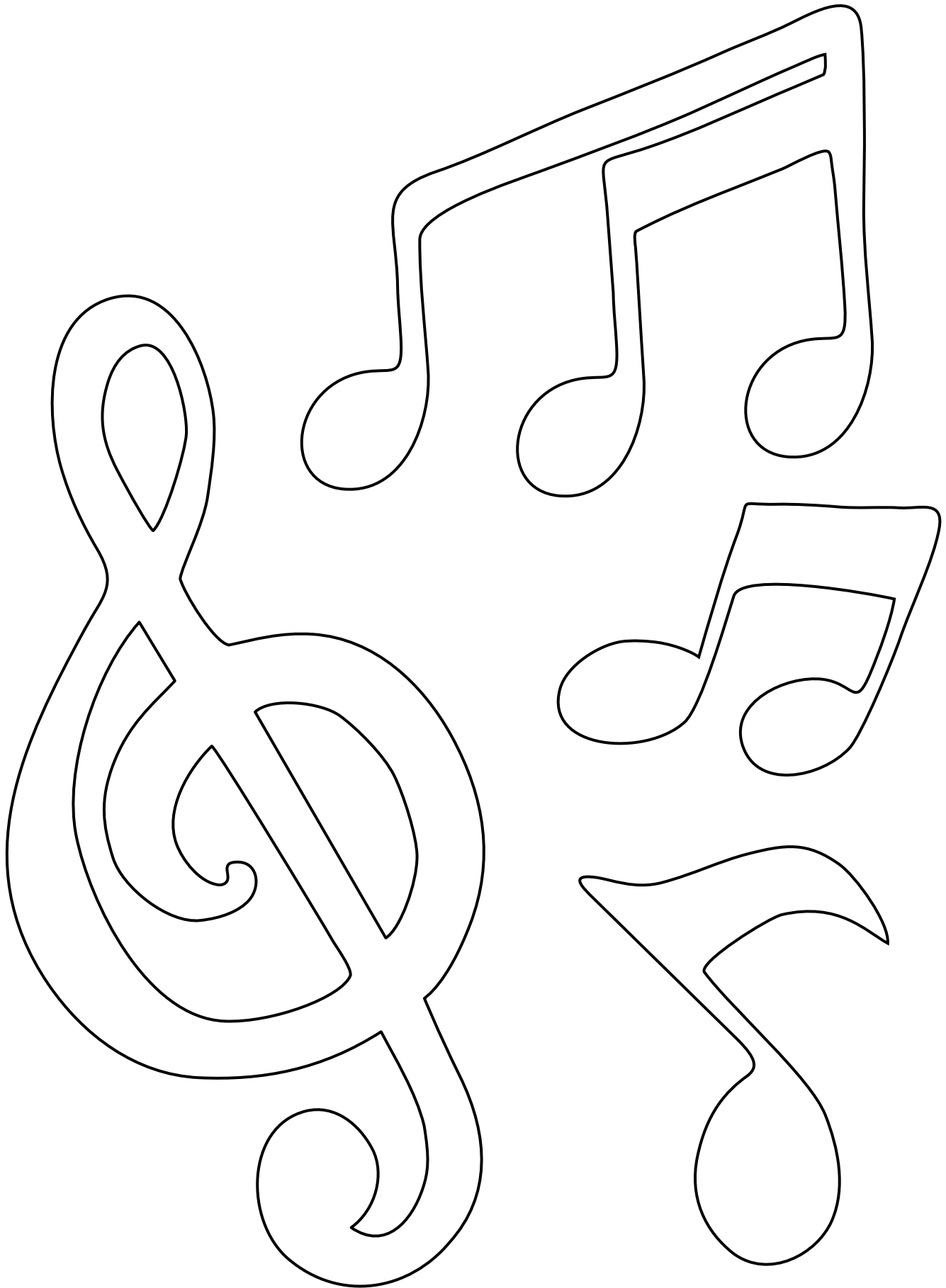
Thank you for your son, Jesus, who lived and loved and died and rose again.

Nothing is impossible with God.

We love you. And we know that you love us. Amen.

Turn the candles off.

Send each child with a blessing, saying, “(Name), the grace and joy of God is with you. Share your joy with all!”



I am so happy so I will sing a song to God.
My heart praises God. My spirit rejoices in God my Savior because

(write something you praise God for)

God has looked on me with grace.
I am just a servant, but everyone will see and remember that
God has chosen me and done great things for me. God is holy!

(write about something great God has done for you)

God's grace is for all who are in awe, generation after generation.

God is

(use a word to describe God)

God, the strong and powerful God, brings low the rich,
the proud, and the powerful.

So I pray to God for

(who do you pray for that doesn't have enough of what they need?)

God, the loving and gracious God, lifts up the oppressed,
embraces the poor, and fills the hungry with good things.

The promises of God are coming true.

God, to me,

(what do you pray for that feels impossible?)

seems impossible, but
I trust you.

God's love goes on forever.



Secret Agent _____:
(Name)

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to go undercover to do service to others without being “caught.” Each day in the next week, do a random act of kindness without letting others know it was you. Pick a person to serve each day. It can be a parent, sibling, friend, neighbor, or just someone who may need help. You can serve the same person or a different person each day. DON’T GET CAUGHT!

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

