



When Did We See You, Lord?

Goal: To practice seeing Jesus in others.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 25:31–46

Jesus’ parable of the judgment of the nations is the only parable where he refers to himself as a “king.” This parable shows that daily actions matter. The great difference is between those who have met the needs and served others and those who have not done so.

In need are those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick, and imprisoned. These indicate specific needs but also, of course, represent needs of all kinds. Basic dimensions of life are indicated here, showing that while these are foundational needs, other needs can spring from them.

Jesus said those who are “righteous” meet needs, and in having done so to “one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Others, who have not met needs, “did not do it to me.” Neither group was aware they were encountering Jesus in the needs of others.

We are aware, now. God’s grace reaches us in providing opportunities to serve others, and in so doing, to serve Christ. Our gratitude for God’s grace in Christ moves us to meet needs and serve God’s children. Whoever is in need, and whatever the need, we help.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children do not grow up unaware of those in need. Whether they see a person on a street corner asking for help with food, gather clothes or food for people in need, or help take a meal for someone who is sick, the experiences they have help make this parable become real.

When children are surrounded by adults who model faithful Christian living in response to the needs of those who are hungry, thirsty, alone, sick, in need of clothes or shelter, or in prison, then they grow up knowing that following Jesus means we are active in our response.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the Fifth Sunday in Lent. You have an excellent opportunity to invite children to think about the season of Lent as a time of personal reflection to consider how Jesus wants us to live. This parable of Jesus reminds us of the simplicity and complexity of following Jesus. Young children will be able to tell stories of times when their family did something kind and helpful for someone else. You could invite these stories to be shared in response to this open-ended statement, “We love Jesus when we. . . .” Older children will be able to wrestle with this parable and why Jesus told it. This parable offers a great chance for them to think about a practice they would like to take up that involves helping someone else.

*O God, give me eyes to see your beloved Son in
the children you have entrusted to my care. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 5, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: magazines

choice 2: serving tray
(optional), paper or
plastic dishes, aprons,
plastic glasses or cups

choice 3: blocks, items
for home living center

Exploring

choice 1: magazine
pictures from “Guided
Play” choice 1, four large
pieces of paper

choice 2: **SCM 5a, 5b**

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, collect magazines that will include as much variety as possible with pictures of food, drink, homes (inside and out), and faces, including people of different races and cultures.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children and parents/caregivers by name and with the words “Grace and peace to you.” Prompt the children to respond with “And also with you.” Explain that the children will hear a story that Jesus told about helping people.

Introduce children to your helper or helpers. Invite them to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Cutting Pictures**—Provide magazines and scissors. Cut out several pictures to use as examples, including pictures of food, drink, clothes, and homes (inside and outside), and faces (including people of different races and cultures). Invite the children to help you cut or tear pictures from the magazines. Set aside for “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1.
- 2. Serving Each Other**—Provide a serving tray (optional), paper or plastic dishes, aprons, and plastic glasses or cups. Suggest that the children pretend to prepare and serve food and beverages to one another. Perhaps some are guests who have come to visit. Encourage the children’s ideas.
- 3. Being Neighborly**—Invite the children to play in the home living center or the block center. Encourage the children to play cooperatively and treat one another as neighbors. Comment on their positive behaviors, such as taking turns, sharing, and speaking kindly to one another.

LG *It’s important to help children understand the need to share, act generously, and give freely. They learn that they are responsible for their part in creating a caring community. Kindness and generosity are contagious.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, singing “We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Pray “Thanks, God!”



With your children, do the following motions for the prayer:

Hands! Hands! Thanks, God, for hands! (*wave in the air*)
 Feet! Feet! Thanks, God, for feet! (*stomp feet or march*)
 Love! Love! Thanks, God, for love! (*touch heart*)
 Neighbors! Neighbors! Thanks, God, for neighbors! (*elbow bump*)
 Hands (*wave hands*), feet (*stomp feet*), love (*touch heart*),
 and neighbors (*elbow bump*)!
 Thank you, God! Amen.

Play Jesus Said

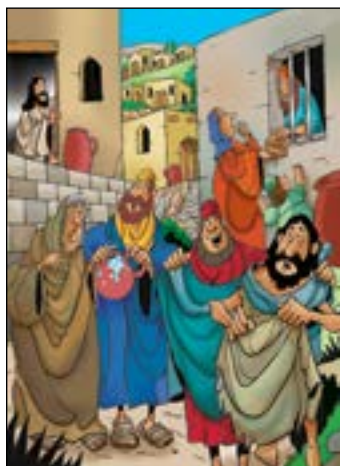


Introduce the Bible story with a poem. Encourage the children to clap or stomp in rhythm as you say the first stanza in rhythm. Then ask the children to try saying the poem. If necessary, have them start by saying “Jesus said” with you and then you add the phrases. Here are the words:

Jesus said: “Give them food,
 give them water, clothes, and shoes.
 What you do for each of these,”
 Jesus said, “You do for me.”

Jesus said: “Go and see
 the sick or lost and the lonely.
 What you do for each of these,”
 Jesus said, “You do for me.”

Jesus said: “Give a smile,
 act with kindness all the while.
 What you do for each of these,”
 Jesus said, “You do for me.”



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.

Hearing the Story

C L B

Open the Bible to Matthew 25. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Tell the children that today's story is about a story Jesus told about helping others.

Read **SCM 5**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Read the story again and invite the children to act out the actions described in the story.

Remind the children that Jesus wants us to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind. Ask who else we are to love besides God. The children may give you lots of good answers; accept them. Wonder who our neighbors are. Encourage children to include the faces pictures cut from magazines in "Guided Play" choice 1.

Today's story offers an opportunity to expand the children's concepts of neighbors to include those who are in need of our help.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Picturing

L B

Take four large pieces of paper and write in the center of one "Food," in the center of the next "Drink," "Clothes" on the third, and "Home" on the fourth. Then post the four pieces of paper on the wall where the children can reach them.

Spread out on the floor the pictures cut from magazines in "Guided Play" choice 1. Use only the pictures that have to do with food, drink, clothes, and home.

Then say something like this: "In the story, Jesus said, 'I was hungry and you gave me'—what?" Give hints until they say "food."

- ▼ Invite the children to select pictures of food from the collection of magazine pictures and bring the pictures to you.
- ▼ Put some glue on the backs of the pictures and invite the children to place them on the paper that says "Food."
- ▼ Continue until all food pictures are affixed to the paper, frequently repeating the phrase "I was hungry and you gave me . . ." and prompting the children to say "food."

Repeat this procedure with "Drink," "Clothes," and "Home." With "Home," you might want to say, "I was sick (or sad, or lonely) and you visited me at (home)."

B *Activities involving more than one child speaking or doing an activity at the same time may escalate into a competition. Remind children to respect others and be polite.*



2. I Spy . . .

VI C

Tape together **SCM 5a** and **5b** to form a poster. Tell the children you are going to play a game of “I Spy” with them. Begin by saying, “I spy with my little eye . . .” Describe someone on the poster who is helping or being helped. Begin with broad descriptions, such as “wearing blue” or “walking.” Then add more details to describe the helping action. Tell the children to raise their hands when they think they know what you spy. Call on a child to come forward and point out the person on the poster, saying, “I see Jesus there, helping someone . . .” and the description of the helping action, such as “who was lonely and someone sat with him” or “who fell down and someone helped her.” The person you are describing could also be the helper. In that case, the child could say, “I see Jesus being helped . . .”

Remind the children that Jesus said when we help others, we are seeing Jesus and helping him. Encourage the children to share this story with their families and to see Jesus in others and find ways to help together.

3. Jesus Said

B M SD

Invite the children to repeat your words and actions:

Jesus said: “Give them food, (*pretend to hand out food*)

give them water, clothes, and shoes. (*pretend to pour a glass of water, tap your clothes, walk in place*)

What you do for each of these,” (*shake a neighbor’s hand or give a fist bump*)

Jesus said, “You do for me.” (*point both thumbs to self*)

Jesus said: “Go and see (*place hand above eyes and look around*)

the sick or lost and the lonely. (*hold tummy, hold both palms up and look around, look down and sad*)

What you do for each of these,” (*shake a neighbor’s hand or give a fist bump*)

Jesus said, “You do for me.” (*point both thumbs to self*)

Jesus said: “Give a smile, (*smile*)

act with kindness all the while. (*put hands over heart*)

What you do for each of these,” (*shake a neighbor’s hand or give a fist bump*)

Jesus said, “You do for me.” (*point both thumbs to self*)

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color **GN 1** and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “How does the thirsty woman feel?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What can the child do to make the person in prison feel better?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What does Jesus see?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Have the children help clean while everyone sings, “Now we put our toys away, toys away, toys away, early in the morning” to the tune of “Here We Go ’Round the Mulberry Bush.”

Form pairs of children. In each pair, one child will be the host and the other will be the guest.

Invite the hosts to arrange snack items, such as carrot sticks, crackers, or cookies, on plates. Then they may serve their guests. When the guests have eaten, the groups can reverse roles: the hosts become guests and the guests are hosts.

Ask the children to pray with you, repeating phrase by phrase after you:

Dear God, /
we are glad we can help. /
Help us remember /
when we help other people /
we make Jesus happy. /
Amen.

As the children and parents leave, bless them: “(Name), show your love for Jesus and for others. The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

When Did We See You, Lord?



See Jesus in others and help everyone you see!

