



Good News!

Goal: To reflect on the good news of Jesus' ministry and our call as disciples of Christ.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 4:14-21

When Jesus began the work of his ministry, he came to Nazareth, his hometown. In the synagogue service, he read from the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (vv. 18-19, CEB). Jesus could have stopped there. Nevertheless, he went on to say: "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it" (v. 21, CEB).

Jesus was proclaiming that in his ministry, the promises God made to Isaiah were happening. In who Jesus was and in what he was doing, the ancient assurances of God's coming reign were going to be coming true. Imagine, good news, release, the blind will see, and the oppressed will be free! God's great work is being accomplished through Jesus' work of ministry.

Jesus' work of giving God's grace to others invites us to participate. As Jesus' disciples, we follow God's directions in seeking healing, justice, and peace. In gratitude, we share God's grace and work for God in our own ministries.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children are concrete thinkers—they understand what they see and hear in literal ways. Don't expect them to grasp the nuances of symbolism or motivation in Bible stories. In school, they are developing new listening skills and the ability to stay more focused on what others are saying. When they have "good news," it is likely they will want to tell as many people as possible.

Encourage them to explore the justice themes in today's Bible story. Why does God want us to share what we have? What is "good news to the poor"? Children will have many concrete ideas about how we might transform the world. Share their ideas with others in your congregation.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This would be a good time to recall all that your church is doing in response to God's grace: feeding others, seeking healing, working for justice, and being peacemakers. Maybe you are involved in one of those ministries. Consider telling something of the ways you are participating in ministry with others. Invite a teenager or adult to share what their ministry is. We all have ministries of grace that bring good news, release, recovery, and liberation to others. This is a great time to connect children with a ministry of your church in ways that make use of their gifts.

*Holy God, help me to keep your mission in my heart.
Guide me as I try to walk in your way. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 9, 18, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

green cloth

white candle

child-friendly
magazines to cut apart

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

Responding

Praying

gift wrap ribbon,
noisemakers, and
rhythm instruments

Offering

tea bags, 2 dowel rods
or yard sticks

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **T** **LD**

Welcome each child with “(Name), the grace of God be with you.” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to set up a worship space using their creativity. Provide a Bible, a candle, and a green cloth.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Invite the children to look through magazines and cut out pictures that show good news. Leave the directions simple and see what the children find. Ask each one to gather what he or she finds and glue it on mural paper to make a group collage.

After a few minutes, invite the children to tell about their contribution to the collage of good news. Imagine together what Jesus might have included if he had added pictures or words to your collage.

Singing

A **MS**

Sing “He Came Down”—**SCM 18**. Form a circle and have everyone put their hands on the shoulders of the people on both sides. Walk to the right as you sing the first stanza. Stop on the phrase “hallelujah forevermore” and clap. Then circle to the left for the next stanza; stop and clap on the fourth line.

Praying

Gather the group around the candle. Turn it on as a sign of Jesus’ presence with the group. Pray aloud:

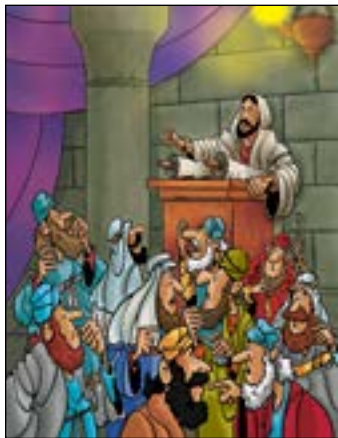
Dear God, thank you for bringing the light of your love into the world through Jesus Christ! Bless our time together and open our hearts to your Word. Amen.

LD *A child with learning disabilities may be no less able than other children; they just receive, process, and/or respond differently. If writing or reading is difficult for a child, allow them to participate verbally.*



Preparing to Hear the Story

Show **SCM 9** and explain that the synagogue in Nazareth is the setting for today’s Bible story. Explain that a synagogue is a place where Jewish people gather to worship God and to learn from God’s Word. In Jesus’ day, when Jewish people gathered on the Sabbath in the synagogue, the service included a reading of the *Shema* (“Hear, O Israel,” Deuteronomy 6:4–8), prayer and response, readings from the Law and the Prophets, sermon, and benediction. Invite comments about how worship in your church includes some of these elements.



Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Luke 4 in the Bible and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 9**, a retelling of the story, or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Ask the children to imagine that they have time-traveled back to Jesus’ day. Say:

You are a member of the Nazareth synagogue and have come to listen to Jesus. You might be related to Jesus, as this is his hometown. You might have known Jesus when he was a boy.

Invite the children to tell you who they are in this scene. Are they a child, youth, or adult; a neighbor who knew Jesus; Jesus’ mother or father; the rabbi (or teacher) of the synagogue; and so on?

Have the children keep this scenario in mind as you read aloud **SCM 9** again. Encourage the children to remain “in character” and tell what they heard Jesus say. Show the story art on **SCM 9** and ask if the artist captured the crowd’s reaction.

Reflecting on the Story

C

Read again the words Jesus read from the scroll.

Distribute copies of **GN 1**. Invite the children to choose one of the things Jesus said he would do—tell good news, bring freedom to prisoners, help the blind see, set the captives free, and proclaim this is the year God will act—and draw a picture imagining what that may look like in the open space by Jesus. Encourage the children to share their pictures with the group.

Singing

Listen to the song “Jesus Taught Us How to Love”—**SCM 23**—and review the words. Play the song again and sing along. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Celebrating God’s Grace



Ask the children to describe the word “reflect” or “reflection.” Have them consider what a mirror does. Invite the children to consider what it means to reflect something or someone. Tell them that they are going to try an exercise in which they reflect one another.

- ▼ Form pairs and have partners face each other, standing about a foot apart.
- ▼ Ask them to hold their hands up with the palms facing each other and to pretend that one of them is the actor and the other is his or her reflection in a mirror.
- ▼ The actor should (slowly at first!) move, and the reflection should copy each movement.
- ▼ After a minute or so, switch roles, so that each person has a chance to be the reflection.

Gather the group and talk about the following:

- ▼ What was difficult or easy about being the reflection?
- ▼ What skills were needed to be a good reflection?
- ▼ Would those same skills help you to be a good follower of Jesus? Why or why not?
- ▼ What other skills or gifts would help you to be a disciple of Jesus?
- ▼ Ask the children to suggest ways that they could reflect Jesus and his ministry.

C *For some children, listening and speaking may take longer. Give them time to respond, and let them know that their contribution is valued.*

Praying God’s Grace



Explain to the children that they will use sounds and movement to prayerfully celebrate the transforming power of God’s Spirit that Jesus talks about in today’s story. Set out lengths of ribbon and rhythm instruments. Talk about the different things a person could do with the items provided. Ask:

- ▼ What kinds of rhythms convey the healing and freeing power of the Spirit?
- ▼ What kinds of movements?

Encourage the children to spend time experimenting with different rhythms and movements. Play “I Am the Salt of the Earth” to help the children get into a joyful mood. When the children are ready, read aloud Luke 4:18–19 and encourage the children to rejoice together in rhythm and sound.



Offering God's Grace



Before the session, put warm water in a plastic ziplock bag with several tea bags.

Explain that in the story, Jesus lays out exactly what he is called to do. Tell the children that they can do something similar by preparing a mission statement explaining what they have to offer as disciples of Christ.

Using newsprint, write sentences to the following prompts:

- Who are we? (*the children of . . . , church name, name of group*)
- What are we going to do? (*learn, study, listen, share, and so forth*)
- For whom or what are we doing this? (*specific people, the earth, ourselves*)
- How are we going to do it? (*tell stories to our friends and family, sing joyfully, pray, and so forth*)

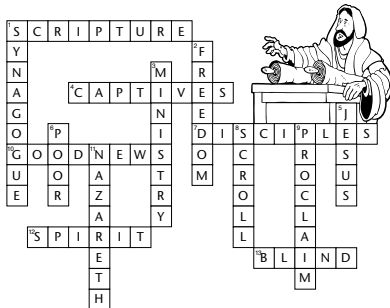
After collecting ideas, try to be as specific as possible. Remind the children that a mission statement is a summary of ideas. It is meant to be easily remembered.

On another sheet of newsprint, write out the group's statement with a permanent marker. Write largely so it can be read by all. Encourage each child to sign their name somewhere on the paper.

Remove the teabags from the plastic bag and squeeze out any excess water. Give the paper an old look by having the children take turns tinting the paper with the damp tea bags. When the paper is dry, glue a dowel rod or yard stick to each end and roll the paper like a scroll.

Display this in your learning area as a reminder of today's discussion or in a common area to share with your congregation.

GN 2 Solution:



Extra Activity



Help the children to reflect on Jesus' call to ministry by solving a crossword puzzle. Hand out copies of **GN 2** to the children. Provide pencils and allow time to read through the clues with the children. Tell the children that the answers are provided in the word bank. If children are struggling, suggest that they pair the answers with the clues before filling in the puzzle. You may want to consider writing the word bank on a sheet of newsprint and working on the puzzle together.

When they have completed their puzzles, take time to review the answers. Reflect that as disciples of Christ, we can carry the good news with us and pass it along.



Next session, you may choose to make kindness bags for folks in your congregation to share with people in need. You may want to ask for donations of the following items:

- ▾ Granola or snack bars
- ▾ Fruit snacks
- ▾ Mini water bottles
- ▾ Pairs of adult socks



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning the worship space.

Invite the children to think of one place or situation that needs God's love. Close with a "popcorn prayer," inviting the children to pray for the situations on their minds. End the prayer by saying, "Hear our prayers, O God. Amen."

Sing "Jesus Taught Us How to Love"—**SCM 23**.

Send the children with the following blessing: *(Name)*, may the God of peace go with you as you leave this place."



Across:

1. Holy writings telling God’s story.
4. Jesus read . . . “to set the _____ free.”
7. Followers of Jesus.
10. Jesus read . . . “God has chosen me to bring _____.”
12. Jesus read . . . “God’s _____ is upon me.”
13. Jesus read . . . “to help the _____ see.”

Down:

1. Jesus went to the _____ in Nazareth.
2. Jesus read . . . “to bring _____ to those who are in prison.”
3. What are teaching, preaching, and showing God’s ways?
5. Who read the ancient words aloud?
6. Jesus read . . . “to tell good news to the _____.”
8. Jesus was handed the _____ to read.
9. Jesus read . . . “to _____ that this is the year God will act.”
11. What was the name of Jesus’ hometown?

Word Bank

- blind
- captives
- disciples
- freedom
- good news
- Jesus
- ministry
- Nazareth
- poor
- proclaim
- Scripture
- scroll
- Spirit
- synagogue

