



The Generous Landowner

Goal: To explore the grace in God's generosity and justice.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 20:1-16

Jesus used parables to challenge people to think. Sometimes parables seem to mean one thing on the surface, but if we look at them more deeply, we see how they challenge us, how they invite us to ask questions about what we value and what we think is important.

The parable of the generous landowner raises immediate questions about the fairness of the landowner who decided to pay the workers the same wages. Those who worked all day received the same as those hired later in the day. And when the workers questioned his action, the landowner asserted his right to do what he wanted to with his money, to be generous. In paying everyone equally, the rich landowner ensured that all those who had less were cared for.

The parable is framed by Jesus saying that those who are first will be last, and those who are last will be first. And we are left, like the hearers, to wrestle with its meaning. Jesus' teachings, and particularly his parables, keep reminding us of what is most important, what to remember, how to live and act. And today, this story reminds us that, when we act with generosity toward others, we are acting in the way that God wants.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children can understand what it means to be generous. They watch faithful adults share their time with someone, or share their financial resources with someone who needs it. As author James Baldwin observed, children learn much more by what they see us do than by what we say.

Invite the children to think about what it means to be generous, to share out of what you have. After reading and thinking about the parable, they will be able to consider the reason Jesus told this story. Invite them to think about other titles for the story.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Younger children will probably question the fairness of the landowner who paid the workers the same wage, even when the time they worked wasn't the same. That is a great question to wrestle with: "Why would the landowner do that?" Or "If you had been one of the workers who had been hired first, how would you feel?" Older children will be able to consider the landowner and speculate about his reasoning and what it means to be first or last.

Gracious God, pour out your spirit of generosity on me as I prepare to guide your children. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 11, 11a, 22, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white cloth

candle

purple grapes, raisins,
grape juice

play money cut from
colored paper copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

play money from
“Welcoming and
Preparing”

Celebrating

play money from
“Welcoming and
Preparing”

Offering

empty clean cans, Cents-
Ability packet from
bit.ly/GGGCentsAbility,
internet-connected
device

Extra

strips cut from **GN 2**;
sugar, butter, cocoa,
milk, oats, measuring
cups, saucepan, stove,
spoons, waxed paper,
cookie sheet, freezer

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” and “Extra Activity” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

M **MS** **F** **A** **B**

Play “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**—as the children arrive.

Greet the children by saying, “Christ is risen!” and prompt them to respond, “He is risen indeed!” Speak a word of welcome to each one and find out something about their interests.

Invite the children to create a worship space, using a white cloth, a Bible, and a candle. Note that the white cloth means the church is in the Easter season, which lasts fifty days. Add grapes, raisins, grape juice, and play money from **GN 1** to the worship table.

While the children work, offer several simple scenarios that characterize fair behavior and unfair behavior. For example: Would it be fair if I gave a cookie to one child, but did not give a cookie to anybody else who is here today? Would it be fair if your brother or sister received five dollars, and you received only one dollar? Encourage the children to share examples of fair and unfair behavior.

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

Singing

M **MS**

Play “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**. Talk about the word *grace* being a special kind of fairness. It is a way of God showing generous love to everyone according to their needs. Lead the children, marching in a circle to the song.

Praying

C

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus, the light of the world.

Beginning with the person whose last name is last in alphabetical order, ask the children to tell about something good or bad that happened to them last week. Pray together:

Dear God, teach us about your grace today. Help us to be grateful for all we are given, not envious of what others have gotten. All are gifts from you. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



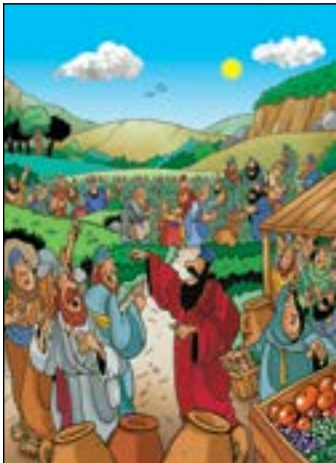
LG Look for opportunities to practice generosity. Offer ways to practice leadership, such as passing out items, holding visual aids, or helping other children.

Preparing to Hear the Story

L C FA

Show **SCM 11a**. Tell how grapes were important in Jesus' time. They were used for food, for making raisins, and for making wine. Imagine together the kinds of work that must be done to care for the vines and harvest the grapes. Point out the grapes, grape juice, and raisins.

Explain to the children that today's story is a parable about a man who grew grapes, and the workers he hired to pick the grapes. Sometimes the person who grows grapes is called the farmer and sometimes the landowner. Jesus tells the story to help people understand something new 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), pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story

Invite a child to find Matthew 20 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 11** or listen to the story audio. If reading, use your voice and emotions to convey the workers' feelings. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Invite the children to snack on raisins and grape juice while they hear the story again as you read it or listen to the story audio.

Reflecting on God's Grace

F

Wonder aloud what the children imagine when they think about the farmer's generosity.

Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ Why do you think the farmer, or landowner, would pay the workers the way he did?
- ▼ What do you think the farmer meant when he said he could be generous if he wanted to be?
- ▼ If you had been one of the workers, how would you feel?
- ▼ How do you think God is like the farmer?
- ▼ What do you think Jesus was trying to tell us about God in this story?

F Help the children think about fairness in a different light. Fairness is not every person getting the same thing, but everyone getting what each of them needs.



Singing

Listen to “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**SCM 22**. Challenge the children to learn both the English and Spanish lyrics. Sing the song.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

F LG

Explain to the children that you are going to award prizes. Give \$100 from the worship table to a person for something over which he or she has no control, such as age or a physical attribute. (*For example, being able to roll your tongue, red hair, born in November, over 4 feet tall, and so on.*) Then give money to each person until everyone has some. Ask:

- ▼ How do you feel about the distribution of money?
- ▼ Was it done fairly?

If they are unhappy about it, tell them that it was your choice to give money and each person has more than they had before, which was nothing.

Then, distribute more money so that each person has the same amount. Explain that you are doing this simply because you want to. Ask:

- ▼ What did you do to earn the money?
- ▼ How is receiving a gift for doing nothing like receiving God’s generous grace?

F *One way to talk about fairness is to discuss collaboration. Children tend to believe that, when people work together, whatever benefits they obtain as a result should be shared.*

Celebrating God’s Grace

LG

This game can encourage children to be generous.

Sit in a circle. Play a favorite song from **Music & Melodies**. Pass the money bag from the worship table around the circle while the music plays. Stop the music, and have the person holding the money bag tell how he or she might use a big bag of money to help other people. Repeat until everyone has had a turn.

Play again, imagining that the money bag is a big bag of God’s grace. Wonder aloud how the children might show God’s grace to other people.



- B** *Make sure to play the games with the children. They will love it when you join the fun!*



Offering God's Grace



Before the session, go to bit.ly/GGGCentsAbility to download the packet and print out the materials you want to use (be sure to include the can wrappers). Check with the appropriate committee about making a collection during worship or fellowship time.

Share with the children that one way to be generous is to help people who do not have enough to eat. One of the ways the church does this is through a program called Cents-Ability. The program invites people of all ages to contribute a few cents at every meal, so that pennies are collected to help those who are hungry.

Watch the Presbyterian Hunger Program's YouTube video "Centsability Video" (bit.ly/GGGCentsAbilityVideo) about a project in Kenya supported by the Cents-Ability offering. Have the children recall some of the ways the program supported the people in Kenya.

Have the children wrap cans with the Cents-Ability can wrappers. Plan the time you will collect coins—during a worship service or fellowship time. As a group, list things you might say to people in your church to encourage them to participate in this program. Decide who will say what, and have the children practice their lines.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Extra Activity



Before the session, copy GN 2 and cut out the strips. Check on food allergies and make appropriate decisions about food choices. Recipe makes 12 cookies.

If you have access to a kitchen with a stovetop, celebrate God's generosity by making cookies to share.

Give one strip from GN 2 to each child and keep one for yourself. If your group has fewer than nine children, give two strips to some children. For more than nine, give one strip to each pair or small group. Join the children in following the instructions on the strips to make the cookies.

As the cookies are cooling, discuss: "How might making these cookies remind us of Jesus' story?" Responses might include that some people did more than others to make the cookies, but everyone will get to enjoy them; the oats were added later, but all the ingredients are important in the finished product.

Enjoy the no-bake cookies!



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Invite the children to help clean up the space.

Invite the children to tell one new thought they have had about God's generosity. Ask them to name something they will do to be generous to others this week.

Read the charge below. Tell the children that, when you say, "Let us turn," they may turn in any direction they choose.

Jesus changes people who love him.

When Jesus changes us, he calls us to do God's work.

Let us turn . . . toward kindness.

Let us turn . . . toward generosity.

Let us turn . . . toward helping others.

Let us turn . . . toward prayer.

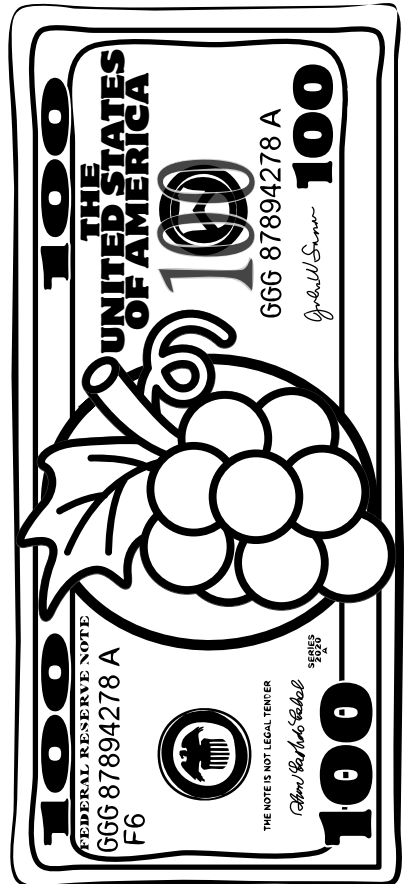
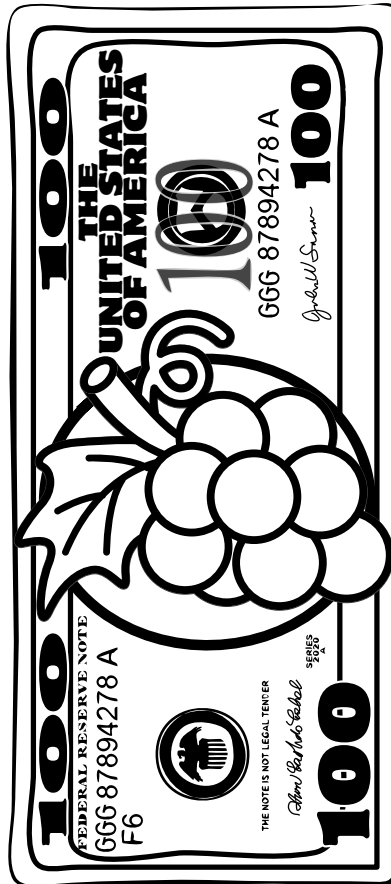
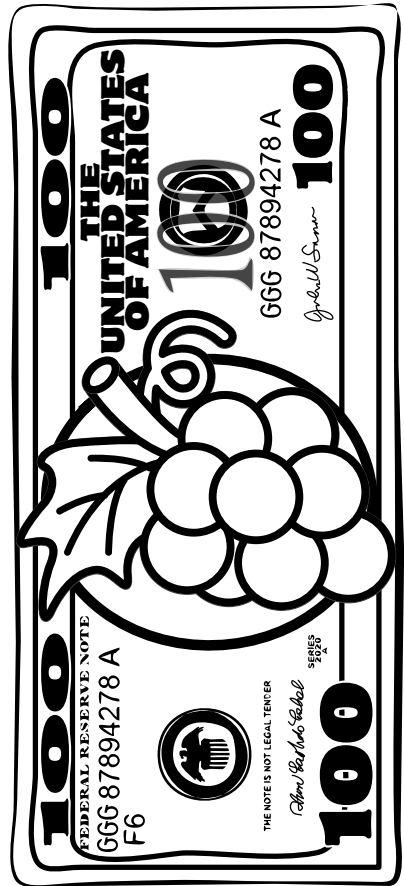
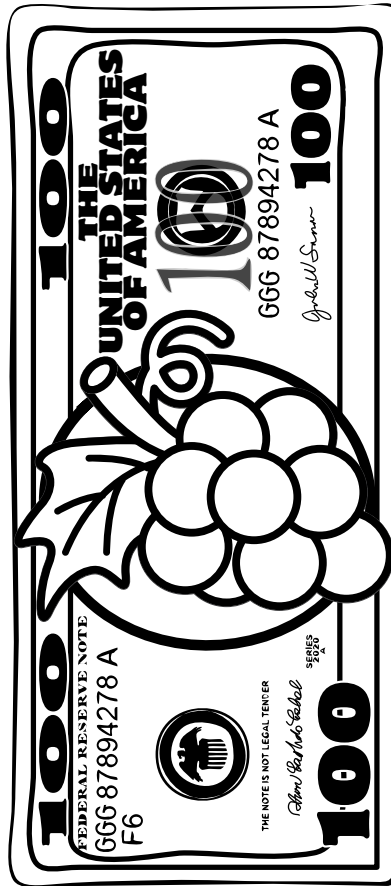
Let us turn . . . toward Jesus.

And let all God's children say, Amen!

As the children leave, send each child with a blessing, saying, "(Name), be filled with God's grace, and be grateful."



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).



Step 1

Measure 2 cups of white sugar.

Step 2

Measure 3 cups of oats.

Step 3

Measure $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of cocoa.

Step 4

Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of milk.

Step 5

Get 1 stick of butter.

Step 6

Mix sugar, butter, milk, and cocoa in a saucepan.

Step 7

Stir on medium heat until boiling.

Step 8

Remove the pan from the burner and stir in oats.

Step 9

Drop spoonfuls of the mixture on a cookie sheet covered with waxed paper.

Step 10

Put in freezer for 20 minutes.

