



You Are the Messiah!

Goal: To practice declaring that Jesus is the Messiah.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 16:13–20

This story delves into theological themes beyond the knowledge of children, so this session is about verses 13–16, where Jesus asks the disciples to identify who Jesus is. “Who am I?” is a question children can entertain, about themselves and about Jesus.

Peter was a key figure throughout the ministry of Jesus and in the early church. He is credited with making the first clear confession of faith in Jesus; it is to Peter that the reply “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16) is attributed.

Christ is not Jesus’ last name! In biblical terms, the Christ is God’s anointed one, the person sent to save God’s people. When Peter said, “You are the Christ,” he proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah, the one God promised to send to the Jews to lead them in God’s way. *Christ* is the Greek word for *Messiah*. Because the New Testament was written in Greek, Jesus’ followers began to call him “Christ” or “Jesus Christ.”

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Children have varying images of who they are. The youngest children are sorting out who they are in relationship to family members and a small community of people outside their home. Older children are struggling to establish an identity of their own, and beginning to feel the pressure of their peers to conform.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

This is the Third 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. When children name who Jesus is for them, the response from God is to call them “beloved child.” Explain that, because we know that Jesus was sent by God, God knows us as beloved children. If they are confused about “beloved,” say that it is another way of saying that God loves us. Ask, “Who are we?” and prompt the children to answer, “We are God’s beloved children.” As you affirm each one’s uniqueness, also emphasize the gift of our diversity. We don’t have to look the same, be the same, or act the same to be one in Jesus Christ. God’s love in Jesus is what brings us together, even in our differences.

*Dear God, help me to be a disciple of Jesus and declare that he is
the Messiah in my life and my way of living. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 3, 21, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

candle

biblical costumes
(optional)

Responding

Celebrating

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

Praying

building blocks

Offering

colored sidewalk chalk;
SCM 3a, 3b

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.

“Praying God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **L** **T**

Play “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 21**—as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt the response, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to help set the scene. On a table, place a purple cloth, a Bible, and a candle to signify the light of Christ. Tell the children that this is the Third Sunday in Lent, a time to think about how Jesus wants us to live. Explain that today you will be learning about who Jesus is and how we can declare who he is in our lives.

Invite the children to draw a picture of Jesus from a Bible story they know. As they work, encourage conversation about how they’ve learned who Jesus is. Share your own experience about how you know who Jesus is too. Once they have had a chance to draw, invite them to describe what Jesus is doing in their pictures. Add the pictures to the worship space.

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

Singing

B **MS** **SD** **L**

Play, listen to, clap, and dance to “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in the Morning”—**SCM 21**.

SD *Common sounds may be painful or overwhelming to some children with sensory issues. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning.*

Praying

L

Gather around the worship table. Light the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ presence with us. Allow a few moments of silence, encouraging children to focus on the light and the drawings displayed on the table. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

God, we thank you /
for your grace. /
We thank you for Jesus. /
Help us to understand /
who he is, /

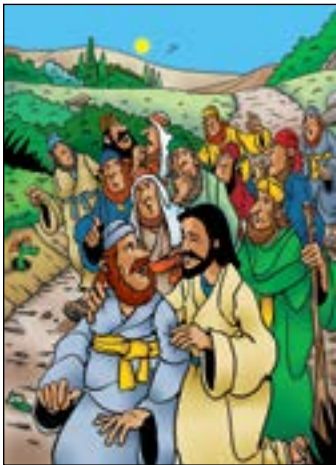


to feel his love, /
and to share his good news with others. /
Amen. /

Preparing to Hear the Story

C L T

Sit in a circle and take turns “declaring” what you each know to be true. Offer that to *declare* means that you are making a statement about what you know or believe. Each time a child finishes the sentence, “I declare . . .” they should raise their right pointer finger in the air. For example: “I declare my breakfast was delicious.” Or “I declare I love baseball.”



Hearing the Story

L

Invite a child to find Matthew 16 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 3** or listen to the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more engaging. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Invite children to hear the story again and listen for the way Peter declared something he knew to be true. Tell them to raise their right pointer finger in the air when they think they hear it. Read the story again or listen to the story audio. When you get to Peter’s words, “Jesus, you are the Messiah, the Son of the Living God,” pause to see if children have caught on and raised their finger. Invite them to repeat Peter’s words.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

LG A B C L

Invite children to act out the story. Use biblical costumes if children like using them. Challenge them to use the “I declare!” line from “Preparing to Hear the Story.” If your group is large, form groups of four to six children. Provide time for them to consider the best way to re-enact the story, but encourage them to consider their tone of voice and facial expressions as they bring the “characters” to life. Invite them to share their skits.

Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ What did you notice about the disciples in this story?
- ▼ What did you notice about Peter?
- ▼ How would you answer Jesus’ question?

T *Providing opportunities for children to act in front of others can be a fun way to learn from each other and can build children’s confidence. However, it can also provide opportunities for unwanted behavior such as bullying or fidgeting. Help children focus on respecting others and being polite.*



Singing

Play, listen to, clap, and dance to “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**. Encourage the children to hold up their pointer finger each time they sing, *Jesus*.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Celebrating God’s Grace



When Jesus asked the disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” they answered with the names of other good, faithful people. They were incorrect; but based on what they knew of people like Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jeremiah, they guessed that Jesus was one of them.

Play a game that will let children guess who one another is by a description they provide about themselves. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and tell the children not to put their name on it. Explain that they will use these pictures to describe themselves by coloring the ones in each row that show something they like. If there is not a choice that fits them, they may draw a small picture or write a word in the blank space. Assist with writing as needed. Suggest that they don’t let others see their papers so everyone can guess.

Mix up their descriptions and draw them out one at a time to be read and guessed. When making a guess, children should raise their pointer finger and say, “I declare that is (Name)!”

LD *Don’t assume what children can or cannot do with regard to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*



Praying God’s Grace



Recall together what Jesus told Peter when Peter declared that he was the Messiah, God’s Son. Jesus promised that, on Peter the rock, the church would be built. Wonder together what that means. Suggest that the foundation of the Christian church is believing that Jesus is God’s Son.

Provide building blocks and invite children to spend time building structures, noticing that what is at the bottom, or the foundation, is what holds it all up. As they build, play “Music Over Water (Instrumental).” Once the children are ready, gather around their structures and lead them in prayer for your church:



Dear God, may we be the church that was built upon Peter's declaration, that Jesus is the Messiah. May we be faithful to who Jesus is so that others know he is the Messiah because of who we are, how we live, and how we love and serve others in Jesus' name. Amen.



Many churches today have stained-glass windows. An alternative to drawing, inside or outside, might be to tour the stained-glass windows in the church.

Offering God's Grace

TD B MS

Display **SCM 3a** and explain that stained-glass windows are beautiful pieces of art. They were used in churches long ago to tell stories from Scripture. Have the children tell what stories are being told in the windows on **SCM 3a** and **SCM 3b**. If necessary, tell them that the picture on **SCM 3a** shows Jesus as a farmer scattering seeds. Remind the children of the story they heard last session that Jesus told about the farmer and the four seeds. The picture on **SCM 3b** shows Jesus praying, something he often did.

If you have a space outside to draw on a sidewalk, take the children outside where they can create their own form of stained-glass windows. If weather or space does not permit sidewalk drawings, give the children colored sidewalk chalk and black construction paper. Explain that they should take time to create a series of "windows" that tell worshipers who Jesus is. They may choose to use words or images, but encourage them to use the chalk to create an offering depicting who Jesus is for others to view and learn from. If black construction paper was used, display the pictures in a space where they may be seen by worshipers.

TD *Some children struggle with textures. Chalk is a common trigger and can cause feelings of nausea or anxiety. Give advance warning and provide options such as paint markers or sponge-tip squeeze bottles. Allow the child to wash their hands if needed.*

Extra Activity

C

Tell the children they will make a poster to remind them who Jesus is—the Messiah! Hand out copies of **GN 2**. Invite the children to look at the letters and tell you what they see in them. The scenes in the letters depict different stories from Jesus' life. Note that the pictures are not in chronological order.

Have the children color the scenes and cut out the letters. Help with cutting as needed. Invite the children to choose a sheet of large construction paper and glue the letters to the paper. Encourage the children to bring home their posters to share with their families.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Ask the children to help clean the space.

Gather in a circle and wonder together how declaring Jesus is the Messiah would be a helpful practice during Lent. Remind them that understanding who Jesus is changes us and how we see others.

Tell the children that, long ago, a man known as St. Patrick lived in Ireland. One of the things he is well known for is a prayer that he wrote. Invite children to repeat the following part of his prayer after you, as well as your actions:

Christ before me (*palm facing out*) /
 Christ behind me (*thumbs pointing over shoulders*) /
 Christ beneath me (*point downward*) /
 Christ above me (*point upward*) /
 Christ at my right (*step to the right*) /
 Christ at my left (*step to the left*) /
 Christ when I sit (*sit down*) /
 Christ when I stand (*stand up*) /
 Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me (*hands on side of head*) /
 Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me (*palm leaving mouth*) /
 Christ in every eye that sees me (*make "glasses" over eyes*) /
 Christ in every ear that hears me (*hands cup ears*) /

Bless each child as they leave, saying, "(Name), declare with your words and actions that Jesus is the Messiah. Go in God's grace."



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).

