



You Are Blessed

Goal: To bless others with encouragement and support.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 4:23-5:11

Central to Jesus' ministry was proclaiming, teaching, and healing. Jesus was concerned for the full needs of all persons. He healed "every disease and every sickness among the people" (v. 23). Then he taught his disciples, sharing with them words about what really constitutes true blessedness. We call these the "Beatitudes."

The first four beatitudes promise blessedness to those who are "poor in spirit," who "mourn," who are "meek," and who "hunger and thirst for righteousness." These cover attitudes that, as Christ's disciples, we seek to cultivate; and with "mourn," a practice that comes to us when life caves in.

When we are poor in spirit, we confess our lack of resources, depending solely on God. When we mourn, we experience grief. When we are meek, we are calm and not easily provoked by wrongs. When we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we may be pursuing God's purposes and justice in the world.

In these, God's grace is given to us. We believe God is with us through all our circumstances and in all our attitudes. This is grace. The blessings that come with these blessed attitudes allow us to express our gratitude to God for all we are given.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

As we continue in this season after Epiphany, remind the children that, just like the disciples remembered Jesus and his teaching, we can do the same. Moreover, Jesus' teaching at the beginning of his ministry with the Sermon on the Mount helps children know that God is with them in all of the experiences of their lives. Notice in the story how the blessings focus on our being and our actions. It is important for children to know that God's blessing is with them whether they are sad or happy and when they stand up for what is right.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Think about the blessings the children have brought to your life. How have you been blessed because of your experience with them, or in your conversations with their parents/caregivers? Think also about what you have learned about them as you have listened to and talked with them. When have they needed comfort or support, affirmation or challenge? Each one may have given you a glimpse of one of these blessings. Spend some time in meditation on each child as you pray for God's blessing in their lives.

Holy God, I recognize that you seek my happiness by calling me to obedience to Christ. Lead me into faithful living. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 9, 19, 23

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

green cloth

candle

Responding

Praying

paper plates; 1" x 5"

strips of paper,

4 per child

Offering

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

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.

Welcoming and Preparing

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

Play “We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing”—**SCM 19**—as the children arrive.

Greet the children by saying, “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.”

Ask the children to create a worship space, using a green cloth, a Bible, and a candle.

Invite the children to make a mountain mural on a large sheet of mural paper for the worship space. Have them draw hills and mountains, adding trees, flowers, rocks, grass, and birds. Tell the children that, as a way to indicate people are close to God, some Bible stories take place on mountains. Ask them to imagine being on a mountain; how does it feel to be close to God? You will use this mural today, and throughout the rest of the winter sessions.

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

Thank the children for their help in creating the worship space. Sing “Thank You, God, for Loving Me”—**SCM 23**—inviting the children to sing together and sway and twirl gently as they sing.

Praying

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus and the light he brings into the world. Pray:

God of all people, help us to listen as we read your words in the Bible, and as we hear your Spirit speak to our hearts. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.

A *Adapt any activity to suit the children’s needs. Ask yourself, “How can I change this activity so that this child can do it?”*

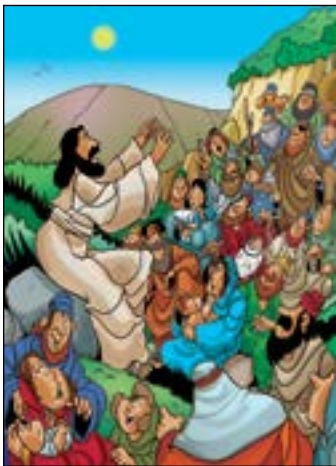


Preparing to Hear the Story C

Have the children form two lines facing each other. Explain that they will work with the person opposite them. Join in to make an even number if necessary. Pairing older and younger children works well for this game.

Call out words or phrases connected to today's story (*mountain, blessed, kindness, people who bring peace, calm, sad, listening*). People in the first line make actions based on the words, and people in the second line act as a "mirror," copying them exactly.

Comment that our faith calls us to reflect God's goodness, wisdom, and love. Invite the children to suggest ways people they know reflect God's goodness. Tell the children that, in today's story, Jesus names certain kinds of people who reflect God's goodness.



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

Gather in front of the mountain mural and ask the children to imagine that they are part of a large group of people who have followed Jesus up the mountainside to hear him speak. Ask a volunteer to find Matthew 4 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 9** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story livelier. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Read the story again. Prompt the children's responses in the story, "Thanks be to God" and "You are blessed."

Reflecting on God's Grace C L

Wonder what it means to be blessed. Tell the children that today's story is a retelling of the Beatitudes from the Bible. *Beatitudes* are blessings that Jesus teaches as part of the Sermon on the Mount.

Invite the children to think of questions they would like to ask Jesus about today's story. It's fine to let questions go unanswered, and simply wonder together. Invite them to answer this question:

- ▼ What are some ways God has blessed you?

Singing

Invite the children to sing "We Are Blessed to Be a Blessing"—**SCM 19**. If they would like, allow them to skip around the space as they sing. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Celebrating God's Grace M

Name the kinds of people Jesus says are blessed. Wonder if people who are sad, who rely on God, or who bring peace are usually considered blessed.

Invite the children to make figures of people to add to the mountain mural. Name examples of people who reflect God's goodness, for example: working for peace, showing kindness, and making God first in their lives.

Have the children draw the people on paper, color the figures, and cut them out. Glue them to the mountain.



Praying God's Grace LG

One way the children can participate in offering blessings to others is through prayer. Remind them that they can help others by praying to God for them. Follow the instructions below to make prayer reminders. See the illustration in the sidebar.

1. Punch about 8 to 15 holes around the edge of a paper plate.
2. Cut a piece of yarn about 3 yards long and tape one end to the inside of the plate near one of the holes.
3. Lace the free end of the yarn through the holes in the plate. Continue criss-crossing the plate in any order.
4. Leave about 3 to 4 inches of yarn to hang the plate.
5. On slips of paper, help the children write names of people or groups for whom the children wish to pray.
6. Tuck the papers into the weaving as reminders to pray for those listed on the paper strips.

Ask the children to remember to pray at home and to invite their family members to pray together.

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



Offering God's Grace

LG

Prepare colorful bookmarks to remind congregation members and family how God blesses and comforts us. Provide card-stock copies of **GN 1**, markers, and a variety of art supplies so that the children can be creative with their bookmarks. When they are finished, read the blessings. Invite the children to share their blessings bookmarks with other people.

LG *Providing opportunities for children to express generosity by offering something to congregation members helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*

Extra Activity

LD

Have the children complete a honeycomb puzzle to help them remember the “Bee” attitudes! Hand out copies of **GN 2** to the children. Invite them to use colored pencils to color in each word that forms one of the Beatitudes.

Use the following directions:

- ▼ Begin with the word “Blessed” and follow the honeycombs to find the words for each beatitude listed around the puzzle.
- ▼ Words progress forward, never directly up or down.

Keep the mountain mural for use in the next four sessions.



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

LG

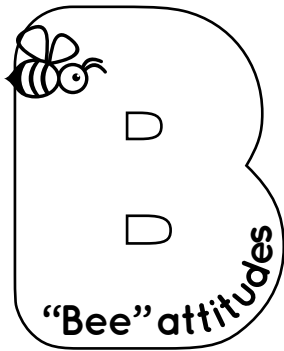
Invite the children to help clean up the space.

Gather the children in a circle and ask each to name one of the Beatitudes. Invite them to think about ways they can be a blessing to others this week. You could do this as a popcorn blessing, where the children say one word that symbolizes their blessing, such as *serving*, *loving*, *helping*, and so on.

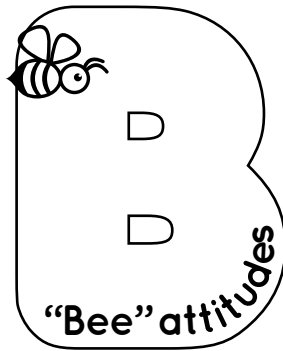
Tell the children that raising their hands over a group of people symbolizes placing a blessing on everyone's head. Invite them to raise their hands and speak to one another as they echo your words, saying the following:

The kingdom of heaven is here! /
Jesus shares God's grace with you! /
Jesus calls you God's children! You are blessed! /

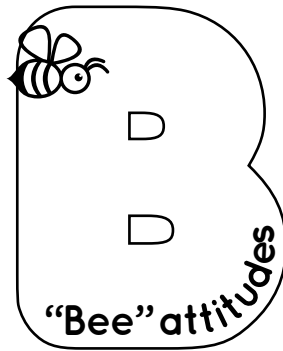
End by saying to each child, “(Name), you are blessed. Be a blessing to others.”

**Matthew 5:3**

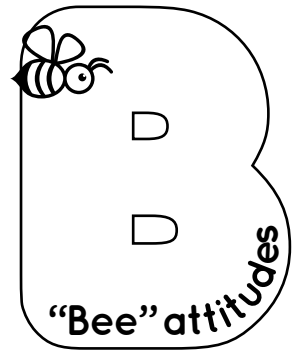
Blessed are
those who
rely on God.
Heaven is
theirs.

**Matthew 5:4**

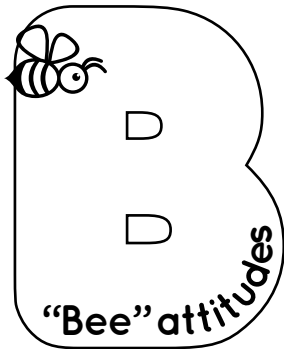
Blessed are
those who
cry.
God will
comfort
them.

**Matthew 5:5**

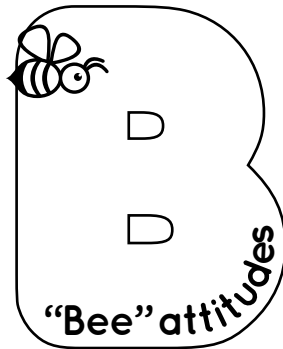
Blessed are
those who
are humble
and think of
others first.
They will be
satisfied.

**Matthew 5:6**

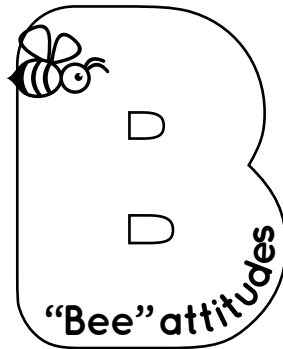
Blessed are
those who
work for
justice. They
will be
fulfilled.

**Matthew 5:7**

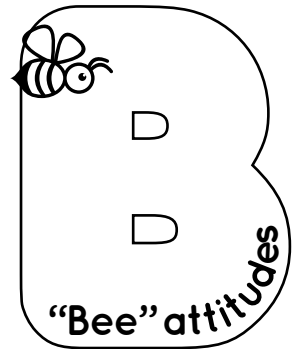
Blessed are
those who
practice
kindness and
forgiveness.
God will give
them the
same.

**Matthew 5:8**

Blessed are
those whose
hearts are in
the right
place.
They are in
God's heart.

**Matthew 5:9**

Blessed are
those who
work for
peace.
God will
call them
sons and
daughters.

**Matthew 5:10**

Blessed are
those who
get into
trouble for
doing the
right thing.
Heaven is
theirs.

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