



## Blessed Are . . .

Goal: To practice being a blessing by helping others.

### RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

#### . . . In Luke 6:17-26

People in Jesus' time were quite familiar with beatitudes. They were a common literary form of blessing. The Hebrew Scriptures included more than fifty different "blessed is . . ." sentences. Each blessing promised a reward.

Jesus, a faithful Jew, offered a fresh take on these traditional blessings. His beatitudes offered happiness to people who seemed to be the least blessed in society. The rewards they offered included life in Jesus' new vision of society where "the last will be first."

These sayings appear in both Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, but with different wording to express the two writers' different interpretations of who Jesus was. The phrase that in Luke is "blessed are you who are poor" turns up in Matthew as "blessed are the poor in spirit." One refers to poverty and the other to personal spirituality.

The blessings in today's reading encouraged and empowered Christians to follow Jesus' way by offering hope to people in especially difficult times. Paradoxically, they offered blessings to people in ill fortune, because these people would know happiness in the society for which Jesus longed.

#### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

Younger children love repetition in storytelling. The repetitive structure of these four blessings, so like the ones they learned last week, will make it possible for children to commit them to memory. Encourage them to share the blessings with friends and members of their families.

Be sure to invite older children to dig more deeply into the meaning behind the blessings. Emphasize the concrete ways we can all work for justice. Be open to hearing children share their own experiences with poverty, hunger, and bullying. Unfortunately, all too many young people in our communities experience being bullied or marginalized. Listen carefully to the stories that older children share and affirm their insights.

#### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Younger children will like the ways in which Jesus blessed people. Many will have had experiences of a teacher, grandparent, or older friend praising and encouraging them. In this session, provide them with opportunities to bless others with their encouragement and support.

Older children may be more interested in exploring the concrete realities that Jesus was addressing. For them, the poor are people who struggle with real challenges. Encourage older children to grapple with the challenges Jesus raised when he blessed the most marginalized and vulnerable in our society.

*Loving God, I am a child of yours. Bless me  
that I might be a blessing to others. Amen.*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

[bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 12, 16, 22

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

green cloth

candle

## Responding

### Offering

tree branch or twigs,  
vase or pot, sand or  
rocks, several colors of  
½" to 1" wide ribbon

### Extra

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

## 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.

For “Welcoming and Preparing” print one of each of the following phrases on pieces of paper: people who are poor, people who are hungry, people who are sad, and people who are made fun of because they believe in Jesus. Prepare enough sheets for each child and adult helper. If you have more than four children, print some phrases on more than one sheet. Place these upside down on a table so nobody can see what is written on them. Use them in “Welcoming and Preparing.”

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing



As the children arrive, greet them warmly. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Ask for help in arranging the green cloth in the center of your meeting space, placing the candle on it. Encourage some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage from the Bible.

Explain that the paper sheets list some of the kinds of people whom Jesus blessed. Tape one sheet to the back of each child. No one should know what is on his or her sheet. Have the children ask each other questions about the people described on the sheets.

The only rule is that no one can tell someone what is on their back until that person guesses it correctly. Then remove the sheet from their back. Play the game until everyone knows who is on their back. Sit in a circle. Place the sheets in the center. Ask the children why Jesus made a point of blessing these people.

### Singing



Gather the group around the candle. Play and sing “This Is the Day”—**SCM 16**—inviting the group to sing along.

### Praying



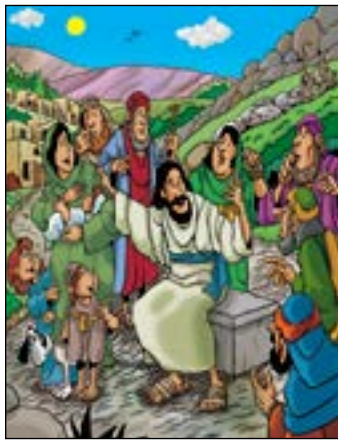
Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence with us. Invite a volunteer to lead a prayer or pray aloud:

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



## Preparing to Hear the Story

Remind the children that Jesus announced the beginning of his ministry when he read Scripture in the synagogue. Wonder if anyone can retell the story found in Luke 4:14–21. Pass out Bibles and ask the children to find Luke 4:18–19. Read aloud the passage together and note to whom Jesus brings good news (*to the poor, to captives, to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free*). Explain that in today’s story, Jesus blesses the same kinds of people. Ask the children to listen to the story and to name where they hear good news.



Matthew’s telling of 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](http://www.pcusastore.com).

## Hearing the Story

LD C L TD A

Invite a child to find Luke 6 in the Bible and the volunteer(s) to read Luke 6:17–26. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Hand out construction paper, pastels, and chalk. Explain that there are many ways to understand a Bible reading—we hear it with our ears, read it, and understand it with our minds. We can also experience it with our emotions. Invite the children to draw pictures as they hear and “feel” good news in today’s Bible story while you read a version of the story again from **SCM 12** or play the story audio.

## Reflecting on the Story

C

Invite the children to share what they have drawn. Ask volunteers to share what they thought about as they listened and drew. Discuss:

- ▼ What do you think it means to be blessed? Do you think it is good news to be blessed?
- ▼ Who does Jesus say are blessed?
- ▼ Has anyone ever made fun of you for going to church or believing in Jesus? What does Jesus say about that? (*Jesus says that you are blessed when people treat you badly for believing in him.*)
- ▼ How can you be God’s blessing to others?

## Singing

Celebrate that our lives can be a blessing to others. Play and sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”—**SCM 22**. While they sing, encourage them to pantomime a way to be a blessing. Turn off the candle.

- Ⓣ *For children who have tactile sensitivities, stimulations that most people do not particularly notice, or at least are not bothered by, could cause extreme reactions that may be interpreted as bad behaviors. Avoid activities involving tactile materials such as chalk and finger paint. Offer alternatives such as markers or painting with paint brushes.*



## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Consider recording a video and email a clip of each child’s drama to his or her parents, or find a place and time to show the videos to the congregation by playing them on a monitor in an easily accessible location.

### Claiming God’s Grace

F LG A MS C LD

Form four groups and assign each group one of the four “Blessed are . . .” statements in Luke 6:20–22. For a small group, choose two or more of the statements to act out.

Give each small group a sheet of light colored construction paper and markers. Have them write the first part of their statement (“Blessed are . . .”) on one side of the paper and the second part of their statement (“for . . .”) on the other side. Explain that they will hold up the first side at the beginning as a title card and turn the sheet over to show the second part at the end. Let the children practice their skits for a few minutes.

If a group is having difficulty coming up with a skit or scenario, see the suggestions below.

- ▼ Have the children read their “Blessed are . . .” statement from another version of the Bible. Some suggestions are *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*; the Common English Bible (CEB); and the New International Reader’s Version (NIRV).
- ▼ Help the children think of situations from school or home. For example, for “Blessed are you who are poor,” two children could improvise a situation in which they don’t have enough money for a school trip and a third helps them to decide to make a faithful response.

Gather the group and take turns presenting the skits. Ask: “How can we be blessings to others?”

### Celebrating God’s Grace

M

Play a game to help the children hear that they are blessed and to offer that others are too.

Have the children stand in a circle and then take two giant steps backward before they sit down. Select one person to be “it.” Have that person walk around the outside of the circle, tapping each child gently on the shoulder and calling out the word “praise” or “blessed.” If the person who is “it” calls out “blessed,” the one who is tapped must jump up and say, “Blessed be, you and me!” Then the one who is “it” changes places with that child, who then becomes “it.” The game continues until every child has had at least one turn as “it.” Then ask:

- ▼ How did it feel to be blessed?
- ▼ How can we bless others?



## Offering God's Grace

F LG

*Before the session, collect a tree limb with multiple branches or gather several smaller branches you can place in a vase or pot. Secure them in place using sand, gravel, or small rocks. This will also act as a sturdy base for the tree.*

Remind the children that one way to help others is to offer prayers or blessings. Tell them that they will make a blessing tree as an offering to the congregation.

Ask the children to brainstorm ideas for blessings. They can offer prayers for those who are sick, blessings for new babies, wishes of peace, and so forth. Jot the ideas on newsprint so that children can copy the words. Give each child a few sheets of paper to use to practice writing. Provide several colors and widths of ribbon along with fine-tipped permanent markers to write their blessings on. Encourage the children to tie several blessing ribbons to the tree.

After the session, offer the tree to the church to use in the sanctuary or common area.

## Extra Activity

LG

Tell the children that they will make a mandala describing ways they can be a blessing to others. Provide copies of **GN 1** and colored pencils. Explain that we will use the mandala with a central focus, blessing, and prayerfully respond in the outward sections.

Encourage children to work silently, considering ways that they can be a blessing by helping others. Tell the children to write or draw a way that they can commit to helping others in each of the open spaces. Encourage the children to hang their mandala at home to serve as a reminder of their commitment.

Traditionally, a mandala was a spiritual and ritual symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism representing the universe. Today, many people, including Christians, use mandalas as a way of centering prayers or for meditation.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Ask the children if they have ever seen a minister raise his or her hands at the end of the worship service when giving the benediction, or blessing. This is a way of placing a blessing on everyone's head. Invite the children to raise their hands and speak to each other as they repeat your words, saying the following:

Jesus shares God's love with you! /  
Jesus calls you God's children! /  
Blessed are you! /

Looking at each child individually, offer her or him a personal blessing that affirms one particular quality or something kind she or he does. "Bless you (*Name*), for your . . ." Close the blessing by saying, "Amen."



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



