



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

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

green cloth

white candle

child-friendly
magazines to cut apart

Responding

Praying

gift wrap ribbon,
noisemakers, and
rhythm instruments

Offering

copies of your church's
mission statement

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 white 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. Ask for a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage from the Bible.

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. If they cannot find photos, suggest they cut out letters to make descriptive words. 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

LG

Gather the group around the candle. Turn it on as a sign of Jesus’ presence with the group. Ask a volunteer to say a prayer or pray aloud:

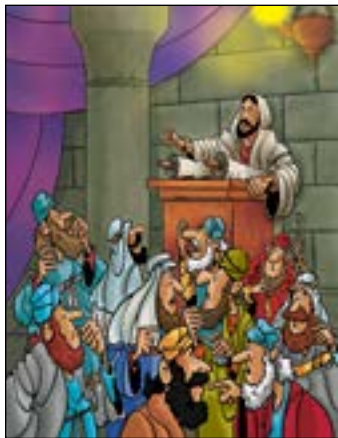
Dear God, thank you for bringing the light of your love into the world through Jesus Christ! Bless our time together, and open our hearts to your Word. Amen.

LD *When participating in activities, don’t assume what children can or cannot do. Think of multiple ways children may be able to engage in the task without feeling excluded.*



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

LG LD

Invite a child to find Luke 4 in the Bible and a volunteer to read Luke 4:14–21. 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.

Ask the children to imagine that they have traveled back in time 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

LD C

Distribute Bibles and pencils. Explain that another way to think of this Scripture passage is that Jesus is proclaiming his mission statement of what God’s Spirit is going to help him do.

Distribute copies of **GN 1**. Work as a group to complete the first and second columns, referring to Luke 4:14–21 as needed. Form pairs to complete the chart. After a few moments, discuss the ideas that pairs have written in the third column.

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.” 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 move slowly at first, 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 reflect Jesus and his ministry.

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



Distribute copies of your church's mission statement. Ask:

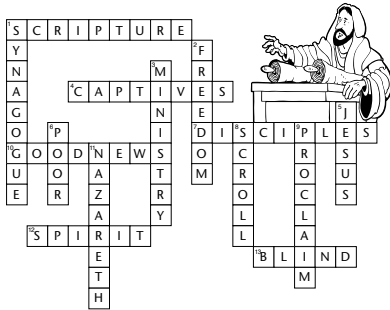
- How is Jesus' mission reflected in our church's statement?
- What are some ways we live out Jesus' mission as a church?
- What are some ways we might follow Jesus' mission more closely?

Form groups of two or three. Invite each small group to identify the most important goals or purposes of your group. Afterward, ask small groups to report. Record their responses on newsprint. Discuss:

- How might what we do as a class support our church's mission?
- What are some ways our class might follow Jesus' mission more closely?

Work together to compose a class mission statement. Copy it onto newsprint. Display this in your learning area as a reminder of today's discussion.

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 for the children to read through the clues. 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.

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.



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."

Jesus' Mission (Luke 4:18-19)	What do you think this means?	How might God's people pursue Jesus' mission this year?
To _____ good news to the _____.		
To proclaim _____ to the _____.		
And recovery of _____ to the _____.		
To let the _____ go _____.		
To proclaim the _____ _____.		

Clues

Captives: People who were bound up physically, including political prisoners and prisoners of war. Also, people who were “imprisoned” by situations like abuse or illness.

Year of the Lord's Favor: Also called the Jubilee year. God told the ancient Jews to forgive debts and let the farmland rest every fifty years. If any plants grew on the land that year, people who were poor were to pick them for food.

Across:

- 1. holy writings about God
- 4. people who are imprisoned
- 7. followers, students
- 10. happy information
- 12. God's presence in a person
- 13. cannot see

Down:

- 1. place of worship
- 2. release or deliverance
- 3. teaching, preaching, and showing God's ways
- 5. He read the scroll in his hometown synagogue.
- 6. those with little to live on
- 8. large, rolled up readings
- 9. declare, profess
- 11. hometown of Jesus

Word Bank

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

