



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

Claiming

adult class, youth class,
or group in fellowship
time with which you can
partner

Praying

building blocks

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,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

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.

Provide yarn scraps, encouraging children to use them to shape letters to make words on the worship table that represent who Jesus is. They may choose to use yarn to form the letters for “Love” or “Good” or “Kind”—any word that they identify as representative of Jesus. As they work, encourage conversation on how they’ve learned about who Jesus is; share your own experience of how you know who Jesus is too. Once they’ve all had the chance to form a word on the worship table, take a moment to read them all out loud.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for several volunteers to practice today’s Scripture passage.

Singing

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

Praying



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 words displayed on the table. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

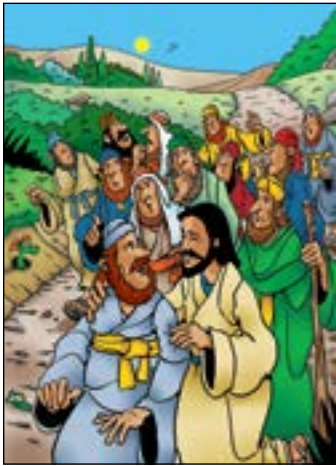
God, we thank you for your grace. /
We thank you for Jesus. /
Help us to understand who he is, /
to feel his love, /
and to share his good news with others. /
Amen. /



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. Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 16:13–20. Conclude the reading 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 center.

Invite children to listen again to the story 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 a retelling of the story using **SCM 3** or listen to the story audio. If you are reading, use your voice and expressions to make the story lively. 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 do you imagine people today may answer the question “Who do people say that Jesus is?”
- ▼ 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.



Claiming God’s Grace



Before the session, find an adult class, youth class, or group in fellowship time with which you can partner.

Jesus first asked the disciples who others said he was. Tell the children they will ask others who they think Jesus is. Review the story up to the point where Jesus asks the disciples who they say he is. Stop before Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah. Explain that the children will retell the story to this point and then ask, “So who do you say Jesus is?”

Have the children form pairs and meet with your partner group. Encourage each pair of children to approach a person in the other group. Invite the children to retell the story up to the point where Peter speaks, then ask, “So who do you say Jesus is?” Thank your partner group for their responses.

Return to your space and invite children to share what they heard. Consider how the responses they heard differ from the way the disciples answered. Wonder together what the difference is. Ask the children if any of the answers they heard surprised them.

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. Give children a piece of paper and a pencil. Tell them that they should write a brief description of themselves without using their name or other obvious descriptors. Assist younger children with writing as needed. Offer an example of how yours may read (for example: I love brownies, watching television, and reading books. My best friend is my dog).

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

C SD

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.

- SD** *Some children with sensory issues have difficulties with sound. Common sounds, like blocks falling, may be painful or overwhelming. Help these children feel more comfortable by providing advance warning.*

Extra Activity

C

Tell the children they will make a poster to remind them who Jesus is—the Messiah! Hand out copies of **GN 1**. 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).

