



Session 8
Winter 2015–16
Middler

Jesus brings good news

LUKE 4:14–30

prepare

PRAYER

God, the width and depth of your love is amazing. Help me to love all people as you do, without turning away from those who are oppressed and in need. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To hear Jesus' message of good news

STORY SUMMARY

Jesus returned to Galilee and taught; everyone praised him. In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from the scroll of Isaiah. The scripture proclaimed good news for the poor and the year of the Lord's favor. Jesus told them that the scripture had come true. Jesus implied that his words wouldn't be accepted in his hometown, comparing the people to Israelites in Elijah and Elisha's time. The crowd turned against him, but Jesus slipped away.



teaching tips for middler

In today's Bible story Jesus suffers rejection. As children approach adolescence, it can be comforting to know that Jesus understands feelings of not being accepted.

Today's session introduces the idea of parables as word pictures. Working on this concept for the next few sessions will help younger middlers understand Jesus' comparisons when they are part of future Bible stories.

Decide which Explore activities you will do. Create calls for a variety of art supplies, including everyday objects that children can use artistically. Bringing unique items and heavy-duty glue and tape will help children be especially creative with their artwork. Check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

This account of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth is unique to Luke's Gospel. It is the first thing Luke tells his readers about Jesus' public ministry, and it introduces several major themes that are repeated in the rest of the Gospel. The text consists of an introductory summary (verses 14–16), two main parts (verses 17–22 and 23–29), and a conclusion (verse 30). In each of the parts Jesus makes a proclamation and the people respond. These sections contrast significantly in mood but each is vital for understanding Jesus' ministry.

Jesus' public ministry begins

Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested. His public ministry in Galilee now begins under the power of the same Spirit.

As an observant Jew, Jesus would have attended synagogue regularly. It was common practice for adult males to read scripture and offer words of interpretation. On this particular occasion Jesus is chosen to read and is given the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He reads Isaiah 61:1–2a, including the line “to let the oppressed go free,” from Isaiah 58:6. This text encapsulates his future ministry.

Just as Isaiah's announcement gave hope to the Babylonian exiles, these same words would have reminded Jesus' contemporaries, oppressed by Rome and harsh economic conditions, of God's promises for future salvation. With these words, Jesus provides concrete content of the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus goes further, however, implying that he is the one who will inaugurate the kingdom. He announces that these promises have been fulfilled in the hearing of his listeners; that God's reign of salvation and justice is beginning “today.” The crowd is amazed. They can hardly believe that such remarkable words can come from the lips of a hometown boy.

LUKE 4:14–30



The mood shifts

Jesus sees through their admiration and reveals the “inner thoughts of many,” as Simeon predicted at his presentation in the temple as an infant.¹ He quotes two proverbs that suggest the crowd will expect him to show them some mighty deeds. Instead of catering to their demands, he reminds them of two Old Testament stories in which God extended mercy not to insiders but to outsiders: to the widow at Zarephath and to Naaman, the leprous Syrian.² God's grace extends beyond Israel—it will not be constrained by finite human expectations. Such words jerk his listeners out of their complacency and self-centeredness

and infuriate them. Jesus' gracious words are indeed good news for some, but they also create conflict and will eventually lead to his suffering and death, as the conclusion of this scene previews.

The good news of Jesus Christ

It will become evident in the rest of the Gospel of Luke that Jesus is indeed inaugurating the kingdom.³ He will preach good news to the poor, both the economically poor and those marginalized in other ways. He will bring release to those captured by sin, sickness, evil spirits, and debt. He will open the eyes of the blind, both the physically blind and those blind to the will and purposes of God. He will proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, words that would have called to mind the Jubilee year, at the heart of which lay cancellation of debts. Every fifty years Israel was to give the land a rest, cancel all debts, release any Israelites who had been sold into slavery, and return ancestral land to the original owners. The imagery from this Jubilee year characterizes what God has anointed Jesus to do.

1. Luke 2:35.

2. 1 Kings 17 and 2 Kings 5. Here Luke pairs stories of a man and a woman, something he does frequently, showing the inclusive nature of God's salvation.

3. See especially Luke 7:18–23.

gather

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Pencils
- Business-sized envelopes (three for each child)
- Slips of paper

to do

- Gather or buy envelopes.

BUILD COMMUNITY

Give children a creative way to share a bit about their lives with each other. Ask them to describe their weeks (or their mornings) using weather. For instance, if they were rushing around, it might have been like a windy day. A “same old” week might be like a grey, overcast day. If this is difficult for your group, approach the concept from the other side: What could happen that would give them the feeling of a sunny day? Or a rainy day?

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Play “God’s Light Shines,” track 8 on the Shine CD, page 14 of the *Year Two Songbook*. Invite children to think about how Jesus’ words in the Bible memory passage could seem like light shining. Sing a verse or two together.

Encourage children to silently welcome God’s light to shine in their time together today.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Guide the children in making prayer envelopes following the instructions on page 97 of this guide.

This week children can write or draw requests on slips of paper and put them in the “for others” envelope. Provide some ideas from current news or needs in your congregation. Encourage the children to silently pray for the requests as they write them.

Have children write their names on the envelopes. Save them for future use.

media connections

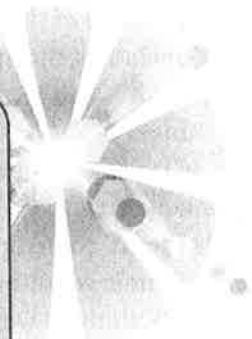
- *The Brow of the Hill Near Nazareth* art by James Tissot
- “Water Fall On Me” song by Jonathan Reuel
- *Voices Against Injustice: Ten Christians Who Spoke Out for Justice* by Catherine House
- Internet search for information on “outsider artist” Harold Finster

Bible memory

Have everyone turn to the Bible memory word search on page 22 in *Glow*. Children can read the definitions and work on the puzzle. Children will work more with this verse during today’s Bible story.

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

—Luke 4:16–19



experience

SHARE THE STORY

Gather in a circle within sight of the Bible memory poster. Open a Bible to Luke 4. Today's story picks up where last week's left off. Invite the children to close their eyes and imagine Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. Say:

Nazareth was a small town, probably just a few hundred people. It was a warm, dry place. The synagogue was nothing like the huge, fancy temple in Jerusalem. It was probably a simple building made of stones.

Children can keep imagining this setting and the unfolding action as you read the story from page 182 in *Shine On*. Invite everyone to open their eyes and read from the Bible memory poster when you get to the third paragraph.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Invite children to think about these questions. They can answer out loud or ponder silently.

- I wonder how Jesus felt standing up like a teacher in the place where he grew up.
- I wonder how Jesus is good news for people who are poor.
- I wonder what we can do today to bring good news to people who are poor.
- I wonder if Jesus was afraid or upset when the crowd turned against him. I wonder how he was able to get away.

PEACE NOTES

Invite the children to imagine how this story would end if it were a comic book or action movie. After sharing ideas, point out that Jesus did not display his power. He did not try to argue or convince people they were wrong. He simply slipped away (perhaps a bit like a mysterious superhero!). Sometimes it is okay not to fight back or even stand up for yourself. Sometimes the best option in tense situations is to simply slip away. Help the children come up with examples of times when standing up is important and other situations where it might be best to walk away.



Jesus brings good news

Luke 4:14–30

supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*

poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Luke 4)

to do

- Practice reading the Bible story.

explore

CREATE

Find out about “outsider art” on page 23 of *Glow*. Jesus brought good news to people who were outsiders, and “outsiders” often have their own gifts to offer the world. Invite the children to create their own “outsider art” that creatively shows the world that Jesus described (oppressed are free, captives are released). Provide a wide range of materials and permit children to use other items they can find around the room or your church building.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Art supplies: paper, markers, scissors
- Additional materials: yarn, paper clips, pipe cleaners, cardboard tubes, twigs, leaves, newspaper, fabric, used food containers, and other objects
- Heavy-duty glue and duct tape



MOVE

Make a circle of chairs with one less than the number of participants. One child will stand in the middle as “the good news proclaimer.” That child will say, “God’s love is for people . . .” and name a category, such as “wearing blue shirts,” “with brown eyes,” or “with pets.” The children matching the description will get up and change seats while the proclaimer also tries to get a seat. Whoever does not get a new seat becomes the new proclaimer. Periodically, the proclaimer should say, “God’s love is for everyone!” and the whole group will change seats.

For smaller groups: The proclaimer says, “God’s love is for people who are . . .” and names an activity, such as smiling, hopping, spinning, or whispering. The last person to start doing that activity becomes the new proclaimer. This idea could also be used if you have someone in the group who is mobility impaired.

supplies

- Chairs

RETELL

Children can use story figures to retell the story. Use Jesus and the Crowd; the Mary, Joseph, James, John, and Peter figures can also join the crowd. Encourage one person to summarize or read the story, making sure to mention the crowd’s reactions. The children with those story figures should make facial expressions and sounds to show their emotions. The story figures are on the back of the poster pack cover.

supplies

- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Story figures (from the poster pack)

GLOW

Children can do the puzzle on page 24 in *Glow* to find out what happened at Jubilee, a likely source of the phrase “the year of the Lord’s favor.” Talk about what a jubilee might look like in today’s world. *Answers:* Land goes back to its first owners. People get back homes they sold. Slaves are freed. Land is not farmed.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Pencils

other ideas

- Decorate your prayer envelopes with colors, drawings, and/or stickers.
- Read and/or act out the stories of Elijah and the widow in Zarephath (page 102 in *Shine On*) and Elisha healing Naaman (page 108).

bles

PRAY

Play "Praying," track 17 on the Shine CD. Encourage the children to listen for prayer requests throughout the week, including in your worship service. They can write them down and bring them to add to their prayer envelopes next week.

Offer a brief prayer thanking God for hearing us and calling us to work for a better world.

SEND

Invite children to find this session's entry on the Bible search poster (Isaiah 61). Jesus claimed these words from the prophet Isaiah for himself. We can participate in this calling, too, even in small ways.

Repeat this blessing several times as children leave the room:

Go and be God's good news to everyone around you!

supplies

- Shine Songbook and CD
- CD player

poster pack

- Bible search poster



We tend to focus so much attention on teaching children ways to recognize God in their head space that we neglect facilitating encounters with God in their heart space. Knowledge about God without experience of God can inoculate children against faith.

—Elsie Rempel
Winnipeg, Manitoba

leader's closing prayer

Good news for the poor is not necessarily good news for the rich! Reflect on how embracing Jesus' message affects the way you live in this world.

God of the loved and the unloved, thank you for challenging those of us who hold power and for gently lifting up those of us who feel crushed and broken by life. May I embrace your good news when it comforts and when it challenges. Amen.

looking ahead

One Explore option next week calls for different colors of tissue paper. Or, you could gather supplies for children to make watercolor paintings.