GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE

THEME: Jesus lived as God’s obedient son. His life of love, compassion and healing shows what children of God are called to be and do.

PREPARING FOR THE LESSON

MAIN IDEA: God sent Jesus into the world to bring hope and encouragement to all people. We can discover ways to bring hope and encouragement to other people.

MEMORY VERSE: “The Lord’s Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers.”—Luke 4:18 CEV

KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS TO BE LEARNED:
- Good news - that Jesus came to this world, died, and was resurrected so that we can experience salvation and have a new life.
- Spirit - can mean breath or wind.
- Holy Spirit - the third Person of the Triune Godhead. The Holy Spirit influences, gives power to and dwells in the believer.

BIBLE BACKGROUND:
Read Luke 4:14-21. All four Gospels have Jesus beginning his ministry in Galilee. After struggling with temptation in the wilderness and returning with the power of God’s spirit, Jesus was ready to face the most difficult challenge—delivering his controversial message to the people who knew him best.

Obviously, Jesus was more than a religious teacher. He was the fulfillment of the hopes of the Jews for a messiah or savior. But some Jewish people saw his ministry as a rejection of his Jewish heritage and they rejected his claim that he was the Messiah. Signs of this rejection began at the synagogue in Nazareth, where Jesus—a native son—had come to pray and worship God.

The passages that Jesus read in the synagogue were from Isaiah’s prophecy of the coming Spirit of God. The Gentiles who heard this message longed for a time when someone would bring good news for the poor, freedom for the captives, healing for the blind and freedom to all who were oppressed. These people, struggling under the oppressive power of the Roman government, heard these words with great hope. When Jesus referred to the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, he implied that it was God’s will that his offer of salvation go to the Gentiles as well. Jesus came to bring salvation and healing, not just to the Jews, but to all persons who would accept him.
The Jews, however, were expecting a Messiah in their image who would offer these things to them only. Consequently, many Jews were disappointed. The Nazareth scene deliberately presents the reader with an announcement of events to come. That announcement was that Jesus would be rejected and crucified by his own people.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STUDENTS:
Following Jesus’ example is not always easy to do. Children have a strong sense of right and wrong. They can easily identify when rules favor one group over another. One of the most frequently used phrases on the playground is, “That’s not fair.”

DEVELOPING YOUR FAITH:
Read Luke 4:14-15. As a teacher, do you feel yourself empowered by the Holy Spirit? Do you feel affirmed in your teaching ministry?
Read Luke 4:16-21. As you teach children, what does this Scripture call you to do? What kinds of good news can you bring to your children?

TEACHING THE LESSON

1. INTRODUCTION

- As the children arrive give either a red or blue string to each of them. You may also use stones and small sticks.
- Ask that all the children with red strings or stones sit on one side and all the children with blue string or sticks sit on the other side. This exercise will help the children better understand the idea of “Gentile” and “Jew”.
- Ask that they only talk with the children who have the same color string or object.
- After a brief time, ask them how they felt about being divided into separate groups and being able to talk only to the ones in their own group? Encourage them to answer and accept all answers. Be sure to give the children enough time to answer.
- ASK: How are the two groups different? (One group has blue strings while the other has red strings.) How are the groups alike? (They are all children. They all came to Sunday school this morning.) Accept all answers.
- SAY: All people are alike in many ways. People are also different in many ways.
- Name some ways that people are alike and different. Make a game of it. For example, SAY: Everyone with two ears, stand up. (Everyone, sit down.) Everyone with who likes candy stand up. (Everyone, sit down.) Everyone who has short hair, stand up. (Everyone, sit down.) Help the children to be aware of their similarities and differences. (Other examples: Older brother, two younger sisters, ate rice for breakfast this morning, etc.)
2. EXPLORE THE BIBLE MESSAGE

- SAY: You have been hearing stories about Jesus, who did wonderful things. Jesus never hurt anyone. He was kind and loving. Do you wonder why some people didn’t like him?
- In today’s Bible story, we are going to begin to get an idea of why some people did not like what Jesus had to say while other people were happy with his message of Good News.
- In Bible times, there were two groups of people: 1. The Jewish people, and 2. Everyone else (These people were called Gentiles.). If we had lived in Bible times, we would have been called Gentiles.
- Just as you were divided into groups when you came, in Bible times, the Jewish people and the Gentiles were divided into their own communities. The Jews would have nothing to do with the Gentiles. They could not play together. They could not eat together. It was against the Jewish law. However, Jesus did not feel that way. Jesus felt that God created all people in God’s image or likeness and that God’s love was for everyone. This idea began to cause trouble.
- In our last story, we heard about Jesus’ baptism. Now, filled with God’s Spirit, Jesus was ready to begin the job God had given him to do. Everywhere he went, he preached and taught and healed. In every town he went, he went to the synagogues and told the people about God and about God’s love. A synagogue was a place of worship where the Jews gathered just as the Christians go to church on Sunday. Soon, word began to spread about this man and all the wonderful things that he did. Our story today is about a time that Jesus went to a synagogue.

Tell the story.

The Sabbath morning came bright and early in the town of Nazareth. All of the Jews of the town gathered in the early daylight in the building that served as their synagogue. Men sat on the benches in the center of the room. Women and children lined up along the stone walls. Some sat and some stood on the cold stone floor. The light inside came from the flames of an oil lamp. The flickering flames cast strange shadows on the wall. There was a reading desk on a raised platform at the front of the room. A lamp cast a dim light on the desk.

The prayer leader came to the front of the room. He was not a priest like those in the Temple in Jerusalem. He was not even an elder of the congregation. He was not the man who blew the ram’s horn to announce the arrival of the Sabbath. Today, the prayer leader was Jacob, the potter from the village of Nazareth. Everyone grew quiet as Jacob’s voice rang out in the opening blessings and praises to God. Then together, young and old, men and women, all chanted the statement of their faith, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.”

Jonathan, an elder of the synagogue, then went to the back of the room and took a scroll from a gold covered wooded chest. The scroll was the Torah, the written Law for the Jewish people. Jonathan held the linen covered scroll up for all the people to see as he brought it to the reading desk. It was as if he were saying, “Everyone, look.
Here is God’s law.” Jonathan laid the scroll on the reading desk.

Jacob, the prayer leader, said a blessing of thanks for the gift of the Torah, and read from the scroll. He would read a passage and then another man from those gathered would tell the people what the words meant. The people listened carefully to hear what God’s law said to them. When Jacob finished reading from the Torah, the elder would call upon someone else to read. The next reader would read from the books of the prophets. These books told about the coming Messiah, the one God would send to save them.

Jonathan called upon Jesus. Jesus came to the front to read. He unrolled the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.”

Then he closed the book, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue looked at him. “Today this passage of Scripture has come true, just as you heard me read it. Everyone marveled at his words. They had heard rumors of all the wonderful things Jesus had done. But was he the chosen one? “Is this not the son of Joseph, the carpenter?” they asked one another. Then Jesus told about Elijah and Elisha and how they had done wonderful things not for the people of their own country, but for people of other countries. This made the people angry. Was he saying that God’s love was for everyone—not just for them? That’s not what they wanted to believe.

Jesus was sad. These people were his friends, his neighbors. Jesus knew that God had sent him to bring good news to all people—Jews and Gentiles. Jesus also knew that the time would come when the people of his own country would turn against him. They wanted a Messiah who would free them from the Romans. They did not want a Messiah who belonged to everyone.

3. RESPOND TO THE BIBLE MESSAGE

ACTIVITY 1: Questions

1. Jesus said that he brought good news. What was the good news? (That God loves everyone. That God sent Jesus to let everyone know about God’s love.)
2. Who was the good news for? (Jesus said that it was for everyone.)
3. How did that make some people feel? (Some people were angry because they thought that God’s love was just for them.)

ACTIVITY 2: Share the message

SAY: Jesus brought a message of hope and encouragement to those people who felt that nobody cared about them. Jesus brought the message that God’s love
was for everyone.

Ask the children to share a time where they saw or heard of someone showing love and being kind to someone. At first the children may be reluctant to share but they will do so with encouragement. You, as the teacher, may want to share from your own experience.

**ACTIVITY 3: Act out deeds of kindness**

After the children have shared the stories in ACTIVITY 1, choose one or two stories and have some children come to the front and act out the deeds of kindness. Afterwards, talk about what they did and why.

**ACTIVITY 4: Make a scroll**

If you have not made a scroll in LESSON 1, you may want to make one now. See the directions in LESSON 1 in this book. This is the kind of scroll that Jesus read from.

**4. CLOSE IN PRAYER**

Remind the children that God sent Jesus into the world to teach people about God’s love. This love is for all people. In the Bible, we read stories of how Jesus lived out that love in his life. Pray:

Dear God, thank you for your gift of Jesus. Help us to remember that God’s love is for all people, everywhere. Amen.