

Jer. 17:5–10

Ps. 1

1 Cor. 15:12–20

Luke 6:17–26

# Jesus Teaches about Blessing

## Goal for the Session

Children will explore Jesus' words to the crowd and celebrate the surprising ways that God brings blessing to the world.

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Luke 6:17–26

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Gay L. Byron

Jesus focuses his eyes (*ophthalmoi*) on the disciples after the healing excursion in verses 18–19. The reference to eyes in this passage (v. 20) should not be glossed over as insignificant. It is not so much that the people are able to see God in this encounter with Jesus. The subtle undercurrent and the word of hope in this passage is how the disciples (and presumably all those would-be followers of Jesus) are seen by God! So the raising of the eyes by Jesus is a symbolic metaphor for the watchful eyes of God, who is ultimately responsible for the blessings and curses that are at the heart of this sermon.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” David L. Ostendorf

This is the raw, unvarnished, faith-rattling declaration of the realm of God. The realm of God rests among those who have nothing but God. Jesus' Sermon on the Plain—these wondrous yet stark beatitudes—jar us out of our faithful complacency. The God Jesus speaks of is not always the God we proclaim. Our human inclination is to fit God into our own small definitions, cultures, and places. But God is always breaking down the barriers we construct to keep God in or out. Here, once again, God is calling us back.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Howard K. Gregory

The sermon seems to be addressed not to the people in general who have gathered around him, but to the disciples—to the church. Pastorally this highlights the fact that the very nature of the sermon, the values and ethics that it expresses, are apparently not intended to be a moral code binding on the society in its widest sense. Rather, it is for those who have made a commitment to follow Christ. At the same time, the fulfillment of the demands of this sermon will not be the outcome of personal effort and resources, but of divine grace. The good news is that our fulfillment of the demands of the sermon is the enabling work of the gift of grace, the gift of the Spirit.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Peter Eaton

[Jesus] is speaking not just “on the plain,” but *plainly*. We can trust Jesus to be absolutely “on the level” with us every step of the way, telling us the truth of our lives as he sees us. We hear this truth only through our participation in a community—the community of lifelong partnerships and families, the community of the eucharistic fellowship, the community of those who pray and discuss the Scriptures together, the community of service, the community of mutually committed members.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Luke 6:17–26**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Depending on the age of your learners, they may notice that the values Jesus teaches in the focus scripture are quite different than the values lifted up by society in general. Be aware of the different ways that children may hear Jesus' words. Those who have experienced poverty, hunger, rejection, or loss may find Jesus' words comforting, while others may not. As you welcome the children each week, your smiles and kind words convey God's blessing powerfully. The children likely will remember the way you express your love for Jesus and for them more vividly than what you teach them about the Bible.

*Loving God, when I forget about your deep love for me, help me remember.  
Bless me this week. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- green cloth
- battery-powered candle
- offering plate
- Bible
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- highlighters
- blanket or beach towels
- Color Pack 23, 24, 32
- map of Palestine
- 1" x 8½" green paper strip, tape, paper chain started Dec. 2
- Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, scissors, markers, stickers
- option 2: plain paper; drawing materials; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player
- option 3: plain paper, markers
- option 4: sturdy white paper plates; gravel; staplers; markers; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, bring a map of Palestine in Jesus' time in a study Bible or Bible atlas.

Greet each child. Invite early arrivals to help you set up the worship space with a green cloth, a battery-powered candle, the paper chain started December 2, an offering plate, and a Bible open to Luke 6.

Gather around the worship space. Point out the green cloth and remind learners that this is Common or Ordinary Time (or the Season after the Epiphany). Light the candle as a reminder of Jesus' presence. Lead this litany:

**Leader:** Jesus has come.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

**Leader:** Today we light the white candle, a symbol of Jesus.

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

**Leader:** We want to follow Jesus,

All: Rejoice, rejoice!

**Leader:** We pray for the light of Jesus to show us the way. Amen.

Ask a child to collect the offering and then place it next to the candle.

Introduce the story by showing Color Pack 23. Invite the children to describe what they see. Ask:

✠ Why do you think this large crowd has gathered?

✠ What is the largest crowd you have been in? What is it like to be in a huge crowd?

Comment that the Bible reading today is about a time when a crowd came to listen to Jesus.

It is important to show children where each session's story is found in the Bible. This reminds them that the stories they hear each week are from the Bible.

## EXPLORING

Show a map of Palestine in Jesus' time and ask volunteers to locate Jerusalem, Tyre, and Sidon, which are mentioned in verse 17. Notice that these towns are far apart, and imagine how the coastal towns might have been different from towns like Jerusalem or Nazareth. Consider how Jesus was teaching about God's ways to people who lived in different ways. Explain that today's story takes place on a plain, an area that was fairly flat. Invite the children to create a plain by spreading out a blanket (or beach towels) and sitting on it.

Open the Bible to today's reading. Explain that today's story comes from the Gospel of Luke. In this part of Luke, a great crowd of people has come to listen to Jesus.

Show Color Pack 24 and invite the children to describe what they see. Ask:

✪ If you could jump into this picture, where would you go?

Ask learners to read the words on the poster in unison. Explain that God's blessing means God's love. When we say, "God's blessing is on you," it means, "God's love surrounds you." Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Jesus Teaches). Form two groups to read the passage responsively. The first group will read the first line (bolded) in unison. The second group will read the second line in unison. Continue in this way to the end of the passage. After the reading, distribute highlighters and work together to mark the text as instructed.

Discuss:

- ✪ Do you think Jesus meant these teachings just for Christians (for people who follow him)? Why or why not?
- ✪ Today, how might experiences of feeling rejected, or sad, or in need of something bring a person closer to God?

Sit in a circle and choose one child to be It. This person starts the game by walking around the outer circle and tapping each person's head, saying each time: "God's blessing is on, on, on" until he/she selects one person and says, "You." It runs around the circle with the person who has been chosen following. When they've gone all the way around, It takes that place and the one chasing becomes the new It.

Ask the children to stand in a circle. Invite each child in turn to say, "I am (*Name*)."  
Have the group respond, "And God's blessing is on you." Discuss:

- ✪ Which part of Jesus' teaching makes you feel like celebrating? How might you celebrate?

## RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

- 1. Blessing Messages** Children will celebrate God's love by telling the good news to the congregation. Ask: How can we tell others about God's love and blessing? Accept all answers. Suggest that you could leave surprise messages with this good news. Distribute

**EASY  
PREP**

copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Blessing Messages), markers, stickers, and scissors. Read aloud the directions and help learners follow them as needed. Go as a group to place the notes in prayer books or hymnals in your church's worship area.

2. **My Vision** Learners will continue their celebration by imagining the difference God's blessing can make to the world. Comment that Jesus' teaching gave his followers a vision of what God's kingdom is like. Explain that a vision is a mental image of what something could be like. Play "Mood Music" (track 12 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019). Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine what it is like in God's perfect kingdom—imagine a world where all the hungry people are fed, the sad people find happiness, and the people who are poor have everything they need. After the music finishes, ask: In your vision, how did the world change? What stayed the same? Distribute drawing paper and markers, crayons, or colored pencils. Invite learners to write or draw about their visions of God's perfect kingdom. Display these in your space.
3. **Advertising God's Values** Learners will express their ideas about living according to God's values as they create advertisements. Ask: If you were to make an ad (either a print ad or TV commercial) to promote what Jesus says is important in the kingdom of God, what would it look like? Form pairs or groups of three to develop a print ad or skit "commercial" promoting the values in the focus scripture. After seven or eight minutes, ask each group to show or perform its ad. After viewing the ads, discuss: What is the biggest challenge in encouraging people to follow Jesus' teaching today?
4. **Tambourines** Children will make tambourines to help them celebrate the ways that God blesses. Lead them in the following steps: Place a small handful of gravel in one paper plate. Place another plate on top, with the bottom facing up. Staple the edges together in five or six places. Use markers to print on one side of the tambourine: God blesses the world! Decorate the other side with stickers. Play "Sing Thanks to God" (Color Pack 32; track 15 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019) and encourage the children to accompany the song with their tambourines as they thank God for God's many blessings.

With learners' permission, place their ads on the church's website or in its newsletter.

### Sing Thanks to God

Little children, *\*sing* your thanks to God.

Little children, *\*sing* your thanks to God.

Little children, *\*sing* your thanks to God.

Thanks to God. Thanks to God.

Verse 2: *\*clap*

Verse 3: *\*dance*

Verse 4: *\*shout*

Little children, praise the Lord your God.

Little children, praise the Lord your God.

Little children, praise the Lord your God.

Thanks to God. Thanks to God.

### CLOSING

Gather around the worship space. Add a green paper link for Ordinary Time (or Season after the Epiphany) to the church year paper chain.

Pray aloud:

*God, thank you for sending Jesus to teach about the power of your love.*

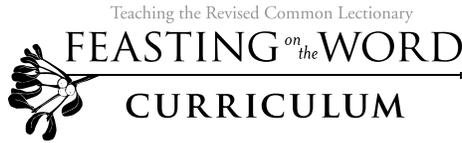
*And thank you for blessing us each day! Amen.*

Sing "Sing Thanks to God" (Color Pack 32; track 15 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019), acting out the words of each stanza.

Say good-bye to each child with this blessing: "(Name), God bless you!"

February 17, 2019

Jesus Teaches  
about Blessing



Multi-Age  
Resource Sheet 1

## Jesus Teaches

**God will bless you people who are poor.**

His kingdom belongs to you!

**God will bless you hungry people.**

You will have plenty to eat!

**God will bless you people who are crying.**

You will laugh!

**God will bless you when others hate you**

and won't have anything to do with you.

**God will bless you when people insult you and  
say cruel things about you,**

all because you are a follower of the Son of Man.

**Long ago your own people did these same  
things to the prophets.**

So when this happens to you,

be happy and jump for joy!

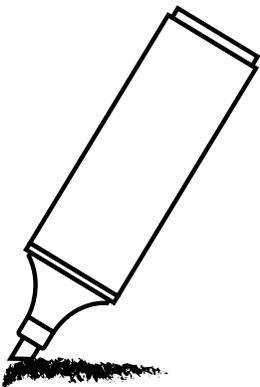
**You will have a great reward in heaven.**

— Luke 6:20–23, Contemporary English Version

### Digging Deeper

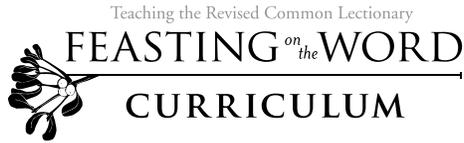
1. Highlight the word *bless*.
2. Circle the descriptions of the people God will bless.
3. Underline the blessings they will receive.

**Note:** In the Bible, to be blessed means that God loves you and approves of you, and gives you something good.



February 17, 2019

Jesus Teaches  
about Blessing



Multi-Age  
Resource Sheet 2

## Blessing Messages

**Directions:** Cut out the notes and decorate them with markers and heart stickers. Place the notes inside prayer books or hymnals for people to find during worship.

