

1. An Angel Visits Zechariah (Luke 1:1-21)

Message

God keeps His promises

Materials Needed

Cheerleading pompoms

Preparation

Put on the board: Promises of God *and* Promises of Parents

Lesson

Today we will talk about promises: promises made by God and promises made to us by our parents. Let's talk about our parents' promises first. When your parents were married, they promised God and each other that if God blessed them with children, they would take very good care of them. Let's make a list on our board of how your parents take care of you. *Build a list that might include feed you, give you shelter, clothe you, give you an education, help you grow closer to God (by bringing you here to Sunday School), help you be happy (ask what makes them happy) and of course and above all, love you!!*

Here is another example of parents keeping their promises to their children. A dad once told his son that he would be at all his Little League games to cheer him on. He knew this would make his son happy. When he kept letting work and appointments get in the way, his wife reminded him that he had made a promise to attend his son's baseball games. The dad rearranged his schedule and made sure to be at those games almost all of the time. He prayed about it, too, so God would help him keep his word!

Let's see what God's promises are. *List these under Promises of God on the board.*

- (1) He will **give you rest** (Matthew 11:28-29)
- (2) He will **supply all your needs** (Philippians 4:19)
- (3) He will **give you peace** (John 14:27)
- (4) He will **strengthen us so we are not afraid** (Isaiah 41:10)
- (5) He will **give us everlasting life** (Romans 10:9)

How many of you watch baseball? Who can explain how the game is played? *Children's responses should include the pitcher and what the pitcher does, the catcher and his job, the various bases, and finally home base where he is safe and scores a point. Make reference to your hometown baseball team and their performance the last several seasons.* As Christians, home base is our everlasting home with God. Let's see if the man in today's story believes all the above listed promises of God and if he will be "safe" on home base. The Bible shows us again and again how God keeps all His promises.

In today's story, Zechariah has been praying for a child. When the angel gives Zechariah the news that he will become a father (*wave the cheerleading pompoms*), was Zechariah excited? Let's hear the story and see what happens.

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth believed in God. They were not happy because they did not have children. One day while Zechariah was doing his work in the Temple – it took him seven days to do this work -- an angel appeared to him. When he saw the angel appear, he was afraid. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah, because God heard your prayers to have a child and your wife, Elizabeth, will have a baby boy. God wants you to name him John. John will be very important to God and John will prepare everyone for Jesus's arrival." Zechariah said to the angel, "How can this happen because my wife and I are very old?" Because Zechariah did not believe the great news brought by God's angel, the angel told Zechariah he would not be able to speak until the child was born. When he finished his work at the Temple after 7 days, Zechariah went home. Not long after he came home, his wife Elizabeth told him she was going to have a baby (*shake the cheerleading pompoms*)!

Children, we learned today that God always keeps His promises and that we need to keep our promises as well. Who can share an example of a promise they have kept?

*Prepared by Berdjouhi Parseghian of St. Leon Armenian Church, Fair Lawn, NJ
(Support resources: Through the Bible in Felt Teacher's Manual by Betty Lukens; Quick Children's Sermons; The Beginners Bible Timeless Children's Stories, Karyn Henley, Questar Publishers; The Early Reader's Bible, Gilbert Beers, Zonderkidz)*

2.An Angel Visits Mary/Baby Jesus Is Born (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7)

Message

God calls upon people of faith to accomplish his purposes

Materials Needed

Red carpet, a toy baby, baby blanket, diapers, baby hat, onesie, baby bottle, rattle

Preparation

Put the words *Purpose* and *Preparation* on the board; point to these as you mention the words.

Lesson

God calls people from all walks of life to accomplish His purposes. He chooses people who wholeheartedly believe in Him. In today's lesson, he chooses Mary for a very important purpose.

Mary lived in a town called Nazareth and was engaged to be married to Joseph. An angel appeared to her and told her she would give birth to a son and she would name him Jesus. Jesus would be very great and would be called the son of God. When the angel told her this news, Mary said, "I am the Lord's servant and I am willing to accept whatever He wants. (*If you presented an assembly on Zechariah last week, contrast Mary's belief and trust in God to Zechariah's lack of trust.*)

One day, Joseph had to take a trip to the City of Bethlehem because all the people of the country had to be counted. So Mary went with him. The city of Bethlehem was crowded. Joseph and Mary looked for a place to stay but there was no room in any house. So, Joseph and Mary had to stay in a stable where the donkeys and horses stayed. That night, baby Jesus was born. It was God's baby son and Mary and Joseph named him Jesus just as the angel had told them to do. They wrapped him up so he would be warm (*wrap the toy baby with the baby blanket under materials needed*). Mary made a soft bed for him in a manger and the baby Jesus slept there. Mary and Joseph loved baby Jesus. Now, most people who await an important event begin preparing. I remember when the Catholicos, the head of the Armenian Church, visited America many years ago; big preparations were made for his arrival. *Lay the red carpet on the floor.* When a baby is born, parents also

prepare for its arrival, by getting everything he or she will need. *Hold up the baby items.* If parents have other children, they will also prepare brothers and sisters for the new arrival. Friends will plan a baby shower where friends bring gifts for the baby. *Contrast all this to the lack of preparation for Jesus's arrival.*

Conclude the Assembly by giving the children something to think about: So, what do you think God is calling you to do? Will your answer be like Mary's, a faithful "yes"? How would you prepare? Let's pray that we will always be ready when God calls upon us to do His good work. Amen!

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3.The Visit of the Shepherds/A Star Leads Wise Men to Jesus (Luke 2:8-40)

Message

God wants us to make good choices in all that we do

Materials Needed

An advertising brochure from a toy store, a cell phone, pictures of billboards, a toy television (or a picture of one)

Preparation

Put the words *Good Choice* and *Bad Choice* on the board; point to these words as you mention them

Girls and boys, stores and companies are always trying to sell something to you. They use different ways to convince you. For example, a toy store might print a brochure and mail it to every house (show brochure); their hope is that you will see the brochure on the kitchen table with the rest of the mail and you will pick it up and look through it. Or, stores trying to sell you things might send texts to your cell phone for those of you who use a cell phone (hold one up). Another method stores use to get your attention is using billboards which are big, outdoor

advertising signs; you may have seen such signs. Lastly, the most popular way to reach you is when you are watching television. For example, I know during the winter months, I see many ads to sell trips to warm places.

Now, the messages advertisers send us require a response, a choice. Will we buy what they are selling? What would be a good choice? A bad one? Of course, parents will always guide you to make the right choice.

In today's story, we're going to hear about a message God sent – a big, beautiful star in the sky that got everyone's attention and a chorus of angels that also appeared in the sky. We're going to meet shepherds and wise men who made one kind of choice when they saw these things and a king, whose name is Herod, who made a very bad choice.

Here's the story: It was nighttime near the town of Bethlehem. Shepherds were watching their sheep and suddenly an angel came to the shepherds. The shepherds were afraid but the angel told them not to be afraid because she was bringing good news. The good news was that God's Son was born that day and they could see him wrapped warmly in a manger. A whole chorus of angels joined her and proclaimed the good news again! When they left, the shepherds went to find this baby and they did find him just as they had been told. The shepherds shared this good news with everyone they met!

God also put a special star in the sky when Jesus was born. Some wise men who lived in the east saw this star. They knew it was a sign that a baby king had been born. These wise men wanted to visit the baby so they followed the star a long way. The wise men went to King Herod and asked if King Herod knew where this baby king was born. This news worried King Herod. He did not like anyone else to be called King. "I do not know this king" said King Herod, "but go and find him and tell me where he is." So, the wise men went and the star took them to where Jesus was. When they saw Jesus, they bowed down and gave him gifts: sweet smelling gifts, sparkling, golden gifts.

Because King Herod wanted to hurt the baby, God sent the wise men a dream. In the dream, he told them not to tell King Herod where the baby was. So, they went home a different way. King Herod was mad. He wanted to find the baby king because he wanted to kill him so he could be the *only* king.

God knew what Herod was thinking so he sent an angel to tell Mary and Joseph to go to Egypt and stay there until the angel told them to come back. Mary and

Joseph went to Egypt and lived there until King Herod died. Only then did Mary and Joseph go back to Bethlehem.

End assembly by giving the children something to think about; ask the question: See what different choices people make when they see the same message! Can you share a time when you made a good choice? What did your parents think of your choice? These examples you shared would make God smile!

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4. Jesus Grows in Wisdom (Luke 2:41-52)

Message

Jesus grew in size and in wisdom

Materials Needed

Gummy bear rings (one for each child); a balloon

Preparation

Put on board: Did Jesus go to school? Who was Jesus's best friend?

The house baby Jesus lived in was not fancy – it was basic and simple. In this house, He grew in size. Did He grow in wisdom? Did He go to school?

All of you were babies like Jesus and have grown up over the years. Let's see if you have grown in wisdom. I am going to ask you several questions and see if you know the answer. Each time you answer a question correctly, I will blow up this balloon. Let's see if you have grown in wisdom by how big we can blow up the balloon.

- (1) Who is the pastor of our church?
- (2) In what town is our church located?
- (3) What book can we read to learn more about Jesus?
- (4) What town was Jesus born in?
- (5) What was Jesus's mother's name? Father's name?

This balloon got bigger as we answered each of the questions because when we go to school, our minds grow as we learn new things. You knew the answers to questions I just asked because you have been coming to Sunday School and learning about Jesus.

None of us come into the world knowing all the answers. Jesus was no different -- He had to go to school too. He was taught by rabbis in the temple where He went many times to learn; He listened closely and asked many questions. He showed that it is important to go to school to learn -- especially about God. So, yes, Jesus did go to school!

Who was Jesus' best friend?

I have something in this bag that reminds me of my best friend (take out the gummy bear ring and show the children). I'm reminded of a few important things about my best friend when I look at this gummy bear ring.

- (a) The *circular shape* reminds me of my best friend because it is a circle without a beginning or an end. Because it has no beginning or end, it goes round and round forever. I don't know when my friend and I became best friends and what year we started hanging out together. Just seems like we always knew each other.
- (b) *Take the ring off and bend the gummy bear back and forth.* Look how *strong* this ring is. My best friend is also very strong. When I get mad or say mean things to my friend, he/she never falls apart, but understands and forgives and is always there for me.
- (c) This ring is *just the right size*. No matter how old I am or how big my finger gets, my best friend still fits. I can always count on him/her to listen and he/she always knows how I feel.

My best friend was also Jesus's best friend. Have you guessed who my best friend is and who Jesus's best friend is? Yes, it's God, our Father in heaven. God, our best friend, promises us:

DO NOT BE AFRAID
I AM WITH YOU

I WILL MAKE YOU STRONG
I WILL HELP YOU
I WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU

Give a gummy bear ring to all those who came to assembly.

End assembly by giving children something to think about: Children, you are growing in size and wisdom also. Learn by going to school just as Jesus learned by going to the rabbis; become smart and wise, and look for your best friend, God, whenever you need him because He is always there for you!!!

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5. Jesus is Baptized and Tempted (Luke 4:1-13)

Message

How do you respond when someone is trying to dare or tempt you?

Materials Needed

Pictures of the baptismal font in church, cactus, plate of rocks, calendar, cheerleading pompons

Preparation

Put the word *Dare* and *Tempt* on the board; point to these words as you mention them.

Good morning boys and girls, last week we talked about Jesus when He was boy, how He grew in size, where He went to school and how He learned to have a good sense of right and wrong. Jesus the boy grew and became a man. One day the older Jesus came to the river and asked a man named John to baptize him. John was telling everyone to stop doing bad things and to start being good. After saying that to those who came to listen to him, John baptized them in a river by dipping them quickly in the water. As soon as Jesus came up out of the water after being baptized, the Spirit of God came down from heaven as a dove and landed on Jesus. God said "This is my Son. I love Him and I am pleased with Him." If you have been in church when a baby is baptized, you have seen how the priest of the church

dips the baby in the water three times so the baby can become a member of God's family.

After being baptized, Jesus went to the nearby desert of Judaea to be alone for 40 days. *Show the calendar and count forty days with the children to show that 40 days is a long, long time.* This was a dry, rocky place where it would have been hard to find food (*show the cactus as one of the plants of the region and explain that it is not a food people can eat*) or to feel safe from wild animals. Jesus was weak, tired, and hungry. The Devil, who works against God's ways, waited until Jesus was weak, tired, and hungry to come to see Him. "You can make food from those rocks" Satan said (*show the plate of rocks*). He was tempting Jesus. But Jesus knew that he must not do what Satan said. "I must do what God tells me." Satan asked Jesus three times to do something that God would not like. But Jesus would not do what Satan said. "I must please God," Jesus told Satan. Satan saw that he could not get Jesus to do what he wanted. So Satan went away. God was pleased with Jesus (*shake cheerleading pompons*).

End assembly by giving the children something to think about: When your friends try to dare or tempt you to do the wrong thing, how do you respond? *Allow children to give answers.* I hope you say "I must do what is right because I want to please God."

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6. Jesus Calls Disciples (John 1:43-51)

Message

Jesus picks his helpers and friends

Materials Needed

Soccer ball or basketball

Preparation

Put on board: How did Jesus choose his helpers and friends?

Lesson

Ask students how many are involved in team sports. After listening to their responses, ask them what they call the person who teaches and leads their team (the coach). Because you trust the coach to teach and lead the team, you trust him or her to win the game. Coaches expect the children on their team: (a) to listen (b) to come to practice (c) to be their best (d) to keep their bodies strong and fit, (e) to be a person that can take loss or defeat without complaining, and (f) to continue to learn and improve their game. Pick a student to come forward and face the other students in assembly. For fun, and to demonstrate if he or she is a good listener, instruct them to bounce or dribble the ball five times and note if they listened and followed the instruction. Have another student do jumping jacks to demonstrate fitness.

Jesus was also a coach who was looking for a team made up of helpers and friends. To find His helpers, Jesus went to very different places. You would think He would search for them in religious schools or schools where they learned how to speak to the public. Instead, Jesus called people with hearts that were ready for Him. He called simple fishermen to leave their boats. He just said: "Follow me." He passed by a tax office. The job of the man in the tax office was to collect the money the people owed to the king. "Follow me" Jesus said to the man in the tax collector's office and the man got up and followed Jesus. These people and others like them became Jesus's helpers and friends. He expected the same important things that any coach expects from a team.

Just as Jesus called on the disciples and others to be on his team of helpers and friends, Jesus is also calling each one of you to be part of His team at school, on the playground, on an athletic field and in your homes. In each of these places, how well are you listening, behaving, being a good example of following Jesus?

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7.The First Miracle of Jesus (John 2: 1-11)

Message

Jesus helps when he sees a need

Materials Needed

Construction paper to be used to cut templates (samples appear below) of Blue's Clues

Preparation

Prepare templates of the six Blues Clues emblems, front and back, and tape them on board; leave space to write next to each one

Lesson

Good morning boys and girls. There is a children's television show called "Blue's Clues." In this show, the TV host gives clues (*point to the six blues clues emblem on the board*) so that the audience could figure out the object or story being described by the clues. We are going to play that game today so the six clues on the board can tell us about the first miracle performed by Jesus; so put on your "thinking caps." (*As students raise their hand, have them come to the board, pick clue number one (do this until all six clues are read) and read the description on the back of each clue. As each description is read, place template back on the board and write the description just read next to the matching template. Follow this procedure until all six templates are completed.*)

Descriptions behind each clue:

- Clue number one: a sacrament
- Clue number two: involves a man and a woman
- Clue number three: Mary
- Clue number four: Jesus' helpers (disciples)
- Clue number five: six water jars
- Clue number six: wine

Now that we have some tidbits of the first miracle, let me describe the story in detail.

One day, Jesus and his disciples went to a wedding party. It was a happy time for everyone. There was food to eat and wine to drink. But Jesus' mother came over to him. "Something terrible has happened" she said. "They have run out of wine!" Then she looked at the servants. "Do whatever Jesus tells you," she said. There were six very big stone jars nearby. Jesus told the servants, "Fill those jars with water." So the servants filled the jars to the top. "Now taste it," said Jesus and then serve it to your guests." The servants tasted it. But it was not water anymore! It was wine. They served it to their guests and many thought it was the best wine at

the party. They did not know it had been plain water. But the servants knew. God had given Jesus special power, because Jesus was God's son.

Whenever Jesus sees a need, like He did at the wedding, He comes to the rescue. What are your needs? Have you prayed to Him asking for assistance? Keep praying and if Jesus knows your need is good for you, He will respond.



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8. Jesus Cleanses the Temple (Luke 19:45-48)

Message

Respect everyone's home

Materials Needed

Wear exercise clothes to assembly, bring a stretch band used to stretch muscles, 5 lb. weights, a ball.

Preparation

Put on board: Have a heart

Lesson

You are probably wondering why I am wearing my exercise clothes and have brought weights and a stretch band to assembly with me. This equipment is what I use to exercise to take care of my body. In addition to making my muscles stronger, I also do things that will strengthen my heart. I take a walk every morning and I lead a hiking group. Let us all stand up and do some exercises that will strengthen our hearts. *Do some deep knee bends, gently run in place, have a youngster bounce a ball and run up and down the hall).*

A strong heart helps us in everything we do such as play in the playground, finish homework assignments given by teachers, and complete the chores asked by your parents. Well, that's about being strong *in body*. But just as important for God – maybe even *more* important - is having hearts that are strong *in faith*. Today's lesson tells us of a time when people's hearts of faith were weak and all they cared about was making money and taking care of their selfish needs. Here is what happened.

Jesus liked to go to God's house. He liked to talk to God there. He liked to be with God's people. But Jesus did not like what some were doing. There were people who sold animals and goods in front of God's house. These men were not very honest and sold their products for more than they were worth. They liked tricking people. Jesus was not happy that God's house was being used in this way and said to them "You are not doing what you should do in God's house." You should go to God's house to be with Him and to pray. You must get out!" Jesus was angry and threw these men and all that they were selling out of God's house!

Have you ever felt mad like Jesus? Imagine how you would feel if you came home one day and found your friends and neighbors had come into your home and filled it with toys, food, or clothes to sell. This is your home and your neighbors turned it into a supermarket, a toy store or a clothing store. Your home is special to you just as Jesus's Father's home was special to Him. Let us strengthen our hearts and our faith, boys and girls, so we can respect and take good care of God's home.

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9. Jesus Returns to His Hometown (Luke 4:14-30)

Message

It's good to be appreciated and loved.

Materials Needed

A picture of your pet (or any pet), pet's carrying case when travelling in a car, food and treats for the pet

Preparation

Put on board: It feels good to be appreciated and loved

Lesson

Good morning boys and girls. How many of you have pets? *If you have a pet: I have a ___ and his/her name is _____ and having him/her in our home makes our home a very special place (tape picture of your pet on bulletin board). If you don't have a pet, tape the picture of a pet on the board and say: "A lot of people have pets, don't they? And their presence in a home really makes it a special place."* I have learned that pets are very smart. When my pet gets/our pets get sick I take her/we take them to a pet doctor often in a carrying case (*show carrying case*). Sometimes when they see the carrying case, they know they are going to the doctor which is something they really do not like to do. They can even run and hide under the bed! You can place food and treats (*place the food and treats in the carrying case*) to persuade them to get into the carrying case. After the doctor is finished examining our pet, they easily go back into the carrying case and are ready to go home. They know home is safe and home is where they are loved and appreciated.

Just like our pets, we all love being home with our family. Whenever your parents let you go to sleepovers to a cousin's or a friend's house, you probably want to go back home after a few days to be in your comfortable bed and cozy home. In today's Bible story, the grown up Jesus goes back home to Nazareth where he grew up. Unlike our pets or you coming home from a sleepover, Jesus was not welcomed with love. Let's see what happens.

Jesus went back to Nazareth his hometown and where he grew up. 'Look who is her!' some people said. Jesus was coming into God's house. Jesus went up where the people could see him. Then he looked at God's word and began to read God's word. The boys and girls were quiet. The mothers and fathers were quiet too. Jesus told them about God's son. He told them what God's word said about him. I am God's son he told them. No, some of the people said. You are not God's son. The people did not like what Jesus said. They took him away and tried to harm him. But Jesus went away from them. These people made Jesus sad. They did not do what they should with God's son.

Jesus felt very sad that the people in his hometown did not welcome him or listen to what he taught. Instead, they wanted to hurt him but luckily he slipped away through the crowd and got away. Boys and girls, it is good to be appreciated and loved. So when you go home today, give members of your family a big hug and let them know you appreciate all that they do for you.

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10. Jesus Heals a Sick Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Message

Jesus helps when He sees a need

Material Needed

Flour-filled latex exam glove; candy treats

Preparation

Put on board: *Kindness*

Lesson

The other day I was making that delicious bread that Armenians eat at breakfast. Does anyone know the name of this “bun”? Yes, the name is choreg. As I was mixing the dough, I realized I needed something but my hands were sticky with dough. I needed a helping hand (*take out flour-filled latex exam glove*). So, I asked my husband to help me by getting the tool I needed from the kitchen drawer. A helping hand comes in handy at times, doesn't it boys and girls?

(Continue holding the helping hand.) In today's Bible story Jesus gives a helping hand to a man who could not walk. Jesus was teaching inside a house; there were many people who came to see him that the house was full. People knew that Jesus healed the sick so four men came with their friend who could not walk. They carried him on a little bed. But they could not get to Jesus because the house was full. That did not stop them. There were some stairs outside the house. Up the stairs they went to the roof. They took off some tiles of the roof and made a hole. They let their friend down right through the roof so the sick man could be right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw the man, He said “Get up and walk.” The man stood up and he walked home praising God. Everyone in the house was surprised and they thanked God also.

Have you been a helping hand to people you know? *Give the boys and girls who volunteer the flour-filled exam glove to hold as they share with the assembly how they were kind and helped a friend in need. Pray the following prayer:* Dear God, help me to remember that kindness means never having to say “I'm too busy to be kind to someone today, amen.” *Give each student a piece of candy prior to dismissing them to their classrooms.*

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