



God's Promise of Peace

(based on Micah 5:2-5)

Once there was a man called Micah who lived in a difficult time of war and fighting. He was a prophet and gave the Hebrew people messages from God.

The people were frightened and sad. The countries fought with each other. Soldiers destroyed their homes. People stole from each other. People hurt each other. It was a hard and scary time.

"What will happen to us?" the people cried. "Will we have to leave our homes? How will we live?"

Sometimes they began to wonder if God had forgotten them. They whispered to each other, "Has God left us all alone?"

But God had not left the people alone. When the time was right, God gave a message to the prophet Micah.

"Micah, tell my people not to give up," said God. "Tell them to look towards Bethlehem. I am sending a new ruler to them. Out of the tiny town of Bethlehem will come a king who will bring peace to the whole world."

Micah was excited to hear God's message. "God has a plan," he thought. "God will send a special king to bring peace to the world. This is good news!" So Micah shouted out the good news to everyone.

When the people heard the message, they rejoiced. "God has a plan!" they said to one another. The message passed from one person to another.

"Tell us more about God's ruler," they begged.

"God's ruler will take care of us," replied Micah. "He will lead us with God's power. We will all live in safety. God is bringing peace to the whole world."

"Have you ever heard such wonderful words from God?" The people cried, "This is good news! We need to say thank you to God."

So that's what they did. They gave thanks for God's promise.

Whenever they heard about the troubles in the land, the people would talk about God's wonderful promise of peace.

"Look towards Bethlehem," they reminded each other. "Out of Bethlehem will come a ruler who will bring peace to the whole world."



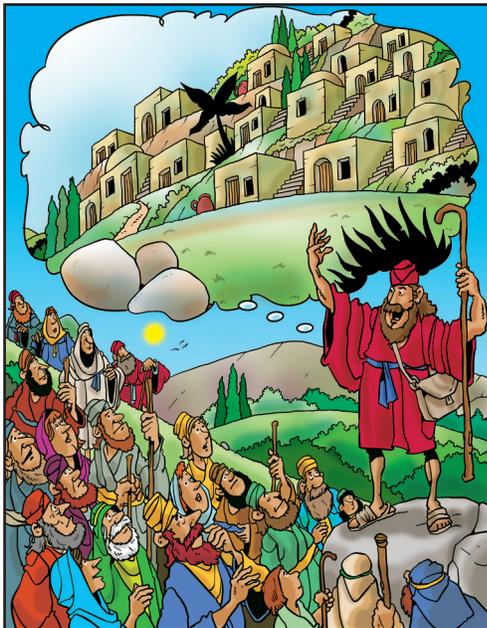
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Advent wreath—When your family is together for a meal this week, read the Bible story, and light the first candle of the wreath. Wonder together where God's grace is in this story.
- Together search presbyterianmission.org for Advent prayers. Download a pdf with a number of prayers and take turns each day, reading from the prayers.
- Nativity scene—In your child-friendly nativity set, put out the empty manger for the first week of Advent. Add other figures each week. Remember how long ago God's promise of peace was given in the little town of Bethlehem. Imagine where God's promise of peace may be found today.



Responding to God's Grace

- Take a drive together and look at Christmas lights. Wonder how the many lights are like the stars in the night sky near Bethlehem.
- Make a cake for the birds. Poke a small hole in a paper hot cup. Insert a string in the hole, leaving a few inches inside and outside the cup. Melt bacon grease. Mix in bird seed. Pour the mixture into the cup. Chill the cup to solidify the mixture. Tear the cup away, and hang the cake on a tree outside to feed the birds. Watch the birds enjoy their feast.
- Help your children paint or draw a picture of your family's home. Turn a piece of bubble wrap bubble side up. Paint the bubbles white. While the paint is still wet, turn it upside down on the picture of your home. Press lightly, then lift it off the paper. The bubbles make a snow scene on the picture. Reflect on the peace and quiet that might be within your home on a snowy day. Consider how your family fosters peace in your community.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Find a YouTube recording of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Learn the refrain and sing it with the recording.
- Make a Peace banner. Cut a piece of paper in half long ways. Glue the two pieces together to make a long strip. Decorate the strip with crayon, paint, or markers. Help your children draw and cut out fat letters to spell PEACE. Glue the letters on the banner. Hang the banner where your family can see it.
- Pray the following prayer each day this week:

God, thank you for not leaving us alone. Help us to never give up hoping for peace for the whole world. Amen.