



# The JOY of the GOSPEL

*Four Lessons for January 2019*

**January 6, 2019** – The Epiphany of the Lord

**January 13, 2019** – The Baptism of the Lord

**January 20, 2019** – The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

**January 27, 2019** – The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

*The Joy of the Gospel*

# The Visit of the Magi (Middle and Upper Elementary)



January 6, 2019 – The Epiphany of the Lord

## Overview

In this week's Gospel passage, the magi visit the infant Jesus to bring Him gifts and honor Him. In this lesson, students will come to a deeper understanding of the identity of the magi, and analyze their story to determine the meaning of their visit to Jesus.

## Directions

1. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
2. Review and discuss the answers to the focus questions.
3. Have students complete **What is the Meaning of the Visit of the Magi?** Students will learn about the identity of the magi and what their visit represented.
4. Review and discuss the answers when finished.

## Answer Key

1. Bethlehem. Herod was king.
2. The magi travelled from the East. They knew that there was a newborn king of the Jews because they saw his star rising.
3. The king was troubled because he felt that his own power was threatened by the newborn "king of the Jews." The chief priests and scribes knew where Christ was born because of an Old Testament prophecy that announced His birthplace as Bethlehem.
4. Herod sent the magi to search for the child and to send him word when they had found him so that he too could come and pay homage. It is likely Herod did not wish to pay Jesus homage, but rather sought to kill Him.
5. A star which led them to Bethlehem and stopped over Jesus' house.

6. They paid Him homage and knelt before Him. They offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
7. They were warned in a dream not to.

### **What is the Meaning of the Visit of the Magi**

1. Every nation on earth.
2. A mystery.
3. This mystery was not made known to previous generations as it has now to the Apostles by the Holy Spirit.
4. The Gentiles are coheirs to the promises of Christ, the Good News of Salvation in the Gospel, and members of the one Body of Christ, the Church.

### **Critical Thinking Question**

The magi represent the Gentiles that St. Paul spoke of. Their visit represents the fulfillment of the Responsorial Psalm, that all the nations on earth will adore the Lord. Thus, the magi are in a certain sense all of us, who come from every nation on earth to adore our God and King.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12: The Visit of the Magi

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*” Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star’s

appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage.” After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

### Focus Questions

1. Where was Jesus born? Who was king at that time?
2. Where did the magi travel from? How did they know that there was a “newborn king of the Jews?”
3. Why was the king troubled? How did the chief priests and scribes know where Christ was born?
4. What mission were the magi sent on by the king?
5. What did the magi follow to find the baby Jesus?

6. What did the magi do when they found the baby Jesus and His mother? What gifts did they offer to Him?
7. Why did the magi not report back to the king?

**Reflection Question**

While you may not have the same gifts of the magi to give to Jesus to celebrate His birth, what other gifts and talents can you offer to Jesus during this Christmas season to honor Him?

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# What is the Meaning of the Visit of the Magi?

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**Directions:** Read the description of the magi, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Second Reading for this Sunday's liturgy and then answer the Focus and Reflection Questions.

## **The Magi**

While a certain tradition has claimed that the magi were three foreign kings who came to pay homage to Jesus, it is more likely they were priests of various eastern pagan religions. There is nothing in the Scripture text that tells us they were kings, or even how many there were. The number three is traditionally given because of the three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. This does not mean, however, that there were three magi. The magi were skilled in astrology and interpreting dreams, as evidenced by the Scripture text. It is through their observation of the stars and interpretation of dreams that they found Jesus and later avoided Herod as they left. So what is the purpose of the visit of the magi, these foreign priests who came to honor the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

The Responsorial Psalm and Second Reading for this Sunday's liturgy give us a strong indication of the purpose of the visit of the magi.

## **Responsorial Psalm**

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

## **Reading 2: Ephesians 3:3-2A, 5-6**

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.

## **Focus Questions:**

1. Who does the Responsorial Psalm tell us will adore the Lord?

2. In the Second Reading, what was made known to St. Paul by revelation?
3. How is this revelation different from other generations?
4. What is understood now about the Gentiles (non-Jews) that was not known before?

**Critical Thinking Question:**

The magi were Gentiles, representative of all peoples who were not Jews. In fact, it was the magi, Gentiles, who were the first to recognize Jesus' divinity and kingship and come to honor Him, not the Jews.

*Considering the events of the Gospel, and what we've learned from the Responsorial Psalm and Second Reading, what do you think the visit of the magi represented?*

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# The Baptism of the Lord (Middle and Upper Elementary)



January 13, 2019 – The Baptism of the Lord

## Overview

In this week's Gospel passage, John the Baptist foretells of the coming Messiah who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. He then baptizes Jesus, upon whom the Holy Spirit descends and comes to rest, while the Father proclaims Him to be His beloved Son. In this lesson, students will consider the meaning of Christ's Baptism and the invitation to all of us it extends.

## Directions

**Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.**

- A. Review and discuss the answers to the focus questions.
- B. Have students complete the **Why was Jesus Baptized** activity and complete the focus questions. Review and discuss the answers when finished.
- C. Play for your students the song "Come to the Water" sung by Matt Maher, found at this link: [SophiaOnline.org/CometotheWater](http://SophiaOnline.org/CometotheWater). Have students follow along with the lyrics from the **"Come to the Water" Reflection** handout.
- D. After listening to and reflecting on the song, have your students respond to the reflection question on the **"Come to the Water" Reflection** handout. When finished, discuss the responses to the reflection question.

## Answer Key

1. Expectation. They were asking in their hearts if John was the Messiah.
2. John told them that he was baptizing them with water while one mightier than he is coming to baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire.
3. Jesus. He was baptized by John.
4. Heaven opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove.
5. "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

## Why was Jesus Baptized?

1. Jesus' acceptance and inauguration of His mission as God's suffering servant.
2. To be numbered among sinners.
3. Jesus is already "the Lamb of God," He is already anticipating the "baptism" of His bloody death, and He is already coming to fulfill all righteousness and submit Himself to the Father's will.
4. The Son's acceptance.
5. The Holy Spirit rests upon Jesus, who will now be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. The descent of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit is a prelude to the New Creation.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 3:15-16, 21-22: The Baptism of the Lord

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and

fire.”

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

### Focus Questions

1. What were the people filled with? What were they asking in their hearts?
2. How did John respond to the question of the crowd?
3. Who was apparently in the crowd that day? What was done to him?
4. What happened after Jesus was baptized?
5. What did the voice from Heaven proclaim about Jesus?

# Why was Jesus Baptized?

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**Directions:** Read the excerpt from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and respond to the Focus Questions.

*Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 536

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death. Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him". Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

## Focus Questions

1. What is signified by Jesus Baptism?

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2. In His Baptism, what does Jesus allow of Himself?

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3. What three things is Jesus already or already doing at His Baptism?

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4. What is the Father's voice responding to?

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5. How are Jesus and the Holy Spirit linked at His Baptism? What is their descent a prelude to?

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# “Come to the Water” Reflection

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O let all who thirst  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who have nothing  
Let them come to the Lord  
Without money, without price  
Why should you pay the price  
Except for the Lord?

And let all who seek  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who have nothing  
Let them come to the Lord  
Without money, without strife  
Why should you spend your life  
Except for the Lord?

And let all who toil  
Let them come to the water  
And let all who are weary  
Let them come to the Lord

All who labor without rest  
How can your soul find rest  
Except for the Lord?

And let all the poor  
Let them come to the water  
And let the ones who are laden  
Let them come to the Lord  
Bring the children without might  
Easy the load and light  
Come to the Lord

Come to the Lord  
Come to the Lord  
Come to the Lord

I will run to you, I will run to you  
I will run to you my Lord

## Reflection Question:

*After listening to and reflecting upon the song “Come to the Water,” how do you think Jesus’  
Baptism reflects the invitation of the song to come to the Lord?*

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# The Wedding at Cana (Upper and Middle Elementary)



January 20, 2019 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Overview

In this week's Gospel passage Jesus begins His public ministry at His mother's request by changing water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. Jesus' first miracle is the continuation of a series of mysterious and miraculous events in Salvation History that culminate in the Eucharist. In this lesson, students will reflect upon the place of Jesus' first miracle in the economy of salvation.

## Directions

1. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
2. Have students complete the written reflection question. Ask for volunteers to share and discuss their responses when complete.
3. Have students complete the **Water, Wine, and Blood** activity. Ask for volunteers to share and discuss their responses when complete.
4. Conclude by praying the Memorare together.

## Answer Key

1. Mary, Jesus, and Jesus' disciples.
2. She told Jesus that they had run out of wine. She had noticed that this had happened, which would be an embarrassment for the bride and groom.
3. Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." While not the focus of this particular lesson, Jesus' response is not, in fact, disrespectful, though it may seem that way at first glance. We can understand Jesus to be announcing that Mary, His mother is the "woman" foretold by God in the *Protoevangelium* (Genesis 3:15), whose "seed" would crush the head of the serpent and

defeat evil and death. In other words, Jesus' response is an announcement that the time of salvation promised by God from the very beginning is at hand.

4. "Do whatever He tells you." Mary is a powerful intercessor for us today. She will take our prayers and concerns to her son and petition Him on our behalf. And Jesus, being the loving son that He is, will honor His mother's request.
5. Jesus changes water into wine. He directs the servants to fill six stone jars with water and then draw some out to take to the head waiter. By the time it has reached the head waiter, it has become wine.
6. The headwaiter questions the bridegroom as to why he has saved the best wine for last. It was customary to serve the best wine first and then, when everyone had drunk, serve inferior wine.
7. So that His glory might be revealed and the disciples would believe.

### **Water, Wine, and Blood Focus Questions**

1. Bread and wine.
2. Letting the Israelites go free.
3. Change the water of the Nile River into blood. He does this by placing his staff in the water. The effect of changing the Nile River to blood was that the fish died, the water stank, and it was unfit to drink.
4. Jesus transforms bread into His Body and wine into His blood.
5. When He drinks it new in the Kingdom of Heaven.

# Sunday Readings

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## A Reading from the Gospel of John 2:1-11: The Wedding at Cana

There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servers, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, “Fill the jars with water.” So they filled

them to the brim. Then he told them, “Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter.” So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from — although the servers who had drawn the water knew —, the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs at Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

## Focus Questions

1. Who was present at the wedding at Cana in Galilee?
2. What did Mary tell Jesus and why?
3. How did Jesus respond to Mary’s request? Do you think Jesus was being respectful of His mother by this response?
4. What did Mary tell the servers?
5. What miracle did Jesus perform? How did He do it?
6. What is the headwaiter’s response to Jesus’ miracle?
7. What does the Scripture text tell us is the reason for this first miracle of Jesus’?

## Reflection Question

After completing the Focus Questions, write a well-constructed 5-7 sentence paragraph that responds to the following prompt:

*The Bible begins with the marriage of the first man and first woman, Adam and Eve, as a sign of the covenant relationship between God and humankind. The Bible ends with a vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb of God celebrated in heaven at the end of time. Why do you think it is important that Jesus chose a wedding to begin His public ministry?*

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# Water, Wine, and Blood

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## Introduction

Far from being a random act, Jesus' first miracle was the continuation of a series of mysterious and miraculous events in Salvation History that would be fulfilled at the Last Supper in the Eucharist.

Read the following Scripture selections and respond to the reflection questions.

## The Offering of Melchizedek

Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine. He was a priest of God Most High. He blessed Abram with these words: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, the creator of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your foes into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. – Genesis 14:18-20

## The First Plague

Then the LORD said to Moses: Pharaoh is obstinate in refusing to let the people go. In the morning, just when he sets out for the water, go to Pharaoh and present yourself by the bank of the Nile, holding in your hand the staff that turned into a snake. Say to him: The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you with the message: Let my people go to serve me in the wilderness. But as yet you have not listened. Thus says the LORD: This is how you will know that I am the LORD. With the staff here in my hand, I will strike the water in the Nile and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the Nile itself will stink so that the Egyptians will be unable to drink water from the Nile.

The LORD then spoke to Moses: Speak to Aaron: Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—its streams, its canals, its ponds, and all its supplies of water—that they may become blood. There will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in the wooden pails and stone jars. This, then, is what Moses and Aaron did, exactly as the LORD had commanded. Aaron raised his staff and struck the waters in the Nile in full view of Pharaoh and his servants, and all the water in the Nile was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the Nile itself stank so that the Egyptians could not drink water from it. There was blood throughout the land of Egypt. – Exodus 7:14-21

## **The Last Supper**

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.” Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. – Matthew 26:26-30

## **Focus Questions**

1. What did the priest-king Melchizedek offer to Abram as a blessing?
2. What was the Pharaoh “obstinate,” which means stubborn and unwilling to change, in doing?
3. What does God command Moses to do as a sign to Pharaoh? How does Moses accomplish this? What is the effect of this sign upon Egypt?
4. What does Jesus transform into His Body? What does He transform into His Blood?
5. When does Jesus say that He will drink the fruit of the vine again?

## **Reflection Question**

It is clear in the context of these Scripture passages that Jesus’ first miracle of turning water into wine is the continuation of mysterious and miraculous events on Salvation History. Melchizedek bestows a blessing upon Abram with two of the most humble elements of human life, bread and wine. Through Moses, God demonstrates His power over life itself, by changing the water of the Nile, which was essential to Egyptian life, to blood. And Jesus offers Himself to us in sacrifice by transforming the wine into His precious Blood.

Write a paragraph that responds to the following prompt:

*What is the significance of Jesus' first miracle, changing water to wine? How does it fit into the larger context of the story of Salvation History? What might Jesus be communicating to us through this first miracle, especially considering the events of the Last Supper on the night before He died?*

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## Memorare Prayer

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Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.

# The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (Upper and Middle Elementary)



**January 27, 2019 – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time**

## Overview

In this week's Gospel passage, Jesus returns home to Nazareth and reads from a prophecy from Isaiah in the synagogue. Jesus proclaims to the people that this prophecy is fulfilled in Him. In this lesson, students will explore how this prophecy from Isaiah sets forth Jesus' earthly mission. Students will consider the ways in which Jesus fulfills the different statements of the prophecy.

## Directions

1. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
2. Review and discuss the answers to the focus questions.
3. Have students work individually to complete the **Jesus' Mission Activity**. When complete, ask for student volunteers to share and discuss their responses.

## Answer Key

1. He has investigated everything accurately anew in order to create an orderly sequence so that the certainty of the teachings of the faith can be known.
2. He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and He was praised by all as word of Him spread.
3. Jesus went to Nazareth, where He grew up.
4. Jesus stood and read from a scroll from the prophet Isaiah.
5. Jesus proclaimed that the scroll from Isaiah from which He read was fulfilled in Him.

# Sunday Reading

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## A Reading from the Gospel of Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21: The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

Since many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as those who were eyewitnesses from the beginning and ministers of the word have handed them down to us, I too have decided, after investigating everything accurately anew, to write it down in an orderly sequence for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may realize the certainty of the teachings you have received.

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news of him spread throughout the whole region. He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all. He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up,

and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

## Focus Questions

1. Why does the author of this Gospel passage say that he has decided to write a new account of the Gospel?
2. How is Jesus described as He returns to Galilee?
3. Where did Jesus go while in Galilee? What is important about this place?
4. What did Jesus do while in the synagogue?
5. What did Jesus proclaim about Himself?

# Jesus' Mission Activity

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Jesus proclaims in the synagogue a scroll with a verse from the prophet Isaiah:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

In many ways, this prophecy of Isaiah sets forth Jesus' earthly mission. In the space below, identify one way that Jesus accomplishes each part of this prophecy from Isaiah during His earthly ministry.

1. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:

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2. He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor:

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3. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives:

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4. He has sent me to proclaim...recovery of sight to the blind:

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5. He has sent me to...let the oppressed go free:

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6. He has sent me to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord:

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## Reflection Question

Reflect on each part of Christ's mission. What is one way that can do each of these in your life to be more like Christ?

7. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me:

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8. Bring glad tidings to the poor:

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9. Proclaim liberty to captives:

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10. Proclaim...recovery of sight to the blind:

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11. Let the oppressed go free:

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12. Proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord:

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