

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - First Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plan for Older Children

Scripture: Luke 21:25-36

Overview: Our Church Year begins today with the First Sunday of Advent. Using the Gospel according to Luke as our primary guide, we will journey through the heights and depths of the liturgical year. We begin in Advent by preparing for a coming that has already come and will come again. The explosive joy of Christmas sends us out into the seven weeks of Epiphany to show the world the Good News we are receiving.

Lent calls us back into an interior journey, in which we and our faith community prepare for the incredible gift of Easter – a gift we celebrate for 50 days, culminating in Pentecost, also known as the Birthday of the Church, when once again we notice the Holy Spirit empowering us to do the work we are given to do. The rest of the year (6 months) we will balance digging into stories of Jesus' ministry 2000 years ago with discovering how to be Jesus' ministers in the 21st Century.

Background: Advent extends an invitation. The invitation: don't just do something – stand, watch, prepare. *Stand.* Choose to believe that ours is a safe universe – a universe God chose to enter as an infant. *Watch.* Look for a coming that has already come and will come again. *Prepare.* Snatch moments from our busyness. Watching for wisps of awe and wonder to show up. Rediscover that God has chosen to dwell in us and we are invited to dwell in God.

What if – just what if – Jesus is already right here, standing silently with us, walking ahead of us, showing us we don't have to do it all? Could it be that we are called to be still, notice, listen – and then follow?

Advent Theme: Christ will come again: We watch, we prepare, we get ready.

A Notation for this week's Gospel

While the world frantically shops, hoping to find the joy which is announced in the piped-in-music to show up in purchases, we are being called to STOP. No, not to zone out, but to stand and be alert for signs. The Psalm for today calls out: "to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul." And so we hold in tension the delicious preparations of celebrating Christmas with seeking moments of silence in which to be vigilant – to lift up our souls.

Theme: Choosing to Notice

Before Class: You will need copies of the scripture lesson for today or Bibles for each child.

For the Map of the Church Year, you will need to either enlarge the circle calendar found at the end of the lesson OR a piece of poster board – or a large sheet of paper with a circle drawn on the paper. There will be 52 Sundays in Cycle C, so you could indicate 52 segments (like thin slices of a pie) on the circle – or let the children figure it out themselves in class. You will need

pencils to sketch the sections and an eraser. Markers in the colors of the seasons – especially green, blue, purple and gold will help track the colors of the seasons.

For the Good News Stories: You will need a large piece of paper on which to collect "Good News" stories -- either from the newspaper or items they download from the Internet. It is easy for children to get discouraged by all the horrible news and comforting to find stories of people who go to great lengths to help children in far away places and in their own communities.

Beginning: As the children arrive greet each with "Happy New Year." Ask them if they think you are "calendar-challenged" or why else might you be greeting them this way. If no one guesses, tell them that today is the first Sunday of the Year for our church. This season of four weeks we are beginning is called: Advent - which means something is coming.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, that we have seasons in our church life. Help us to be alert to the signs you send us. Amen.

The Story: Luke 21: 25-36 Tell the children that this passage occurs near the end of Luke's story of Jesus' life here on our earth. People are delighting in their fancy temple and not focusing on the things Jesus has been teaching them. Jesus realizes he does not have much time left in which to get their attention and he apparently is pretty sure that 'time' as they knew it was coming to an end.

Invite children to read a short section and then use the reflection questions.

Luke 21: 25-28 Ask for a volunteer to read this portion.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what signs Jesus says to look for? (verse 25)
- What is the hopeful sign Jesus promises? (verse 27)
- I wonder if we can think of times in our worship service we claim this promise? (The Creed, for example, and at the Eucharist when we say: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.)

Luke 21: 29-33 Invite someone to read this little story within the story.

Reflection Questions:

- What "signs" is Jesus telling the people they know about here? (How to tell when summer is near)
- I wonder what might help us believe "the kingdom of God is near." (Our worshipping community, the Eucharist, the outreach activities we are engaged in.)

Luke 21: 34-36: Invite someone to read this last portion of the passage.

Reflection Questions:

- How would we define "be alert?" (Not zoning out - paying attention, noticing, etc.)

- I wonder what kinds of things weigh us down and "catch" us unexpectedly? (Yes, heavy loads of homework, but draw out of the children the "weights" of fear that hold us back.)
- I wonder what things help us stay "alert" and not bogged down in discouragement? (Might be music that speaks to us – a friend who will really listen – even a sport we are good at or a musical instrument we enjoy playing.)

Modern Day: If time permits, or if you choose to do this instead of much time in discussion, invite the children to "pretend" that Jesus is here – for the first time – in our town and giving this talk. What examples might he use? What might he mention, instead of The Temple? What temptations might he describe – that were not around 2000 years ago. Invite their hand at "translating" this passage with you scribing what they come up with.

Map of the Church Year: If you have the time and you think the children would be intrigued with a "map" of the Year, bring out the large piece of paper and show the children how this Cycle C will play out for us this year.

You can also download a church calendar and walk the children through coloring theirs in so they understand the church year by color and timing. You can find beautiful color church year calendars at: <http://myfaithmylife.org/> (Contact them for a black and white one if there is not one there). There is a simple one below in black and white that you can copy and use.

Good News Stories: As a way of helping the children remain hopeful (a much stronger place to stand than optimistic) invite them to be on the lookout for stories of Good News: hungry children being fed, doctors caring for poor children and not charging, stories from our community and around the world. The stories can be clipped from newspapers, downloaded from the Internet, or just reported from radio or TV stories. Collect these stories during Advent and display them in the class.

Getting Closure: If time permits, you could look up the Collect for this Sunday (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 211) and read it.

Closing Prayer: God, as we begin this new year in the church, help us to be alert to the signs you put before us – signs that you love us and are in this with us. Amen.

Luke 21:25-36

The Coming of the Son of Man

‘There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’

The Lesson of the Fig Tree

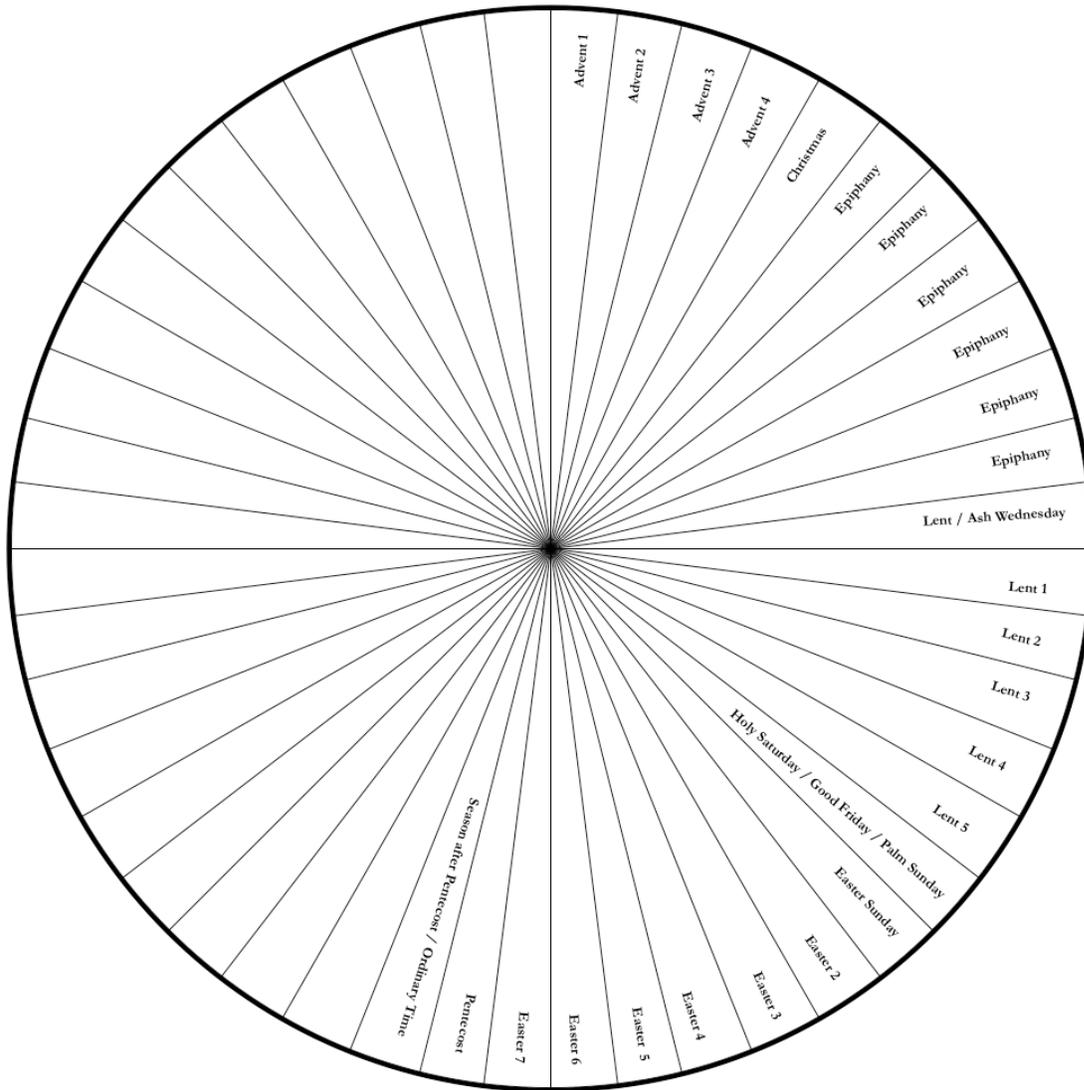
Then he told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.’

Exhortation to Watch

‘Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’

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Seasons of the Church Year

- Advent = blue or purple
- Christmas = white
- Epiphany = green
- Ash Wednesday and Lent = purple
- Palm Sunday = red
- Good Friday = black
- Holy Saturday = white
- Easter = white
- Pentecost = red
- Season after Pentecost = green