

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - First Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plan for Younger 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: An assortment of props is suggested for the season of Advent. Your resources (time and dollars) will help you decide which you will use. Here is the list - so you can make your plans:

- A length (a couple of yards - or one yard split down the middle and sewn together) of blue material inexpensive cotton, Sarum blue (the blue we use at Advent) or Purple (depending on which color your congregation uses.)
- A string of Christmas tree lights – preferably all white, but colors will work also.

- Stars, moons, and suns – cut from gift-wrap or drawn, free-hand for the children to color or paint. Cookie cutters shapes can be used as stencils.
- A Manger - The manger scene created by using small stuffed animals and scraps of cloth, a small box for the crib, etc. and a cardboard box in which to arrange the scene.

For this week, you need the blue cloth and Christmas tree lights, stars, moons, and suns along with paints or crayons to decorate them.

Beginning: When the children have gathered, ask them to help you unroll the length of cloth and spread it out either on your table or on the floor. Ask the children what the long, blue piece makes them think of. If no one has mentioned the sky at night you could wonder with the children if the cloth could be trying to look like the sky. Ask the children what things we see when we look up in the sky – in the daytime – and at night. Tell them our story today is about signs in the sky.

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the sun that shines and warms our world. Thank you for the moon that we can sometimes see at night. Thank you for the stars that fill the sky. Amen.

The Story: The people were admiring the beautiful Temple - what they called their church. Jesus was telling the people the Temple would not always be there – and he was right, it is not there now. But the Temple is not the important thing, Jesus said. Someday, Jesus said, he would come in a wonderful way - coming like in a cloud. Signs would be in the sky, in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. So, Jesus said, “Be alert.” Keep looking and listening for signs.

Activity: Ask the children if they have seen any signs in your community that would make us think that Christmas is coming. What things might be signs? (Christmas trees? Lights in people's windows and in stores. Music being played in the malls or places we shop. Anything else -- here in our church, for example, have they noticed different colors being used - anything different?)

Bring out whatever you have assembled in the way of craft materials: stars or star patterns (cookie cutters) construction paper or gift-wrap. Invite the children to work together to decorate your classroom. If you can leave things up from week to week, then hang up what they produce, saving a few to be arranged on the blue cloth at the end of your session. If you cannot hang things in your space, invite the children to place their work on the blue cloth and tell them they will be able to arrange their work again, next week. And some of the stars and moons and suns may go home with the children.

Getting Closure: Arrange the blue cloth in the middle of your floor and invite the children to sit on one side or the other of the cloth. Arrange a few stars and moons and suns on the blue cloth.

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.

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