

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

Scripture: Luke 1:39-45 (with Luke 1:26-38 as optional reflection)

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: Mary has simply accepted the message the angel gave her. Now she goes to the one other woman on the planet with whom she can talk: her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, who is expecting a baby whose name will be John. Blessed is she who believes. But what does Mary make of the baby in Elizabeth's womb "leaping" at the sound of Mary's voice? Who is the baby John? Who is this baby Mary carries?

Theme: Who is this child?

Before Class: Since the story of the birth of Christ does not appear in the next two Sundays' readings (it is reserved for the readings for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day), you may wish to invite your class to fill in the blanks as the Option for today's lesson. You will need large construction paper, butcher paper, crayons, markers, and the readings for today.

Beginning: Describe to the children which option you have chosen and what to expect. If it is to stick with only the scripture for the day, begin by posing this question: What if someone comes up to one of your friends and says, "You are so cool. You always seem to have just the right thing to say." Which of these would your friend be likely to say: (1) "Thank you." Or (2) "Get outta here, I am not all that cool." Why do the children think the response would be the one they picked?

Opening Prayer: Dear God, help us to "wonder" today – at the people you choose to do your work, including us. Amen.

The Story: Luke 1: 30-45 Invite two readers: one to be the narrator (verses 39-42a) and one to be Elizabeth (verses 42b-45.)

Reflection Questions:

- What is the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth. (They are probably cousins.)

- Who is the baby that Elizabeth will give birth to? (John the Baptist.)
- Why do you think Mary decided to go visit Elizabeth? (The angel had told her that Elizabeth was going to have a baby and that might have been the first Mary heard that news. Perhaps she realized that Elizabeth could give her some good advice about taking care of babies.)
- What do you think is the significance of the baby in Elizabeth "leaping" when Mary spoke? (It was understood as a sign by the writer of this Gospel that Mary had a special job to do for God.)

Luke 1: 30-38: In order to find out just what Mary did know about this baby, we can read the verses before today's reading: Luke 1: 30-38. Ask someone to read the words of the Angel, then we can take some notes on what Mary would have heard.

Reflection Questions:

- What is the first thing the angel says? (Do not be afraid. Angels always seem to have to say that.)
- What do we think this angel looked like? A soft pretty girl with golden curls? A huge, kinda scary guy who looks like he could play football? (We don't know, but probably more like the second.)
- What are the words the angel uses to describe this baby to be born? (Verses 32 and 33.)
- What is this baby Jesus to be called? (Verse 35b: Son of God.)

Activity:

Option 1: Give each child as large a sheet of paper as you can acquire (perhaps light-colored sheets of 12" x 18" construction paper) and crayons or markers. Ask each child to draw what they think the angel looks like.

Option 2: Roll out some butcher paper/roll paper and have the class create the scene of the Angel and Mary meeting and/or Mary/Jesus and Elizabeth/John meeting.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to share what they have done. Invite the children to share what they like best about the stories today.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for always finding ordinary people to do your work. Help us to see the important work you have for each of us. Amen

Luke 1: 26-38 (optional)

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

Narrator: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said,

Angel: 'Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.'

Narrator: But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her,

Angel: 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'

Mary: 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'

Angel: 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.'

Mary: 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'

Narrator: Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:39-45

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Narrator: In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry,

Elizabeth: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'

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