

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Second Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: Matthew 3:1-12

The school year began months ago; New Year's Day is over a month away. Yet here we are, beginning our new Church year with the First Sunday of Advent. Advent invites us to risk pushing on through the world's weariness to expectant hope. Something's coming we proclaim! Immanuel: God With Us in the form of an infant. We celebrate what happened 2000 years ago while we look to the promise that Jesus will come again. We are also called, as we live in this parenthesis time, to look for messages God continues to send: what has happened, and will happen again, is also happening now: right here.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

The Prophet Isaiah could see the day when "the earth will be full of the knowledge of God." John the Baptist saw clutter blocking the way to God. John pointed to the truth that through Baptism, we are called to seek knowledge of God, get rid of the clutter, and smooth the path on which we walk.

Theme: I Will, With God's Help

Before Class: The suggested activity for today is to draw a huge John the Baptist — the size of the angel the children created last week. You will need a large piece of brown Kraft paper (the kind sold to wrap packages for mailing), felt markers, some dried beans, and a small jar of honey. Bring washcloths or paper towels to clean hands. You will also need Bibles or copies of the scripture for today and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Beginning: Tell the children that today we have a story about a prophet. What do they think a prophet does? (Explain that a prophet tells it "like it is" and helps people notice what needs to change.)

Opening Prayer: Thank you, God, for the messengers you send us to help us figure out what we can do. Amen.

The Story: Matthew 3:1-12 Invite two children to read the parts of Narrator and John the Baptist (see the script below).

Questions:

- When is this happening — what are "those days?" (Jesus had just begun his ministry and was probably about 30 years old. John the Baptist was his cousin, born about 6 months before Jesus.)
- Describe John's outfit and his diet. (Verse 4. If the children are grossed out at the idea of eating "locusts" tell them that some translations refer to his food as "beans".)
- Where was John preaching? (Verse 1 – the wilderness, out away from the town.)
- Who came out to hear John? (Verse 7a)
- Who were the "Pharisees" and the "Sadducees?" (The religious leaders.)

- I wonder why John had such harsh words for them? (They had gotten pretty sure of themselves and didn't think they needed to tell God they were sorry about anything.)
- Who is the person John the Baptist is referring to in verse 11? (Jesus)
- John the Baptist was out in the wilderness — how did he baptize people? (He led them into the Jordan River and baptized them there.)

Activity: Invite the children to imagine what John the Baptist looked like and then draw him on the large piece of paper you have brought. Since John probably spilled honey on his clothes and the beans stuck to the honey, suggest they incorporate honey and beans into their depiction of John. When they have finished, allow it to “dry” until the end of your session when it can be placed next to the angel they created last week. Provide washcloths or towels for clean up.

Option: If time permits, look at our Baptism service (*The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 299-307). Invite them to follow along as you read the five “Will you’s” at the bottom of page 304 and the top of page 305 suggesting that all of you say together the people’s response: “I will, with God’s help.”

Getting Closure: Go with the children to position the poster of John the Baptist where the people who go to your church can see it.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for John the Baptist who showed people how to “prepare the way of the Lord.” Amen.

Matthew 3:1-12

Narrator: In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”³This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.”’

⁴Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.⁷ But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them,

John the Baptist: ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit worthy of repentance. ⁹Do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.¹¹ ‘I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing-fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing-floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2012 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.