

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

Scripture: Luke 21:25-36

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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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Lesson Plan for Older Children

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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

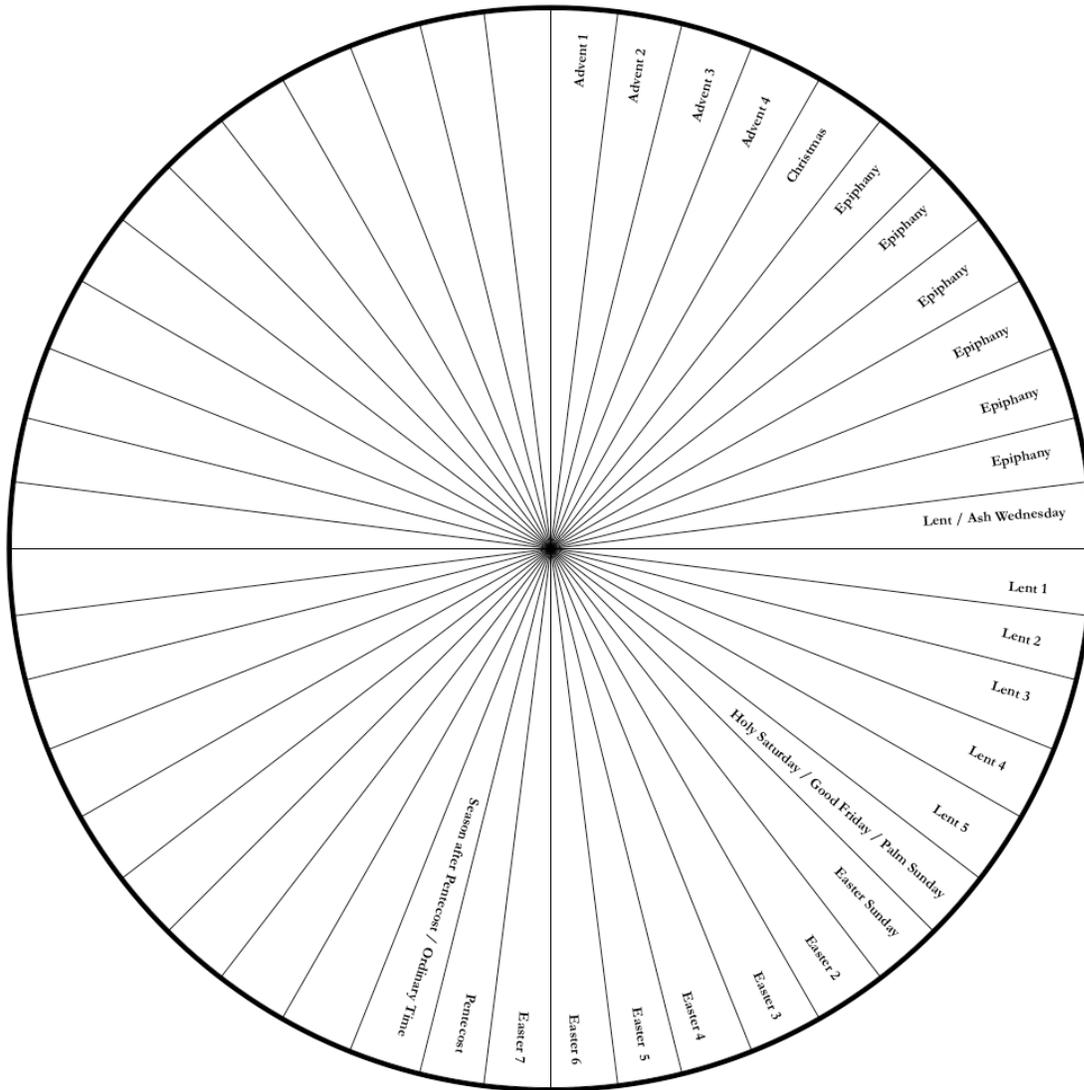
Then he told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass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

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

Scripture: Luke 21:25-36

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Theme: Choosing to Notice

Before: As you prepare for this session, check with your clergy if there will be changes in the worship service (blue or purple cloths, an Advent Wreath, a different setting of the Eucharist, etc.) and be prepared to invite your class to notice and discuss the changes. You might choose to create a small Advent Wreath and light one candle – particularly if you think the adults might want to see how you do this -- so they could develop an Advent Wreath at home. (See Intergenerational Lesson for more on the Advent Wreath.) You will need enough copies of the Bible and *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Beginning: Invite the class to describe what "feels" different about this new season we begin today: Advent. Work together as a class to come up with your definition of Advent. (Aspects include: waiting for Christmas, getting ready, making a space in our lives in which the Christ child could enter.)

Opening Prayer: Lord, we thank you for the glory of the Lord which shall be revealed. Be with us as we stand, watch, and prepare for your coming. Amen.

Option: Make copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* available and ask the group to turn to page 75. Some churches rarely have Morning Prayer on a Sunday, but some individuals or small groups may have it as their Rule of Life to read Morning Prayer daily. You might choose to use the opening sentences of Morning Prayer for each season as you go through this year as a class.

The Scripture: Luke 21: 25-28 This passage could be approached as having three sections. And so you might choose to read each section separately and discuss it. It would be useful to have three different voices to read: Luke 21: 25-28, 29-33, and 34-36.

Reflection Questions:

- Why do we think "signs" in the sky would be expected by Jesus' hearers? (With no TV or even radio weather forecasters, signs in the sky were their only way of forecasting.)
- What other times was a star in the sky a "sign?" (When the shepherds saw it and the Wise Men followed it.)
- Using *The Book of Common Prayer*, find places in our worship where we proclaim what Jesus is saying in verse 27 (The Creed, page 363, etc.)

Reflection Questions for Luke 21: 29-33:

- What is the sign Jesus points out in verses 29-30? (Signs that summer is here.)
- What does it mean to this group to speak of the "Kingdom of God"? (What are its aspects? Which are already here? What do we still wait for?)

Reflection Questions for Luke 21: 34-36:

- I wonder what things are weighing our hearts down?
- What things are causing us to lose our focus?
- What "urgent" things are driving out the "important?"
- What would "be alert at all times" look like for us?
- If we cannot quit our day jobs, how else could we find ways to "be alert?" (Consider ways individuals could grab chunks of time. Discuss ways people could help each other: e-mail messages? Phone calls? Meeting mid-week for coffee? Etc.)

Getting Closure: Provide a few moments of silence for each person to reflect on ways they will choose to find time to be still and be with God. Invite those who choose to do so to share what they have come up with.

Closing Prayer: Read the Collect for the First Sunday of Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.

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.’

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