

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C - Third Sunday of Advent**  
**Gospel Lesson for Adults**

**Scripture: Luke 3:7-18**

**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:** Convicted by John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?" As we wait, how will we get ready? Yes, the packages have to get wrapped. Yet John invites us to "bear fruits worthy of repentance." Perhaps we are being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

**Theme: What Then Should We Do?**

**Before Class:** You may need to check with your clergy to be informed of outreach opportunities available through your church, or in which your church participates in your community. Be prepared to share this information with your class. You will need Bibles and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

**Beginning:** Consider beginning this session with a moment or two of silence in which you invite the group to get centered, shake off distractions, and be prepared to work with the Word appointed for today. If you are using an Advent wreath, light three candles and consider using one of the Opening Sentences on page 75 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you God for this space amid all our busyness. Help us to pause and take a breath so we may more fully notice the message you have for us today. Amen.

**The Scripture: Luke 3: 7-18** As we read this rather long passage today, let's look for themes that present themselves to us. Invite each person to read the passage, silently, once. Then ask someone to read it aloud while the rest of the group listens for a particular word or phrase that speaks to them. After the passage has been read, invite people to share the word that spoke to them. When most or all have shared, you can reflect on the words.

## **Wonder With the Group**

As we hear John the Baptist's message, "Get ready!" the people ask, "What then should we do?"

I wonder, as we wait in this season of Advent, how will we get ready? Yes, we have lots of "to-do's," however how are we being called to notice what we have received and choose what we will share with others. How will we choose to respond to the abundance we have received?

**Reflection Questions (optional):** You may well have enough "words" surfacing in the group to not need additional questions. These are provided only if you need them.

- Verses 7-9 - Why do you think John the Baptist is so angry with these people? (He sees that they have become complacent, sure of themselves, confident that being descendants of Abraham puts them in a privileged position.)
- In what ways can we identify with their over-confidence?
- Verses 10-14 - What do you think turns the people to ask what they should do? (Perhaps, John is getting through to them.)
- Notice what he tells the soldiers to do (verse 14), the tax collectors (verse 13), and the rest of the people (Verse 11.)
- What does verse 11 say to us today in our community? What are we being called to share? (Some outreach opportunities you have checked out could be explored.)
- Verses 15-18 - What were the people expecting in the way of a Messiah? (The Hebrew Scriptures appointed for today, Zephaniah 3: 14-17, for instance.) Notice how John the Baptist describes "the one who is more powerful than I" (verse 16-17).
- Discuss why this sounded like "good news" to John's hearers. Consider how it is good news to us today.

**Getting Closure:** If the group has made any outreach decisions, discuss how you will go about what you have chosen to do and how you will report back to the group.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear God, help us to notice what we have received and guide us as we choose how we will share with others. Be with us as we continue to wait and prepare. Amen.

### **Luke 3: 7-18**

7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’<sup>8</sup> Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin 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.<sup>9</sup> Even 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.’

10 And the crowds asked him, ‘What then should we do?’<sup>11</sup> In reply he said to them, ‘Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.’<sup>12</sup> Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, ‘Teacher, what should we do?’<sup>13</sup> He said to them, ‘Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.’<sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, ‘And we, what should we do?’ He said to them, ‘Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.’

15 As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah,<sup>16</sup> John answered all of them by saying, ‘I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.’<sup>17</sup> His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’

18 So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

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