

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 11:2-11

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

John the Baptist has been calling people's attention to their skewed priorities and baptizing them when they got the message. Now, confined to prison for his preaching that made the authorities uncomfortable, John sends this plaintive question to Jesus: "Are you the one?" How do we answer the question? How do we choose to live out our answer?

Theme: Are You the One?

Before: You will need white paper and crayons. A drama is suggested so be thinking about what would serve as a jail for John the Baptist.

Beginning: Tell the children you are going to tell them a story, and they can make a play out of it when you finish. But first, begin with your Advent Wreath and light 3 candles, adding the pink one this time (pink for Mary), or color the third candle on the paper wreath.

Praying: Thank you, God, for John the Baptist, who told people about Jesus. Amen.

The Story: Remember John the Baptist who was baptizing people in the river? John had been telling people to get ready. He told them to tell God they are sorry for the bad stuff they have done. John told people to keep on praying to God and do what they are supposed to do.

What things are **we** supposed to do? Brush our teeth? What else? (Accept what the children offer. If they cannot think of things, ask them if they pick up their toys, make their beds, help set the table, etc.)

Some people did not like what John was saying so they got John thrown into jail. While John was in jail, he wanted to be sure he was telling people the right thing. So he sent a message to Jesus. Maybe he whispered in the ear of someone who came to see him in jail. The message got to Jesus: "Are you the one?" Jesus sent John a message back, maybe by whispering in the ear of someone who could take it to John. Now, John knew that Jesus was the one.

Activity: Tell the children you would like them to act out the story. We will need someone to play the part of John, another to play the part of Jesus, and someone to be the messenger. We will also need to make a jail. (A table turned upside down? Chairs dragged into a circle?) John can show how sad he is in jail. A messenger can hear his whisper: “Ask Jesus: Are you the one?” The messenger can go to where Jesus is sitting and whisper the message in the person’s ear. The message Jesus gives, the messenger takes back to John who now feels better. If children want to change roles, or other children want to play the parts, keep going until all have had a chance.

Activity: Give the children paper and crayons and ask them to draw the story. If they like writing words, write in big printing: Are you the one? They can include it in their picture, if they want.

Getting Closure: Bring the children into a circle and, if they drew pictures, ask them if they want to show their picture and talk about it. If you only had time for the play, tell them you are going to whisper something in the ear of the child next to you, and that child can whisper it in the ear of the child next to that child — and so on until each person hears the whisper. The last one will whisper to you, so you can say out loud what was whispered. The message: “Jesus is the one.”

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for all the messages you send us that Jesus is the one. Amen.

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