

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Third Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plans for Older Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 35:1-10

Advent begins with darkness. In the days of the prophets, the Israelites looked to God for hope and promise. The prophets began to speak of the hope and light that would be coming to the people of God. Today we continue to share the stories of the prophets to remind us that we have been given this hope and light through the birth of Jesus Christ. During this time in the calendar year our days are getting shorter, and we wait for the light of Christ to shatter this darkness. In Advent we are encouraged to stop and listen and hear what the prophets are saying.

Theme: Everlasting Joy

Note for The Third Sunday in Advent: The third Sunday in Advent is often represented by the color rose or pink. It is called Gaudete Sunday which in Latin is rejoice. This Sunday has a focus on the hope of the coming of Jesus.

Supplies Needed: Cloth for prayer space, advent wreath, Anglican prayer beads (if made by the older group during week 1), matches for the candles or batteries if candles are electric. If your church tradition is to have a pink candle for this Sunday be sure it is a part of your Advent wreath or prayer area. For option 1 - premade cutout cookies, frosting, variety of sprinkles or other cookie decorating items. For option 2 – paper for the student to brainstorm how to publicize their event. For option 3 – preselected Christmas carols.

Prepare: Prepare your prayer/gathering space with a small table, or space with a piece of cloth, it could be burlap, purple or sarum blue depending on your traditions. On this cloth put a small Advent wreath. The wreath can be something you have prepared together as a group or 4 small votive candles with greenery. Add a pink candle if your wreath doesn't have one for today.

Welcoming the Children: Gather the children together at the prayer table and ask some wondering questions:

- What do you think of when you hear the word joy?

We are still in the season of waiting and listening, the season of Advent.

- What is one thing that makes you really happy?

Opening Prayer: Light the first and second candle on your Advent wreath. Then light the pink candle. Have the children each pick a strand of prayer beads. They will stay in our prayer space for us to use each week during Advent.

- At the cross – say, “Let us pray.”
- For the Invitational beads – say, “Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”
- For the first Cruciform bead – have the children say out loud or in their hearts something they have to wait for.
- For the first seven beads – repeat the line “Help us to wait, Lord.”

- When you reach the second Cruciform bead – have the children say out loud or in their hearts something they want help for.
- For the second seven beads – repeat the line “Guide us, Lord.”
- When you reach the third Cruciform bead – have the children say out loud or in their hearts something they want to pray for.
- For the third seven beads – repeat the line “Be with us, Lord.”
- When you reach the fourth Cruciform bead – have the children say out loud or in their hearts something they have to wait for.
- For the fourth seven beads – repeat the line “Help us to wait, Lord.”
- When you reach the first Cruciform bead again – have the children say the Lord’s Prayer together, ending with Amen.

After the gathering/opening prayer time, you can move to another space in the room for storytelling. It allows the children to move and stretch and renew their focus on the story.

Gather together for your story.

The Story: In the Bible we hear stories from special people called prophets, they said things to many people for God. One of the prophets was Isaiah, he wanted people to know more about God, and begin to tell people about what would happen.

Ask one or more children to read the passage – Isaiah 35:1-10 aloud. The version listed is New Revised Standard. You should use a translation of the bible that is used within your own parish. With older children they can take turns looking up the verses and reading them aloud.

Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
‘Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.’

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

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Questions:

- Where have we heard 'Do not be afraid, do not fear'? in the Christmas story?
- If you want the children could look up the visitation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38) or to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25). How do the words compare in the stories?
- I wonder who Isaiah was speaking of when he said the eyes of the blind would be opened? What other healing was mentioned?
- I wonder what God wanted to us know about joy? How can we show joy to others during the Advent and Christmas season?

Activities

These options can be done within your same space or a separate craft area. Encourage movement after the storytelling.

Option 1: Cookie Creation

Your group will create cookies for those who are homebound in your parish or if you have a connection to a nursing home. Make sure to wash hands before beginning this activity.

You may want to organize a delivery time with your families, even have a Christmas caroling party when you deliver the cookies and cards (made by the younger group).

Using pre-baked cookies, have the children frost and decorate the cookies. Have the children package the cookies for delivery on paper plates.

When they are finished you can continue with option 2 or 3 and/or or conclude with the final gathering.

Option 2: Bringing Joy

Discuss as a group how you could bring joy to other families? As we prepare for the birth of Christ, what do you think it takes a family to prepare for the birth of a child today? What are the needs? What if you didn't have everything you needed? Perhaps your class could ask everyone in the congregation to bring some items specifically for infants to be donated next week. Items could include, baby wipes, diapers, formula, bottles, blankets, etc. Then have the class design signs, make postcards to be sent, or create an email that could be sent to the congregation about their desire to help others.

If your congregation is already doing an outreach project during Advent, think about ways that the children can participate or help with that project. If your congregation is doing an "Angel Tree," maybe they could make cards or special notes.

Option 3: Singing

Join the younger group if you are going to deliver the cookies as a families or groups to practice singing Christmas carols. Decide on which carols to sing prior to the class.

Gather/Ending: Gather the children together in a circle in your prayer area.

One option is to use the song I've got the joy by Go Fish. You can use the YouTube version to play, or have the kids sing along.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ES1RmHEiSW4>

If you would like sing, use the song "I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in my heart"

Closing Prayer: Place the lighted wreath in the middle of your circle. Turn off the lights of the room. Ask the children if there is anything or any prayer they would like to say to the light.

Conclude your time by having the children repeat each line after you:

Open my eyes to see your light.
Open my hands to receive your bread.
Open my ears to hear your word.
Open my mouth to speak your love. Amen.

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