

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – First Sunday of Advent**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Mark 13: 24-37**

**Background**

Advent means “coming.” The coming of the baby Jesus, God among us in human flesh. The coming of Christ again “the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. In between those two great comings is God’s constant longing for each of us to come to God, to love God, and to let God love us. “Be alert.” Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? For the ways God will choose to get our attention this season. For those moments when we notice that our ways are not in alignment with God’s ways. For those shimmering glimpses of the Kingdom of God.

**A Notation for This Week’s Gospel**

Ominous warnings of end times: These warnings and words of hope heard in a community that was pretty sure the world was coming to an end. The message: Keep alert! Stay awake! Pay attention! Jesus just might come this very night. Implicit is the invitation to make some changes in our priorities and to notice what really matters.

**Theme: Keep Alert!**

**Before:** Using 3 x 5 cards and bright felt markers, make a card for each child with the words “Keep Alert!” in large letters. You will need a Bible, purple or blue cloth for the altar, four votive candles in little glass containers, long fireplace matches OR electric votive candles, and greens to make a wreath. (Longer matches are much safer if you are going to let small children light candles.) Use this Advent wreath in the class the four Sundays of Advent. You can also bring a nativity set if you wish to have that out on the altar.

**Beginning:** Greet each child. Ask the children what they notice about our space. (different colors, wreath, etc.) Ask them what season is coming in the church? (Allow them time to respond.) How do we get ready for Christ coming? What things do you do at your house? You might offer something like this: “At my house we have a nativity set of the Baby Jesus, his mother, Mary, his daddy, Joseph, some animals and shepherds and we put these little dolls on a table where we can all see them. Do you do something like this at your house?”

**Opening Prayer:** Form a circle around the altar with the Advent wreath in the middle and light one candle only. Today is the First Sunday of Advent. Next Sunday we will light two candles. Let us pray: Dear God, thank you for letting us be here together today. Thank you for (name each child). Help us to “Stay Alert” and prepare for the coming of Christ this Advent season. Amen.

**The Story: Mark 13:24-32, 33-37.**

With this age group read only verses 33-37. “Does anyone know what it means when I say ‘Keep Alert?’ (Allow them time to respond) What if I say: ‘Watch!’ ‘Listen.’ (Allow them time to respond.) So what would we say it means to ‘Keep Alert?’ Work with the children to come up with what you and they believe it means. It could be “Pay attention,” or “Don’t zone out.”

Ask the children to listen as you read the story. You can read the story from a Bible or tell the story like we have done below.

Jesus told us that he is coming back, but nobody knows when that is going to happen. Jesus wants us to be watching and doing the stuff we need to do. If we were going on a trip and had a puppy, we would want to be sure we had someone we could trust who would take care of that puppy until we got back. We would want someone who would remember to feed the puppy and take him for walks. We would want someone who would pay attention. Watch. Stay alert.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Are there things at home or school that you take care of?
- What are the things that help them grow, things that make a happy home?
- Jesus wants us to grow and be joyful as we wait for the coming of Christ. I wonder what things we could do for each other that would make us joyful?
- I wonder how we prepare for Christmas?

**Activity:** Give the children pieces of paper and crayons and ask them to draw what their house is going to look like as they get ready for Christmas. Will they have a Christmas tree? Will they have a nativity set? What will they do to help get their houses ready?

**Getting Closure.** Give each child one of the 3 x 5 cards with the words "Keep Alert!" that you prepared before the session. Suggest they take it home and put it on the refrigerator. When members of the family ask them what it means, the child can tell them. The children may also take their pictures home with them.

**Closing Prayer:** Sing one verse of "Silent Night," then close with prayer: "Thank you, God, for this time we have had together. Help us to keep alert and prepare for your coming. Amen."

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
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**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

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**Background**

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**Theme: Keep Alert!**

**Before:** Decorate your space with blue streamers or ribbons, an undecorated Christmas tree, an Advent calendar, calendar for the liturgical year, or Advent wreath. The idea is to make sure that in some way the space is different to mark the beginning of the church year and the season of Advent and that you have a way to mark time during Advent.

**Beginning:** Greet your class with the words: “Happy New Year!” Then ask them why they think you are using this greeting. Spend time catching up with what is happening in their lives. Then ask the children if there is something they want us to be praying for as we open with prayer. Offer some suggestions for things you want to be praying for to give them the concept.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you God, for bringing us here today. Thank you that we are beginning a New Year in our church. Help us to ‘Keep alert’ as we prepare for your coming. Amen.

**The Story: Mark 13: (24-32), 33-37**

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God’s plan is for each of us too.

Read the passage using a translation of the bible that is used within your own parish.

**Reflection Questions:**

- Who is speaking here? (Jesus)
- Who is Jesus speaking to? (his disciples – the people that have been traveling with him)
- If Jesus is speaking to us, what do we think he means by “Keep alert!” or “Keep Awake?”

You might wish to tell the children that the disciples were pretty sure that the world was coming to an end very soon. They asked Jesus when it would happen and Jesus told them not to worry about it. Since the world did not come to an end, people in the Church have come up with the tradition of Advent as a time of getting ready for Christmas, celebrating the coming of Jesus and, just in case Jesus does choose to show up, being ready.

- If we thought Jesus was really going to come this year, what things might we do differently?
- What would Jesus expect to find?
- What might we add to our lives or what might we start doing?
- What might we stop doing?

### **New Year Resolutions:**

We are now in the season of Advent which begins a new year in the church. Advent means “coming” and we wait for the coming of Christ at Christmas. Today we heard, “Be alert.” Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? As we prepare for the coming of Christ what can we notice? What do we listen and watch for? (Allow them some time for brainstorming and write their responses up on the whiteboard or easel.)

You are now invited to write some “New Years Resolutions” for this time of Advent. Who can tell me what a resolution is? (allow them time to respond) Resolutions are promises we make to ourselves and each other. They usually involve something we want to do differently, something we want to stop doing, or something we want to stop doing. Think about preparing for the coming of Christ at Christmas. What resolutions would help you prepare yourself and “Be alert” for the coming of Christ?

- Write a couple of resolutions for the class.
- Invite each person to write resolutions for themselves to take home with them and post in their room as a reminder.
- What resolutions might be suggested for the faith community, for the world?

**Getting Closure:** As we draw closer to Christmas, how do you and your family get ready? In light of the resolutions, how might getting ready be different this year? Share, giving each student an opportunity to respond.

**Closing Prayer:** Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.)

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year B – First Sunday of Advent**  
**Lesson Plans for Adults**

**Scripture: Mark 13: 24-37**

**Background**

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**Theme: Keep alert!**

**Before:** You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture for everyone. You may want to have a second translation to read from as well.

**Beginning:** As you gather for coffee, etc., greet each other with “Happy New Year,” since today is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Christian year.

Since this is the first day of the New Year for the Church, the beginning of Advent, we are going to do some internal housekeeping, check out our priorities, and get ready for the coming of Christ in Christmas. Advent is a season of preparation, a season of preparing for the coming of Christ. A time to prepare and make this a Christmas with meaning and significance for those we love and those in our community. How are we going to manage this?

**Opening Prayer:** Lord God, you show us in scripture that you long for us to come to you. You reach out to us daily and extraordinarily with the gift of your son, Jesus. Help us to keep awake to hear what you have for us in the Word and in our time together today. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

**The Scripture: Mark 13:(24-32) 33-37**

Invite someone read the lesson aloud. If time permits, allow a moment or two of silence, then have someone else read the same passage from a different translation. Before you read the lesson the first time, invite people to listen for a word or words that struck them as they listened and/or read along.

**Reflection Questions:**

- What word – or words – struck anyone?
- What questions came to you?
- What is your understanding of the "Second Coming"?
- How do you explain that Jesus seems to be saying that the end time would come in the lifetime of the disciples?
  
- If we had a hunch that Jesus would return this Christmas, what might we do differently?
- What would he expect to find?
- What might we add?
- What might we jettison?
- How do you and your family get ready for Christmas?
- What rituals, preparations, traditions mark Christmas at your house?
- In light of our discussion, what might you do differently?

**Getting Closure:** End the class with a few moments of silence and then read the poem by Madeleine L'Engle, "Advent, 1971" from *The Weather of the Heart* (H. Shaw, 1978).

**Advent, 1971**

When will he come  
and how will he come  
and will there be warnings  
and will there be thunders  
and rumbles of armies  
coming before him  
and banners and trumpets  
when will he come  
and how will he come  
and will we be ready  
O woe to you people  
you sleep through the thunder  
you heed not the warnings  
the fires and the drownings  
the earthquakes and stormings  
and ignorant armies  
and dark closing on you  
the song birds are falling  
the sear birds are dying  
no fish now are leaping  
the children are choking  
in air not for breathing  
the aged are gasping  
with no one to tend them  
a bright star has blazed forth  
and no has seen it  
and no one has wakened

**Closing prayer:** Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.* (Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.)

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