

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C—Advent 3
Lesson Plans for Older Children
RCL Old Testament Readings—Track One

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Background: This is the third Sunday of Advent, the four weeks that prepare us for Christmas. Advent means “coming” and the One who is coming is the messiah, Jesus. We remember and celebrate Jesus’ birth and we make ourselves ready for the time that Jesus will come again, when God will make all things new. The stories we hear in this season are from the prophets, who bring us messages of great hope and deep joy as we wait and watch and wonder.

A Notation for This Week’s Reading: God’s compassion for all the marginalized will be complete.

Theme: Rejoice! God will Care for God’s People

Before Class: You will need kazoos for each child or the materials to make them: toilet paper rolls, waxed paper, rubberbands and stickers (<http://www.education.com/activity/article/how-to-make-a-kazoo/>) plus paper and pens for the songwriting and brainstorming.

Beginning: Prepare your gathering/prayer space with a cloth of blue or purple, whichever color your church uses in Advent. For the four weeks of Advent and two weeks of Christmas, you will need an Advent wreath and a Christ Candle, or four votive candles and a pillar candle, matches and a candlesnuffer. A chime is helpful to mark transitions but not necessary.

Opening Prayer: Holy God, let the light of this Advent candle remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. May this light glow in us, kindling our love for you, sparking our imaginations, and making us burn with a desire to do your work in this world. Amen.

The Story: Zephaniah 3:14-20

Ask a child to read the passage, or ask each child to read a sentence. After a moment of silence, invite them to name a word or a phrase or an image from the text that stood out to them. Pause, then read the entire passage aloud again.

Sing as loud as you can, O daughter of Zion!

Go ahead and shout, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter Jerusalem!

God has taken away everything and everybody that could hurt you. God is right beside you and you don’t have anything to be afraid of or worry about anymore.

God has won the day.

*He will rejoice over you with gladness,
He will renew you in his love;
He will join you in singing loud and long.
God says: I will take care of the disasters,
and I will deal with the people who want to put you down.
I will save those who can't keep up with you
and gather the people who are on the fringes of your community,
and I will change their shame into praise and make their name famous over all the
earth.
I will bring you home, and make you special among all the people.*

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder who needs to hear the good news of God taking away everything and everybody that can hurt us.
- I wonder who the people on the fringes could be? How could we help gather them until this time?
- I wonder what God's singing might sound like? What would it sound like if we joined God's song of rejoicing?

Activity: Invite the class to write a song illustrating this scripture passage to the tune of "This Land is Your Land" following the same rhyme and rhythm pattern. Encourage the children to focus on giving God's good news to those who have been hurt or afraid or outcast. Try singing it, with a kazoo orchestra.

Getting Closure: Until the time when we will hear and sing God's song of rejoicing, we can help those who are sad, afraid and shut out. Ask the children to brainstorm ways they can help and share it with their parents.

Closing Prayer: God of love, you sent your prophets to show us the way of truth. As we prepare for the coming of Jesus, teach us to follow him so that we can be a part of bringing your kingdom of justice and goodness to earth. Amen.

*Scripture from "God's Word, My Voice: A Lectionary for Children" by Lyn Zill Briggs.
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