

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C - Third Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plan for Younger Children

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:

Preparation for NEXT Week: Young children need a place to visit and re-visit the story of the birth of Jesus. To help them "get their hands on" the story, we suggest you create a manger scene with the children using a simple cardboard box, a collection of small stuffed animals the children share, and some pieces of material for costumes. Be creative with how to create the manger. How many characters are represented in your scene will be limited only by the number of stuffed animals that show up for casting and the imagination of you and the children. You will definitely need baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph. In addition, assorted animals, shepherds, and angels. You could bring the cardboard box today and describe the project to the children, inviting them to loan stuffed animals by bringing them next week. You will also want to communicate this with the parents. Or, you could simply assemble the cast of characters yourself. You could begin this project this Sunday, or wait until next week.

THIS Week: You will need paper, crayons, the blue cloth, and Christmas tree lights. If you want to begin building the manger, you can begin this week, continuing next week as the children bring in their stuffed animals or other items.

If you want the children to bring stuffed animals from home, draft a note to go home to the parents explaining what you need and making clear when the children could have their animals come back home with them.

If your church provides food for the hungry, distributes clothing, participates in an angel tree, or is connected to an organization that does, have this information to pass along to parents. And if your church is engaged in any other outreach program the children could participate in, let the parents know about it, also.

Beginning: As the children come into your room, ask them who is coming in two weeks. (If you get "Santa Claus" agree, and ask who else is coming, offering clues until they tell you we will celebrate that Jesus is going to be born on Christmas.)

Opening Prayer: Loving God, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to be born as a little baby. Help us remember today what we celebrate on Christmas. Amen.

The Story: Last week we had a story about a man named John the Baptist. He is in our story again today. He has been telling people they should stop doing bad stuff and start doing good stuff. The people listened to him for quite awhile and then somebody stepped up and asked, "OK, what should we do?" John had some suggestions for tax collectors and for soldiers, and he also had a suggestion that everyone could understand. John said, "If you have an extra coat, give it to someone who needs one. If you have enough food, share some of it with people who don't have enough."

Activity: Invite the children to act out the sharing using pretend coats and pretend big plates of food. One child can be the child with a batch of coats, struggling to hold so many coats. Another child can be shivering in the cold until the first child shares a coat. One child can be carrying several plates of food until that child sees another child, holding their tummy in hunger, and share the food until everyone is fed.

Outreach: If you have been able to find ways the children could participate in an outreach project, tell them about it and invite their participation.

Option: If you have sufficient time, you could invite the children to draw pictures of the sharing they acted out.

Getting Closure: Spread out the blue cloth and light the Christmas tree lights spread along side of the cloth. Then sit beside the cloth, or around it. Ask the children to tell you, again, who is coming in two weeks. Describe the manger scene you will be developing next week and remind the children to bring in stuffed animals. OR begin to assemble the pieces of the manger, reminding them that we will continue next week. Tell the children to be sure to give their parents the notes you have written so you are all ready for next week.

Closing Prayer: If your group likes to sing "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" (Hymn 56), this could be your closing prayer. If not, use this prayer: Thank you, God, for showing us how we can also help by sharing. Be with us as we go into the world to love each other and you. Amen.

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