

Focus: God blesses us

Materials:

Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest's vestment) and Altar Cloth
Advent Wreath and Flames
Advent CD
Bible: Children's Everyday Bible.
Pictures
Red/Green cards

Gathering (children find/sit on a carpet square)

Say: *Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about John the Baptist and how he told others to get ready for Jesus to come again and how we can get ready for Jesus. This week John the Baptist wants to know more about Jesus and we do too.*

Opening Prayer

Together we make the Sign of the Cross (do in reverse so children can mirror).

Say: *Now let's put our hands together and bow our heads.*

Let us pray.

Jesus our Light, Fill our hearts with joyful hope, as we wait to celebrate your coming into the world. Guide us each day with the light of your love.

Today is the 3rd week of Advent. We light the pink candle; this is the candle of Joy. We are waiting for Jesus, the bringer of true and everlasting joy.

Let us pray: Loving God, we thank you for the joy you bring us. Through Your Son we have found joy in living as your children. Help us to prepare our hearts for this gift. We ask in the name of your son, Jesus. Amen.

Song/Movement

Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, track: 1, from Advent CD

Play music, encourage children to stretch or move to the music (clapping, stamp feet march in place to the beat), turn to each other and shake hands, saying hello, etc. Have children sit on their carpet squares when finished.

Chorus:

I got your hope peace joy and love
The best gifts come from above
I got your hope peace joy and love in
my heart
(Repeat)

Hope is a light in the darkness, shining
brightly on Bethlehem town
The Messiah is born; he's our king
and our lord; the promise of love we
have found

Glory to god in the highest; peace on
earth and good will to all men
Take the star in the east to the prince
of peace who will someday be coming
again.

Repeat chorus 2x

An angel appeared from the heavens,
bringing news to the shepherds that
night.

Good tidings of joy, in the birth of a boy, born to give us forgiveness and life.

Jesus Emmanuel Savior; little baby the gift from above

He loved us so much he gave his only son, the gift of hope peace joy and love.

Repeat Chorus 4x

Memory Verse

Say: *Now let's take a moment together to learn a verse from the bible.*

God sent John to prepare the way.

Have the children repeat the verse after you a couple of times.

Say: *John the Baptist was a very important person. John the Baptist told others that they needed to change their ways. The people wouldn't share and only cared about themselves, John told them about the one who would come and show them what God wanted. God wanted them to care for others. God wants us to do the same.*

Gospel Story

Say: *Today we are reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Have children make sign of the cross on their forehead, mouth and heart saying. *"Lord, open my mind, my lips and my heart so that I may learn it, speak it and love it."*

Read: Children's Everyday Bible, pp. 246, *John the Baptist's Questions*

After the reading say: *The Gospel of the Lord*

Children respond: *Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ*

Discussion Starters:

- *What does John want to know about Jesus?*
- *How does Jesus answer John?*
- *What does Jesus tell the people about John the Baptist?*

Reflection on Reading:

In today's gospel we hear that the prophet John the Baptist wants to find out if Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus tells John what kind of Messiah he is. Jesus is the Messiah who brings healing to the sick, sight to the blind and good news to the poor.

Today's gospel passage goes on to honor John the Baptist as a great prophet. John a messenger sent by God with the highest mission—to prepare for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. Like all prophets John the Baptist is a model of faithfulness. The gospel today reminds us to be faithful and tell others about God's love.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

In today's Gospel, Jesus' message to John didn't tell John who Jesus was, but it told John, what things Jesus did and then let John decide that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus told of the signs he had performed so that everyone knew who he really was. He healed the sick and gave sight to the blind and made all people feel important and feel the love of God.

All good things come from God, we call them blessings. Blessings are touches of God's special grace (goodness.) When wonderfully good things happen to us we say they are blessings. But everyday things can be blessings (signs of God's goodness and love) too.

There are signs all around us of God's love for us. We are going to look at some pictures and we will decide if they are signs of God's love.

[Show pictures and decide if it is a blessing from God. Each page has 2 pictures, and the top one is an obvious blessing, but the other isn't. Point out how the less obvious is a blessing too.]

Family praying at dinner vs. Brussels sprouts. Brussels sprouts and all vegetables are blessings from God. They nourish us and help us to be healthy and strong.

A plant vs. dirty boots: A sign that you have work to do. You can work in the garden or maybe you are building a house and the soil is muddy. Dirty boots are a sign of a blessing from God.

Sunshine vs. rain is a blessing. We all need water to live. It helps grow plants and trees and us!

Show them the last picture (a rainbow)

Besides if we didn't have rain, we wouldn't have a rainbow. A rainbow in the sky is a promise that God is with us, he sent Jesus to be with us always. We celebrate Jesus being with us during Advent and Christmas. Sometimes we sing a song called O Come Emmanuel. Emmanuel means 'God with us'.

Jesus is with us every day. We can pray every day to thank God for sending Jesus, for giving us all the blessings we see around us. God is a good and loving God. Without God, there would be no good in the world. Take time each day to look around and thank God for all the good you see. As you do, you will see that God generously blesses us with His goodness each and every day.

Activity 2:

God blesses us with many things. [Have the children share what they think are blessings and validate appropriate responses.] Because of all the blessings we receive from God, we should show God we are thankful. We can show God we are thankful by taking care of others, like Jesus did.

Let's practice making good choices that help us get ready for Jesus.

All good things come from God. Without God there is no goodness. Who would want to live in a world without goodness? Those who love God are filled with his love and goodness.

Even the simplest prayer or smallest kindness to someone else, if it is done in the name of Jesus, becomes an act of love for God.

Let's play a game to see if we know how to be kind to someone else.

Red Light-Green Light

(Use the colored paper squares) Have children raise Green if the action shows we care for others (GO) and the Red one if they don't show caring and love. Have the children brainstorm ways to make uncaring actions caring ones.

These are just a few examples. Please make up some more of your own. (Can also use Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down)

- † You see a friend crying so you just walk right by.
- † It is morning and everyone is waking up. You still feel tired, but you give a big smile and a hug good morning to your mom and dad.
- † You give your unused toys to the homeless shelter
- † A friend asks to play with your new game and you won't share.
- † You help your mom and dad deliver food to the food bank
- † A child at the playground makes a mistake and you make fun of them.
- † Listen to your parent when they tell you it's time to clean up your room
- † You don't pay attention at the grocery store and you hit someone with a shopping cart
- † You run or skate around inside a store
- † Visit someone in a nursing home
- † Make a card for a sick friend
- † You get mad and yell or hit your brother or sister

Complete the weekly bulletin as a group-let the children color them if there is extra time

Closing Prayer

(Children respond: "I Believe!")

Ask: *Do you believe in God, who shows his love for us every day?*

Do you believe in Jesus, who shows us the way to love others?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to recognize God's blessings all around us?

Sending Forth

Say: Remember to hunt for God's blessings all around us. They aren't always pretty, but they are blessings. Even chores can be a blessing, because they mean we are part of a family and we do our chores to show our love.

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*Father, We Thank Thee*" track 3 from Advent CD while children put away any materials and lineup. Hand out weekly bulletins. Remind them it is important that they return to their family quietly so that we may all listen and pray together in church.