

Focus: Preparing for Jesus

Materials:

- Prayer Altar: Cross, Candle, Chasuble on stand (priest’s vestment) and Altar Cloth
- Advent Wreath-and flames
- CD-Little Lit Advent Cycle C
- Gospel: In Lesson Plan
- Marker/Easel Pad-Crayons for kids
- Gift Box of Faith

Gathering (have children sit on floor-Criss-Cross Applesauce)

Say: Good Morning everyone, my name is _____. Last week we talked about waiting for Jesus and the good things we can do while we wait. This week we are going to hear the story of a man who prepared others for Jesus.

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.

Loving God, Help us to get ready for the coming of Jesus.

Let all the wonderful sights and smells of this season remind us to be ready to welcome Jesus.

Today is the 2nd week of Advent. We light the second purple candle this is the candle of Peace. We are waiting for Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Peacefulness is a feeling of quiet in our hearts. When we aren’t planning what to do next. When we are being quiet with God.

Prayer: Loving God, thank You for the peace You give us through Jesus. May Christ’s light shine in our lives, showing us the path of peace between God and all people. Help us to prepare our hearts to receive His peace. We ask in the name of your son Jesus. Amen.

Song/Movement

Hope, Peace, Joy and Love, track: 1, from Advent Cycle C

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.)

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 hope 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 a 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.*

Everyone will see God's saving power.

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

Say: *These are the last words in today's Gospel story. They are spoken by a prophet (a person who shares God's words with others) named John the Baptist.*

During the season of Advent we watch and wait. We hope in the promise of salvation, when everyone will see God's saving power when he brings peace to all the earth. The message of salvation, called to our attention by the prophets before Jesus was born, makes us who we are this Advent --a people preparing for that day when Jesus will come again, hoping in God's promise.

- *Is it hard for you to wait until Christmas?*
- *What helps you to watch and wait?*
- *Do you look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus our savior?*
- *What helps you to focus on Jesus during the season of Advent?*

Gospel Story

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

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: None, pp. N/A,

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke

Invite children to repeat what you say and do.

Explain that John the Baptist was a prophet. A prophet is someone who listens to God and shares God's words with others.

John the Baptist was in the desert
[Pour imaginary water from your hand]
when God spoke to him.
[Cup one hand around mouth]
John went throughout the countryside
[Walk in place]
telling everyone to say they are sorry for not obeying God,
[Praying hands]
and baptizing them,
[Pour imaginary water from your hand]
as the prophet Isaiah had said many years before:
[Chatty hand, thumb against fingers]
a voice crying out in the desert:
[Cup both hands around mouth]

“Prepare the way of the Lord.
[Point heavenward]
Make his paths straight.
[Slice hand downward through air]
Every valley shall be filled.
[Move hand down and up, then leveling off]
Every mountain shall be made low.
[Move hand over a mountain and down, then leveling off]
Curved roads will be made straight.
[Move hand along a winding path, then straight]
Rough paths will be made smooth.
[Spread hand before you as if smoothing something]
Everyone will see God’s saving power.”
[Raise hands, palms up, toward heaven]

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

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

Discussion Starters:

- *Where did the John the Baptist come from?*
- *Who does he prepare the way for?*
- *What is John the Baptist’s message?*
- *During Advent how do you prepare for the coming of Jesus?*
- *What person (or persons) points the way to Jesus for you?*
- *How can you announce the coming of Jesus to others?*

Reflection on Reading:

John the Baptist told people about the king that would be coming to teach them all about God and what God’s kingdom was all about. He told people to be sorry for their sins and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

When we do something we know is wrong, it is called a sin. Sin hurts our relationship with God. God is always good and he wants us to be good too. He also wants us to be close to him. God forgives our sins, when we say we are sorry and we can be close to God again.

How do you think the mountains will be made low and the curvy paths straight? God can do anything. God can make the mountains low, the paths straight, rough ways smooth and much more. God can give us joy when we’re sad, courage when we are afraid and wisdom when we are confused. We can trust in God’s promise to be with us always.

Gospel Activity

Activity 1:

This is an exciting time of year. It is often a time when company comes. Maybe it is grandparents who will come for Christmas, or perhaps a favorite aunt or uncle. Don't you love to have company come? It is nice to visit, but it also means that there is a lot of work to do. We wouldn't want company to come and find our house in a mess. We have to mop, vacuum, dust, clean the bathrooms, make sure the beds are all made, and ...the list can seem like there is no end.

In our Bible lesson today, we read about a man named John who went into the country around the Jordan River preaching and telling people to prepare for the coming of the Lord. When John told people to prepare for the coming of the Lord, he didn't mean that they should go home and sweep the floor, pick up their toys, and make their beds. He meant that they should prepare their hearts. How? By saying they are sorry for making the wrong choice and turning toward God. When they did this, John would baptize them in the Jordan River. That is how he got the name, "John the Baptist."

The Bible tells us that Jesus is coming again and, just as in the day of John the Baptist, it is important for us to make sure our hearts are clean and ready for the coming of the Lord. We do that by telling God about our mistakes, saying we are sorry and asking God to forgive us. If we will do that, the Bible tells us that he will forgive us and make our hearts clean.

Cleaning house isn't something you can do one time and forget it. It is something that we must do every day. If we kept our house clean all the time, it wouldn't be such a big job to get ready for company. That same thing is true when it comes to keeping our hearts ready for Jesus' return. We must spend time each day in prayer, reading his Word, and asking God's forgiveness for those things that keep us from being ready to welcome Jesus' return.

Jesus is coming! How exciting! But first, there is some heart cleaning that must be done!

Prayer: Father, forgive us of the things that we do each day that are not pleasing to you. Make our hearts clean so that we will be ready for the return of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. In his name we pray. Amen.

CLEAN HEART DISPLAY: Use the easel pad and marker to draw a big heart and write ways to clean our hearts -- such as praying, forgiving, reading God's Word, etc.

Let each child draw a heart on the poster to decorate it. Title the poster board with big colorful letters that will say I WANT TO CLEAN UP MY HEART.

Activity 2:

One way we can prepare the way for Jesus is to tell others about him.

Have the children sit in a circle. Tell them the package represents God's gift of Faith. We share our faith when we live as Jesus taught us.

Have them pass the gift as the music plays, (Use the closing song from CD -Change My Heart O' God) when the music stops the one with the gift steps into the center of the circle and tells one thing they know about God the Father or Jesus, the Son. The rest of the group continues to play as time allows, with each child stepping into the circle. When time is up

and there are still children outside the circle have them come into the circle and hold hands while you pray.

Dear God, thank you for all that we have and sending your Son, Jesus, to teach us to be good. We know you want everyone to be inside your great big circle of love. Help us to love one another as you love each of us. Amen.

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 loves us always?*

Do you believe in Jesus, who we change our hearts for this Advent season?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who fills us with the power of God's love?

Sending Forth

Say: Prepare the Way of Jesus. Tell others about Jesus. You can say he teaches, he loves us always, he heals, he is the Son of God, he is the Good Shepherd. Spread the Good News!

Lining Up/Closing Song

Play "*Change My Heart O' God.*" track 2 from Little Lit Advent Cycle C 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.