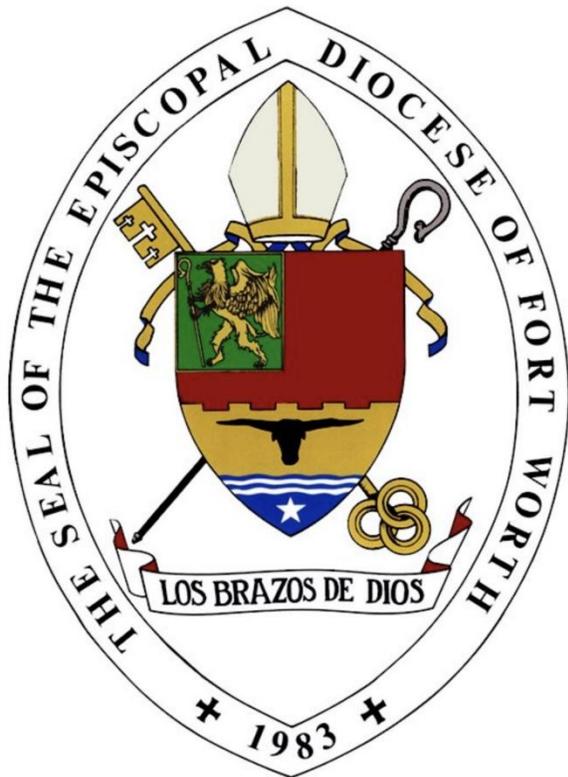


EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

A lectionary-based Sunday school curriculum for Pre-K through High School



**THE FIRST
SUNDAY IN
ADVENT**

**Sunday from
November 27 to
December 3**

A free resource created by the Christian Education Commission
of the Anglican Diocese of Fort Worth

Sunday School Curriculum for the First Sunday of Advent - Year A Sunday from November 27 to December 3

Lectionary Texts:

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalms 122

Romans 13:8-14

Matthew 24: 29-44

Isaiah 2:1-5

People From Many Nations Will Worship at Mount Zion

¹ Here is a vision that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, had about Judah and Jerusalem.

² In the last days

the mountain where the Lord's temple is located will be famous.

It will be the most important mountain of all.

It will stand out above the hills.

All of the nations will go to it.

³ People from many nations will go there. They will say,

"Come. Let us go up to the Lord's mountain.

Let's go to the house of Jacob's God.

He will teach us how we should live.

Then we will live the way he wants us to."

The law of the Lord will be taught at Zion.

His message will go out from Jerusalem.

⁴ He will judge between the nations.

He'll settle problems among many of them.

They will hammer their swords into plows.

They'll hammer their spears into pruning tools.

Nations will not go to war against one another.

They won't even train to fight anymore.

⁵ People of Jacob, come.

Let us live the way the Lord has taught us to.

Psalm 122

A song for those who go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. A psalm of David.

- ¹ I was very glad when they said to me,
"Let us go up to the house of the Lord."
² Jerusalem, our feet are standing
inside your gates.
³ Jerusalem is built like a city
where everything is close together.
⁴ The tribes of the Lord go there to praise his name.
They do it in keeping with the law he gave to Israel.
⁵ The thrones of the family line of David are there.
That's where the people are judged.
⁶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Say,
"May those who love you be secure."
⁷ May there be peace inside your walls.
May your people be kept safe."
⁸ I'm concerned for my family and friends.
So I say to Jerusalem, "May you enjoy peace."
⁹ I'm concerned about the house of the Lord our God.
So I pray that things will go well with Jerusalem.

Romans 13:8-14

Love, Because the Day Is Near

⁸ Pay everything you owe. But you can never pay back all the love you owe each other. Those who love others have done everything the law requires. ⁹ Here are some commandments to think about. "Do not commit adultery." "Do not commit murder." "Do not steal." "Do not want what belongs to others."—(*Exodus 20:13-15,17; Deuteronomy 5:17-19,21*) These and other commandments are all included in one rule. Here's what it is. "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."—(*Leviticus 19:18*) ¹⁰ Love does not harm its neighbor. So love does everything the law requires.

¹¹ When you do those things, keep in mind the times we are living in. The hour has come for you to wake up from your sleep. Our full salvation is closer now than it was when we first believed in Christ. ¹² The dark night of evil is nearly over. The day of Christ's return is almost here. So let us get rid of the works of darkness. Let us put on the armor of light.

¹³ Let us act as we should, like people living in the daytime. Have nothing to do with wild parties. Don't get drunk. Don't take part in sexual sins or evil conduct. Don't fight with each other. Don't be jealous of anyone.

¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ as your clothing. Don't think about how to satisfy what your sinful nature wants.

Matthew 24:29-44

²⁹ "Right after the terrible suffering of those days,

'The sun will be darkened.

The moon will not shine.

The stars will fall from the sky.

The heavenly bodies will be shaken.' (Isaiah 13:10; 34:4)

³⁰ "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven. At that time, all the peoples of the earth will mourn. They will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. He will come with power and great glory. ³¹ He will send his angels with a loud trumpet call. They will gather his chosen people from all four directions. They will bring them from one end of the heavens to the other.

³² "Learn a lesson from the fig tree. As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ In the same way, when you see all these things happening, you know that the end is near. It is right at the door. ³⁴ What I'm about to tell you is true. The people living now will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away. But my words will never pass away.

The Day and Hour Are Not Known

³⁶ "But no one knows about that day or hour. Not even the angels in heaven know. The Son does not know. Only the Father knows.

³⁷ "Remember how it was in the days of Noah. It will be the same when the Son of Man comes.

³⁸ "In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking. They were getting married. They were giving their daughters to be married. They did all those things right up to the day Noah entered the ark. ³⁹ They knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes.

⁴⁰ "Two men will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill. One will be taken and the other left.

⁴² "So keep watch. You do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ You must understand something. Suppose the owner of the house knew what time of night the robber was coming. Then he would have kept watch. He would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So you also must be ready. The Son of Man will come at an hour when you don't expect him."

Overview of the Texts:

The themes for the readings today center around “Stay awake, be ready for the Lord’s coming.” Being ready to be found living a holy life, loving others, living in unity & peace, depending on the Lord, by being in close relationship with Him will make us ready to go with him when he comes quickly like a flood coming in. What does it mean to be living and growing in holiness and in relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ? How are we to be disciples so that we may be found fit? To be found fit means that we are to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints and to be with Him on the Last Day.

Being ready reminds us that the story of salvation has been playing out all along. God has had a plan for us from the beginning, one he promised to Adam and Eve. The rest of the Bible narrative leads us through God’s plan, proclaiming His victory over our self-inflicted exile and death. Through the golden ribbon of time, God has set in place all that we need to return to Him. Therefore, as we look forward to the promised second coming, we also look back to the way God has wonderfully and mysteriously worked to get us here. We see Him establish a relationship and covenant with His people. We follow his Commandments and His wisdom for our lives. We see the cautions of the Prophets and the lessons of the Parables. We watch as the fate of the world rises and falls with its obedience to all that God commands. We take on with joy the honor of worshiping Him as he wants and as we need, walking in the path God began in the Old Testament and brought to fruition through Christ in the New Testament. We go about the business of being disciples and discipling others. To say it simply, we know how to be ready for Christ because we have read and are trying to be a part of the story of salvation.

Advent is the perfect time to remind ourselves of that plan. Advent is our time of preparation. We prepare in many ways for the coming of Christ in Christmas. It is a festive time, but also a sober and penitential time. We are clearing out the garbage in our hearts to prepare room for Christ. What better way to do that than to remind ourselves of the path that lead Christ into our hearts. Today the children will be working on Jesse Tree ornaments. Each of the 28 ornaments represents a particular part of the story of salvation. The Jesse Tree is a family tree that shows the line to Jesus, but it also shows the way to salvation as lived out by each of the people and events discussed.

Pre-K - Elementary Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer:

PreK-Kinder: Lord’s Prayer

Elementary: Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, Glory Be

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Copies of the Jesse Tree ornaments included below. Each student will need 6 copies of the sheet of blank ornament ovals. There are 28 ornaments to make, so this will yield two extra ovals. Coloring (and optionally decorating) materials, yarn, ziplock bags. If time permits: scissors and a hole punch.

Preparation: Cut 6" lengths of yarn – 28 per child –OR- cut one long length of yarn that should be enough to provide 28 6" pieces (14 feet).

Discussion:

Ask the children if they are going anywhere for the holidays. Will they need to do anything to get ready to go or can they just walk out the door? What are some things they (or really their parents) might need to do to prepare for the trip?

- Make plans with the people or place you are visiting.
- Look at the weather report so you know what kind of clothes to pack.
- Pack clothes and other needed items. Toothpaste and teddy bears!
- Find out which is the best way to get where you are going (check a map, think through when and where the worst traffic might be and change your route as necessary).
- Make sure you have plenty of things to do along the way so no one gets cranky.

These are all great ways to prepare for a great trip – a trip that will probably go better because you planned carefully. Our life with Christ is the same way. When we are baptized, we are making plans to get to heaven. We are making arrangements with our host, God. We read and learn about God through reading the Bible, going to Mass, going to Sunday School, etc. It helps us to know how to live as a Christian (like knowing the weather, so we know what to pack). Learning God's ways with His people (which includes us) helps us to pick the best routes and hopefully avoid any spiritual traffic so that we can arrive at our destination without too many detours. We keep ourselves busy making our lives about Christ – worshipping Him, learning about Him, serving Him, serving others in His name, and always seeking to be like Him – so that our trip is as peaceful and fruitful as possible. See? We just planned a trip the way God wants us to. Only the trip we are talking about today is not a short trip to Grandma's house, it's our lifetime trip to God in heaven.

Today we will be making a road map. This is a special road map that tells a story. It tells us where we came from and where we are going. This story is told through people instead of places. We start at the very beginning with the first people Adam and Eve. They really made a mess of things, didn't they? If it weren't for the mercy and love of God, we could have lost everything. But God really wants us with Him. So, rather than giving up on us, He has worked with us and helped us along the way in a big story that's happy ending is Jesus. Through all the people we will learn about today, God was making a map for how to get back to Him. Each person has an important part to play in

the story of salvation. If we read the little pieces of the Bible that go with each person, we will learn God's plan for us. We will have the road map that leads us to heaven.

Activity:

Give each student a set of the ornament sheets and a chart showing the readings and symbol for each day. Students will be designing their own images for each symbol. It is helpful for some children to have examples to look at, therefore, creating a set ahead of time could give inspiration. Depending on how much class time you have, you may wish to do this activity in several ways: spend the class time drawing as many ornaments as possible and sending the sheets home with the yarn for children to finish coloring and cutting at home; or decorating then cutting and stringing as they go, but sending the rest home to finish. If you are particularly ambitious, you could cut the ornaments out for each student ahead of time. One way or the other, there are so many ornaments that the students will not be able to finish them during class (even if you have a long class time, the students will lose interest and energy before finishing the whole set). Send everything home in a ziplock.

While the children work, read a few of the scripture selections so that the children can hear the story playing out. Help them make the connections from one Bible figure to the next. How are they related?

See materials at the end of the lesson packet below.

If you know there is a family with both PreK and Elementary students, you may wish to divide the ornament pages between the children of one family so that multiple kits are not made for a single household. It may be worth asking the parents how their children will do with sharing the kit.

Closing Prayer:

PreK-Kinder: Lord's Prayer

Elementary: The Collect of the Day

Junior High Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, Hail Mary

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Bible, poster board, markers

Preparation: Mount the poster board.

Activity:

1. Discuss the readings and themes, noting the season of Advent, when we anticipate the coming of Christ a) in the manger, b) in the world through Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit, and c) in Christ's Second coming.

The readings focus on being ready. How is this connected to Advent? *Advent is a time for preparing – getting ready – for the coming of Christ.*

How are we supposed to be preparing for Christ? *Advent is a penitential season (notice all the purple, just like Lent?). We are supposed to be clearing away all the things that separate us from Christ, our sins and weaknesses. We can do this by examining our consciences and confessing, reading helpful spiritual materials, partnering with other Christians to ensure accountability, making a greater effort in our prayer life, serving others in Christ's name, and using spiritual disciplines like fasting.*

Advent seems to be about getting ready for Christmas and the birth of Christ. In what other ways do we see Christ coming into the world? *We are certainly preparing to celebrate when Christ was incarnate in the world, but we see this as a reminder that he will come again. So, we look backward and forward at the same time. In the meantime, we also celebrate Christ present now through the Church. The Holy Spirit operates in us to make Christ present to the world.*

2. On your poster board, chart the ways we can live holy lives. Ask the students for suggestions and acknowledge each thing on the poster. If they give general answers (loving Him, obeying Him, serving Him, and keeping watch for His return...), encourage them to give specific examples (regularly attending mass, having a daily prayer time, working in one of your church's outreach ministries or one of their own, going to confession, reading the Bible, going to Bible study, etc.), but write the general answer for ease.

What are some ways we can live holy lives?

What are some specific examples you would give to someone who wanted to be holy?

What happens if we don't do all these things? *Faith is a living thing that must be fed and tended to. Simply declaring yourself a Christian is not enough. While you do not have to do absolutely everything you can think of to demonstrate your faith, you do need to do things that will help you grow in faith and love of the Lord. It is worth the effort. You are not trying to win Christian of the Year, you should be trying to have a heart won to Christ.*

What happens if you try to do these things, but then forget or get too busy? *No one is perfect, and sometimes our best intentions falter. It's important to always keep trying. It is hard to learn the discipline required to live a holy life – especially in our current culture. When you do falter, ask yourself why? Is it simply a matter of being more*

disciplined, or do you need to find other more effective ways to grow and nurture your faith? Not everything is the best for everyone. Is there a better method, time of day, amount? Would you do better on your own or with a partner or group? Be careful not to talk yourself out of valuable spiritual disciplines, but do search for ones that are the most helpful.

3. Also, discuss repentance when we fall away, confessing our sin, choosing to turn away and return to the Lord. This is a good time to discuss participating in the sacrament of Confession with your priest. Repentance is the way back to holy living. We return to holiness through confession.

What happens when you find that you have really strayed? There is always a way back. There is nothing too big or too bad that God cannot handle. God's capacity for forgiveness is bigger than your capacity for sin. He desires a relationship with us even when we have made really terrible choices. No matter how filthy we make ourselves, God is standing by ready to make us clean again. He greatly desires to have you come back to him.

How do you get back to God? Confession is the means by which I can return to God after I have turned away from him. First, you must repent. To repent means to turn away from and leave behind our sins. To repent is to be truly sorry for the things we have done. Keep in mind that when we sin, we sin against God. Whatever bad things we do to ourselves or other people, it is God against whom we have sinned first. Because Christ died for our sins (even the ones we haven't committed yet), we have the ability to tell God we are sorry, turn away from that sin and receive forgiveness. In confession we tell God what we have done, we tell him we are sorry, and we commit to avoid that sin in the future. In doing so, get back to our proper relationship with God.

What if you do the same sin again? You will. Most of the sins that we commit are the things to which we have the most weakness. We are most tempted to these things and they will likely be a lifetime battle for us. God knows this. Your priest knows this. We should never give in and just decide "that's how we are." We need to fight that sin and continue to come back to God after we give in to our weakness. Confessing the same type of sin over and over is quite usual. What we must avoid is not being truly sorry for it when we confess or not intending to avoid it in the future. Going to confession falsely is not only a grievous sin but is missing the point all together. We go to confession to effect change in our lives. Going falsely is simply giving the appearance of a desire for holiness and does nothing to help us. You might fool your priest, but you're never fooling God who knows the interior of your heart.

What can you do to battle a repetitive sin? When you find that you seem to be battling the same sins all the time, Spiritual Direction is a great option. In Spiritual Direction, you meet regularly with a mature Christian who can help guide you in ways that will strengthen your faith and give you tools to fight your demons. The Spiritual Director can be your priest or another mentor in your family or Christian Community. Spiritual Direction is not just for helping you try to conquer your sins. It has many uses including

finding productive ways to exercise spiritual disciplines to help you grow in your faith (for example during Advent!).

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day

High School Lesson Plan: _____

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: Bible, poster board, marker

Preparation: Make a poster with the acronym "S E C O N D" written down the left side. See #3 below for filling in characteristics of the Second Coming as you discuss events and scripture.

Activity #1:

1. Discuss the Second Coming of Christ after reading these passages that Jesus said: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36). "Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with the hand mill; one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:40). "Therefore *keep watch*, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42).

2. Read the readings for today.

3. Discuss the season of Advent and how during this season of the Christian year we "keep watch for Christ's coming" as a babe in a manger, as the resurrected Christ living among us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and finally, in His coming again. (See Junior High Discussion point #1 for more notes).

4. Only God knows the time. What are our concerns to be? *We want to be found living holy lives.*

5. Discuss what it means to be living holy lives. *We can do this by seeking God; yearning to make God first in our lives by piety and prayer, study, and action; being His hands in the world; and telling and sharing our faith and the Gospel story.* (See Junior High Discussion point #2 for more notes).

6. Using the acronym S. E. C. O. N. D. and what the Bible tells us, we can determine some things about this future event.

S: Sudden. It will be sudden.

E: Essential. It must and will happen

C: Christ's Final Judgment. It happens upon his coming

O: Obvious. It will be obvious when it occurs.

N: No One Knows. No one knows when.

D: Doubters. There will be doubters about Christ's return.

Activity #2:

See Junior High Discussion

Activity #3:

See PreK – Elementary Activity for a craft opportunity.

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day

Table of Scripture Readings for the Story

Date	Persons	Events/Themes	Scripture	Symbols
First Sunday	Introduction of the Jesse Tree		1 Sam 16:1-13 Isa 11:1-10	The Tree
Mon Wk 1	God	Creation	Gen 1:1-2:3	Dove
Tues Wk 1	Adam and Eve	The First Sin	Gen 2:4-3:24	Tree with Fruit or Apple
Wed Wk 1	Noah	The Flood	Gen 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12, 20-9:17	Rainbow or Ark
Thur Wk 1	Abraham	The Promise	Gen 12:1-7, 15:1-6	Field of Stars
Friday Wk 1	Isaac	Offering of Isaac	Gen 22:1-19	Ram
Sat Wk 1	Jacob	Assurance of the Promise	Gen 27:41-28:22	Ladder
Second Sunday	Joseph	God's Providence	Gen 37, 39:1-50:21	Sack of Grain or Coat
Mon Wk 2	Moses	God's Leadership	Exod 2:1-4:20	Burning Bush
Tues Wk 2	Israelites	Passover and Exodus	Exod 12:1-14:31	Lamb
Wed Wk 2	God	Giving the Torah at Sinai	Exod 19:1-20:20	Tablets of the Torah
Thur Wk 2	Joshua	The Fall of Jericho	Josh 1:1-11, 6:1-20	Ram's Horn Trumpet
Fri Wk 2	Gideon	Unlikely Heroes	Judg 2:6-23, 6:1-6, 11-8:28	Clay Water Pitcher
Sat Wk 2	Samuel	The Beginning of the Kingdom	1 Sam 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9	Crown

Third Sunday	David	A Shepherd for the People	1 Sam 16:1-23-17:58, 2 Sam 5:1-5, 7:1-17	Shepherd's Crook or Harp
Mon Wk 3	Elijah	The Threat of False Gods	1 Kng 17:1-16, 18:17-46	Stone Altar
Tues Wk 3	Hezekiah	Faithfulness and Deliverance	2 Kng 18:1-19:19, 32-37	An Empty Tent
Wed Wk 3	Isaiah	The Call to Holiness	Isa 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7	Fire Tongs with Hot Coal
Thur Wk 3	Jeremiah	The Exile	Jer 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:1-11	Tears
Fri Wk 3	Habakkuk	Waiting	Hab 1:1-2:1, 3:16-19	Stone Watchtower
Sat Wk 3	Nehemiah	Return and Rebuilding	Neh 1:1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22	City Wall
Fourth Sunday	John the Baptist	Repentance	Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-207:18-30	Scallop Shell
Mon Wk 4	Mary	The Hope for a Future	Luke 1:26-38	White Lily
Tues Wk 4	Elizabeth	Joy	Luke 1:39-56	Mother and Child
Wed Wk 4	Zechariah	Anticipation	Luke 1:57-80	Pencil and Tablet
Thurs Wk 4	Joseph	Trust	Matt 1:19-25	Carpenter's Square or Hammer
Fri Wk 4	Magi	Worship	Matt 2:1-12	Star or Candle
Dec 24	Jesus	Birth of the Messiah	Luke 2:1-20	Manger
Dec 25	Christ	The Son of God	John 1:1-18	Chi-Rho Symbol

