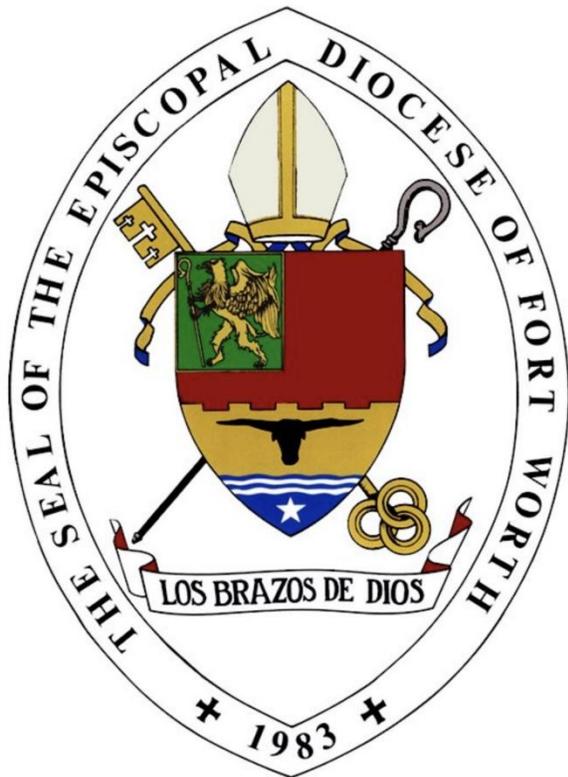


EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

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



**THIRD
SUNDAY OF
ADVENT**

**Sunday from
December 11 to
December 17**

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

Sunday School Curriculum for the Third Sunday in Advent, Year A

Lectionary Texts:

Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalm 146

James 5:7-20

Matthew 11:2-11

Isaiah 35:1-10

¹The desert and the dry ground will be glad.

The dry places will be full of joy.

Flowers will grow there.

Like the first crocus in the spring,

² the desert will bloom with flowers.

It will be very glad and shout with joy.

The glorious beauty of Lebanon will be given to it.

It will be as beautiful as the rich lands
of Carmel and Sharon.

Everyone will see the glory of the LORD.

They will see the beauty of our God.

³ Strengthen the hands of those who are weak.

Help those whose knees give way.

⁴ Say to those whose hearts are afraid,

“Be strong. Do not fear.

Your God will come.

He will pay your enemies back.

He will come to save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of those who are blind will be opened.

The ears of those who can't hear will be unplugged.

⁶ Those who can't walk will leap like a deer.

And those who can't speak will shout with joy.

Water will pour out in dry places.

Streams will flow in the desert.

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool of water.

The thirsty ground will become bubbling springs.

In the places where wild dogs once lay down,

tall grass and papyrus will grow.

⁸ A wide road will go through the land.

It will be called The Way of Holiness.

Only those who are pure and clean can travel on it.

Only those who lead a holy life can use it.

Evil and foolish people can't walk on it.

⁹ No lions will use it.

No wild animals will be on it.

None of them will be there.

Only people who have been set free will walk on it.

¹⁰ Those the LORD has saved will return to their land.

They will sing as they enter the city of Zion.

Joy that lasts forever will be

like beautiful crowns on their heads.

They will be filled with gladness and joy.

Sorrow and sighing will be gone.

Psalm 146

¹ Praise the LORD.

I will praise the LORD.

² I will praise the LORD all my life.

I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³ Don't put your trust in human leaders.

Don't trust in people. They can't save you.

⁴ When they die, they return to the ground.

On that very day their plans are bound to fail.

⁵ Blessed are those who depend on the God of Jacob for help.

Blessed are those who put their hope in the LORD their God.

⁶ He is the Maker of heaven and earth and the ocean.

He made everything in them.

The LORD remains faithful forever.

⁷ He stands up for those who are beaten down.

He gives food to hungry people.

The LORD sets prisoners free.

⁸ The LORD gives sight to those who are blind.

The LORD lifts up those who feel helpless.

The LORD loves those who do what is right.

⁹ The LORD watches over the outsiders who live in our land.

He takes good care of children whose fathers have died.

He also takes good care of widows.

But he causes evil people to fail

in everything they do.

¹⁰ The LORD rules forever.

The God of Zion will rule for all time to come.

Praise the LORD.

James 5:7-20

⁷ Brothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient he is for the fall and spring rains. ⁸ You too must be patient. You must stand firm. The Lord will soon come back.

⁹ Brothers and sisters, don't find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door!

¹⁰ Brothers and sisters, think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They are an example of how to be patient when you suffer.

¹¹ As you know, we think that people who don't give up are blessed. You have heard that Job was patient. And you have seen what the Lord finally did for him. The Lord is full of tender mercy and loving concern.

¹² My brothers and sisters, here is what is most important. Don't make a promise by giving your word. Don't promise by heaven or earth. And don't promise by anything else to back up what you say. All you need to say is a simple "Yes" or "No." If you do more than this, you will be judged.

The Prayer of Faith

¹³ Is anyone among you in trouble? Then that person should pray. Is anyone among you happy? Then that person should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Then that person should send for the elders of the church to pray over them. They should ask the elders to anoint them with olive oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer offered by those who have faith will make the sick person well. The Lord will heal them. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ So confess your sins to one another. Pray for one another so that you might be healed. The prayer of a godly person is powerful. Things happen because of it.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, just as we are. He prayed hard that it wouldn't rain. And it didn't rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again. That time it rained. And the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters, suppose one of you wanders away from the truth. And suppose someone brings that person back. ²⁰ Then here is what I want you to remember. Anyone who keeps a sinner from going astray will save them from death. God will erase many sins by forgiving them.

Matthew 11:2-11

² John was in prison. When he heard what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to him. ³ They asked Jesus, "Are you the one who was supposed to come? Or should we look for someone else?"

⁴ Jesus replied, “Go back to John. Report to him what you hear and see. ⁵ Blind people receive sight. Disabled people walk. Those who have skin diseases are healed. Deaf people hear. Those who are dead are raised to life. And the good news is preached to those who are poor. ⁶ Blessed are those who do not give up their faith because of me.”

⁷ As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. He said, “What did you go out into the desert to see? Tall grass waving in the wind? ⁸ If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No. People who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. ⁹ Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ He is the one written about in Scripture. It says,

“I will send my messenger ahead of you.

He will prepare your way for you.’ (Malachi 3:1)

¹¹ “What I’m about to tell you is true. No one more important than John the Baptist has ever been born. But the least important person in the kingdom of heaven is more important than he is.

Overview of Texts:

Today’s texts revolve around three major themes: messianic promise, messianic signs, and messianic deliverance. These three themes are apparent in three divisions of Isaiah’s prophecy, which are then mirrored directly in the Gospel, and emphasized to a lesser extent in the Psalm and Epistle. The first division of Isaiah’s prophecy, 35:1-3, sets up the *messianic promise*: God will come and save His people. The second division, 35:4-7, establishes the signs that accompany the coming of the promised Messiah (or Savior, or, from Greek, Christ); that is, the Christ performs signs of healing and restoration (of the blind, the lame, the deaf, etc.). Finally, in the third division, 35:8-10, Isaiah prophesies that God will restore His people back to a restored Jerusalem by means of the “Holy Way.” The Holy Way is a path He creates through all trial, safe from all tribulation, on which the redeemed travel. We see this pattern fulfilled in the Gospel text first with St. John’s question, “Are you the promised one?” (11:2-3), then with our Lord’s manifestation of the works of healing and restoration (11:4-6), and finally with Jesus’ interpretation of St. John as the messenger sent to prepare the “Holy Way” (11:7-11). The Psalm repeats the same pattern - vs. 4-5 establish the promise, vs. 6-7 establish the signs, vs. 8-9 establish the theme of deliverance. As a last note, the Epistle today follows the final theme, that of messianic deliverance, and draws it into the post-resurrection Church. St. James’ emphatic point is that the Christian, who has witnessed the first coming of the Messiah, is to wait with patience for the second and final coming when all of creation will be perfected and subjected to Christ. Until then, St. James’ exhorts us, we are to suffer patiently, following the examples of the prophets - such as Isaiah, who was sawn in two, after all - who saw the coming of the Lord beforehand.

PreK – Kindergarten Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer

Supplies and Preparation:

Supplies: White masquerade masks, colored sharpie markers, optional: sequins or plastic gemstones and glue, Christian themed stickers or foamie shapes with sticker backs.

Preparation: None.

Lesson:

- Ask your students what they would think if you walked in and (very nonchalantly) said that you were a superhero. Would they believe you?
- Be very insistent that you are in fact a superhero and that you are incredibly strong and can pick up cars but refuse to show them.
- Ask them if they believe you (*the answer will probably be no*). Next ask what you would have to do for them to believe you. *Demonstrate your powers in some way.*
- Talk about how it is easier to believe someone who shows you what they are or can do as opposed to just telling you.
- Read the Gospel lesson.
- Talk about how Jesus wanted people to see that he was the Messiah instead of telling them. People expected certain things to happen when he came, and he was able to show people who he was instead of just telling them. All of the miracles Jesus performed were meant to show everyone that he really was the Savior of the World.
- We need to be able to show people that we are followers of Christ by loving them and doing what is right and what God wants us to do.

Activity:

Since we talked about how it is easier to show someone who you are, we are going to have some fun and show people that we are superheroes by making our very own superhero masks. But, the only thing is that we all have the same superpower, and that is the power to follow Jesus. Ask the children to create a mask that shows they are following Jesus.

Closing Prayer: Lord's Prayer

Elementary Lesson Plan:

Opening Prayer: Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and Glory Be

Supplies and Preparation:

Supplies: White masquerade masks, colored sharpie markers, optional: sequins or plastic gemstones and glue, Christian themed stickers or foamie shapes with sticker backs.

Preparation: None.

Lesson:

- Ask your students what they would think if you walked in and (very nonchalantly) said that you were a superhero. Would they believe you?
- Be very insistent that you are in fact a superhero and that you are incredibly strong and can pick up cars but refuse to show them.
- Ask them if they believe you. Next ask what you would have to do for them to believe you. *Demonstrate your powers in some way.*
- Talk about how it is easier to believe someone who shows you what they are or can do as opposed to just telling you.
- Read the lesson from Isaiah. Point out the places in the lesson (vss. 5-6) where it says what will happen when the Lord comes to be with his people.
- Now read the Gospel lesson. Point out that Jesus is showing that the things from the Isaiah lesson are now happening in his own ministry.
- Talk about how Jesus wanted to show the people who he was based on what was expected when he came. He didn't just tell people he was the Messiah; he showed them.
- We need to be able to show people that we are followers of Christ by loving them and doing what is right and what God wants us to do.

Activity:

Since we talked about how it is easier to show someone who you are, we are going to have some fun and show people that we are superheroes by making our very own superhero masks. But, the only thing is that we all have the same super power, and that is the power to follow Jesus. Ask the students how they could show with their mask that they are following Jesus. What symbols, words, or pictures could they use?

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day

Junior/Senior High Lesson Plan:

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

Supplies & Preparation:

Supplies: 4 note cards to hand out, one to each of the first four students who enter.
First with "Isaiah 35:5-7" written on it.
Second with "Isaiah 35:8-10"
Third with "Matthew 11:4-6"
Fourth with "Matthew 11:7-11"

A chalk board/white board/writing tablet, divided down the center, with "Isaiah" at the top left, and "Matthew" at the top right.

Lesson:

Ask the student with the first card to read his/her passage.

In a couple of quick bullets, ask the students to state what that passage is about under "Isaiah" on the board.

Draw a line under that section.

Ask the second student to read his/her passage.

Again, quickly note what's going on in this section of the passage under the line from the first section on the "Isaiah" side.

Ask the third student to read his/her passage

Quickly note what's going on in the section under "Matthew,"

Draw a line under that section.

Ask the fourth student to read his/her passage.

Again, quickly note the big themes in this section underneath the first section on the "Matthew" side.

You should now have a board or piece of paper divided into quadrants, with a short description of the four sections of the readings.

Ask the students to point to similarities between the two passages.

If the students have gotten the big themes, they should note that the top two sections have to do with healing the blind, lame, and so on, and that the bottom two sections have to do with the "Way of the Lord," or the "Holy Way."

Some points for further discussion:

Why would these two passages be so similar to one another?

With that, do we find Jesus preached in the Old Testament? To whom did Isaiah point?

How did St. John Baptist prepare the way before Jesus?

How does this apply to us as we prepare for Christmas through the season of Advent?

Closing Prayer: The Collect of the Day