Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Advent 1 (B)
New Testament: Mark 13:24-37

BACKGROUND
Advent means “coming.” The coming of the baby Jesus, God among us in human flesh. The coming of Christ again "the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. In between those two great comings is God’s constant longing for each of us to come to God, to love God, and to let God love us. "Be alert." Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? For the ways God will choose to get our attention this season. For those moments when we notice that our ways are not in alignment with God’s ways. For those shimmering glimpses of the Kingdom of God.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK’S READING
Ominous warnings of end times: These warnings and words of hope heard in a community that was pretty sure the world was coming to an end. The message: Keep alert! Stay awake! Pay attention! Jesus just might come this very night. Implicit is the invitation to make some changes in our priorities and to notice what really matters.

THEME
Keep Alert!

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the Bible or copies of the scripture for everyone. You may want to have a second translation to read from as well.

BEGINNING
As you gather for coffee, etc., greet each other with "Happy New Year," since today is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Christian year.

Since this is the first day of the New Year for the Church, the beginning of Advent, we are going to do some internal housekeeping, check out our priorities, and get ready for the coming of Christ in Christmas. Advent is a season of preparation, a season of preparing for the coming of Christ. A time to prepare and make this a Christmas with meaning and significance for those we love and those in our community. How are we going to manage this?

OPENING PRAYER
Lord God, you show us in scripture that you long for us to come to you. You reach out to us daily and extraordinarily with the gift of your son, Jesus. Help us to keep awake to

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hear what you have for us in the Word and in our time together today. We ask this in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 13:24-32, 33-37

Invite someone read the lesson aloud. If time permits, allow a moment or two of silence, then have someone else read the same passage from a different translation. Before you read the lesson the first time, invite people to listen for a word or words that struck them as they listened and/or read along.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What word – or words – struck anyone?
- What questions came to you?
- What is your understanding of the "Second Coming"?
- How do you explain that Jesus seems to be saying that the end time would come in the lifetime of the disciples?
- If we had a hunch that Jesus would return this Christmas, what might we do differently?
- What would he expect to find?
- What might we add?
- What might we jettison?
- How do you and your family get ready for Christmas?
- What rituals, preparations, traditions mark Christmas at your house?
- In light of our discussion, what might you do differently?

GETTING CLOSURE

End the class with a few moments of silence and then read the poem by Madeleine L'Engle, "Advent, 1971" from *The Weather of the Heart* (H. Shaw, 1978).

Advent, 1971
When will he come
and how will he come
and will there be warnings
and will there be thunders
and rumbles of armies
coming before him
and banners and trumpets
when will he come
and how will he come
and will we be ready
O woe to you people
you sleep through the thunder
you heed not the warnings
the fires and the drownings
the earthquakes and stormings
and ignorant armies
and dark closing on you
the song birds are falling
the sear birds are dying
no fish now are leaping
the children are choking
in air not for breathing
the aged are gasping
with no one to tend them
a bright star has blazed forth
and no has seen it
and no one has wakened

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CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.)

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