Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Advent 2 (B)
New Testament: Mark 1:1-8

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
John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus, dressed in camel’s hair and lived off the land, driven by the message he has heard from the prophet Isaiah, "Prepare the way of the Lord." "Stop," John is saying. “Look at yourself and your life. Make a fresh start. Begin again. Come, be baptized. Someone is coming to lead the way. My job is to point to that someone.”

THEME
Prepare the Way

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the scripture for each child.

Prepare the Way: You will need paper, pencils, a large roll of paper with “Prepare the Way” written across the top, markers, and crayons.

John the Baptist: a large piece of brown craft paper, roll of paper, or several grocery bags, a small jar of honey and something to spread it with, a handful of dried beans (for the locusts), and an old leather belt. To make the "camel’s hair" you will need something rough such as the lint from the clothes dryer or trimmings from a frayed rope. You will need glue, tape, markers, etc.

BEGINNING
Greet each young person. Invite them to share how they prepare themselves when someone important is coming to their school or to their house.

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OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for each and every one of us here today. Thank you for speaking to us through other people. Help us to recognize them and prepare the way for your coming. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 1:1-8

Ask if they know who John the Baptist is. If they don't, explain that he is Jesus' older cousin.

Invite the children to read the story, or read it to them, or tell it, like this: John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus, knew the stories in the Bible, especially the story written by the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah told that a messenger would come and that messenger would prepare a path for Jesus. Now this John was a very odd-looking man. He made clothes out of camel's skin, and wore a beat-up old leather belt. About all he ate was honey and locusts (which didn't mean bugs, it was a kind of bean). Anyway, John told the people to stop! Stop what they were doing and look at their lives to see what they needed to do and what they needed to stop doing. John baptized the people who came to hear him, and he told them that he was not the messenger, but it was his job to point to the messenger.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- John the Baptist was preparing the way for Jesus to come. He wanted them to be ready. What do you think he told them to do to be ready?
- What kinds of things do you think John told people to stop doing?
- Why do you suppose people came out to the wilderness to listen to this man?
- Can you picture what he might have looked like?

ACTIVITIES

Prepare the Way

If John the Baptist was here to prepare the way for Jesus, let's think about how we are preparing the way for Jesus to come this Christmas. How are you preparing the way? (Allow them time to respond.) John the Baptist told us that we need to ask forgiveness of our sins. What do you think a sin is? (Allow them time to respond.) Sin is anything that separates us from God of from each other. I wonder what we need to ask forgiveness for? It may not be big things, but think about those things for which we want to ask God's forgiveness. Things like: being mean to someone, borrowing my sister's things without asking, not doing something I was asked to do, etc. Let them think about it and they may want to write them down.

Now that they have thought about what they want forgiveness for, how might they act differently so as to prepare themselves for Christ's coming? Invite them to write these words and phrases on the large roll of paper that says, "Prepare the Way."

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Making John the Baptist
Bring out the art supplies. Together, create a really tall John with a camel's hair outfit. Let the children get creative. Is he standing by the water? Is he baptizing someone? Is he eating the honey and locusts? When you finish, you may choose to display your John the Baptist where all can see him after your session.

GETTING CLOSURE

Look at the resolutions made last week and have the children point out the ones that John the Baptist might preach about and encourage us to live out. Add other resolutions if you wish.

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for the Second Sunday of Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.)

MARK 1:1-8

1 The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

2 As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way; 3 the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: "Prepare the
way of the Lord, make his paths straight" ', 4 John the baptizer appeared in the
wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And people
from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to
him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was
clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild
honey. 7 He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am
not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. 8 I have baptized you with
water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

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