Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger 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
Bring the Advent wreath from last week. Bring a pretty clear bowl and a pitcher of water. If possible, bring a picture of a baptism, which shows the various elements needed for a baptism.

BEGINNING
Greet children as they arrive. Invite them to share how they know what season it is. Have they seen Christmas trees? Lights? Nativity sets? Advent Wreaths?

OPENING PRAYER
Gather around the Advent Wreath, lighting two candles and pray. Dear God, we want to keep awake, to watch, to be alert. Thank you that we can be here with you today. Help us to prepare for your coming. Amen.

THE STORY: MARK 1:1-8
Tell the children that today we have a story about a man named John and that John is the cousin of Jesus. Then read the gospel story for today, or tell it.

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Here are the elements of the story: John, the cousin, of Jesus, wanted people to know they could do better. They could stop doing things that hurt other people and hurt themselves. And John wanted people to know that someone very special was coming soon. When people came to listen to John, he would ask them if they would like to get baptized. Lots of people wanted to get baptized.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- John the Baptist was baptizing people, getting them ready for Jesus to come. Has anyone seen a baptism?
- What happens at a baptism?
- Does anyone have a story about their own baptism?
- What does the priest do with the water at baptism?
- John baptized people in the river as a way of getting them ready for Jesus' coming.

ACTIVITY

Baptism

Bring the bowl and the pitcher of water to your circle. Pour some water in the bowl. Tell the children that when they were baptized the priest said this: "(Child's name), you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own forever. Amen."

Invite the children to dip their fingers in the water and make the sign of the cross on their foreheads and repeat the above phrase with you. (If time permits, have each child, in turn, do exactly that.) Be sure to make the sign of the cross on your own head and repeat the phrase, also. If a child should offer that he or she has not been baptized, tell them that someday if they are baptized, they will get to have this done for them.

GETTING CLOSURE

Tell the children that the mark on their forehead is there even if they do not see it. Jesus sees it. And everyone in the faith community knows it. It is there all the time and they have been marked "Christ's own."

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for sending John the Baptist to tell people that Jesus was coming. Thank you that we all have been marked as children of God and that soon we will celebrate Christmas – the birth of Jesus. Amen.

You could also sing a verse or two of "Silent Night."

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