

A Voice in the Wilderness



Theme: Preparing for the coming King. Advent 2-A

Object: Some cleaning equipment. (mop, pail, broom, etc.)

Scripture: In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'" Matthew 3:1-3 (NIV)

Do you always keep your room neat and clean? Are all your toys picked up? Are there any clothes on the floor or hanging over the back of a chair? Did you make your bed this morning? Are there any "dust bunnies" hiding under the bed? If you knew I was coming to visit this afternoon, would you have to rush home to make sure everything was in order?

My mother was a very good housekeeper, and although our house always looked great to me, I can still remember what happened if my mother found out that company was coming. She brought out the broom, the mop and pail, sponges, window cleaner, bathroom cleaner, dust rags, and furniture polish. Then she called all the children together and assigned each of us the jobs that we were to do. When we were finished, she checked to make sure that not a speck of dirt or dust remained.

Can you imagine what it would have been like around our house if we had been expecting somebody really important — someone like a king or queen? Well, that is what our Bible lesson is about this morning. The coming of a King. Not just any king — the King of Kings! Jesus!

The Bible tells us that in the days before Jesus began his ministry, a man called John began preaching and telling the people to prepare for the coming King. When John told people to prepare for the King, he didn't mean that they should go home and sweep the floor, pick up their toys, and make their beds. He meant that they should prepare their hearts. How? By repenting of their sins and turning toward God. When they did this, John would baptize them in the Jordan River. That is how he got the name, "John the Baptist."

It is important for you and me to make our hearts ready for the coming King too. We do that by confessing our sins and asking God to forgive us. If we will do that, the Bible tells us that he will forgive us and make our hearts clean. Then we will be ready for Jesus when he comes.

Father, every day we do things for which we need your forgiveness. We ask you to forgive us and make our hearts clean so that we will be ready to welcome the coming King. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

"KING IS COMING" NECKLACE - Teacher can have a curved cut-out half-collar or like a horse-shoe shape for children to write THE KING IS COMING and decorate on the necklace. Have a hole punched on each end and tie yarn or string and make a necklace for the children to wear!

PATHS TO FOLLOW - Teacher can make "paths" for children to follow - ideas would be a "path" with string, feet prints, yarn, candy thrown in a "path" form, etc. Discussion in a circle at the END of the path about today's lesson!

CLEANING FROLICK - Have cleaning items such as mops, brooms, dust rags, box of junk, etc for children to clean the room at the beginning of class and discussion about today's lesson in getting ready for someone VERY IMPORTANT... and how we can prepare for the KING's coming!! Teacher could purposely have things out of place as children arrive and begin class discussion as they enter the room!

"KING IS COMING" Hide and Seek Game - Children can scatter to hide as the teacher or another appointed leader begins to look for the children. Tell the children that if they think their "leader" is getting close, they should JUMP out of their hiding place and shout... THE KING IS COMING and run to not get tagged. They can then run to the classroom and begin their heart tree or another project, or a designated area while the others continue to play. Teachers may have

other variations on playing the KING IS COMING as long as the children shout those words.

HEART CHRISTMAS TREE - Children can decorate a green triangle or make a Christmas tree with branches and the trunk of the tree in brown construction paper. REPENT can be written on the trunk of the tree and children can make "hearts" in the places of light bulbs on the tree and decorate the tree to remind children to "prepare to meet God", "turn toward God", "get hearts clean", "ask God to forgive my sins", etc.

"HEARTS & CROWNS" POSTER - Children can each be given a large red heart to color a border or decorate and then glue a large crown or draw a crown across the heart. Discussion about getting our "hearts" clean to prepare for the KING! Encourage children to take their poster home and share their lesson today so that "others" can prepare to MEET GOD!

"GET READY" PRAYER CHAIN - Teacher can have red and green strips of construction paper cut and ready for children to write an idea on each strip of paper of ways to GET READY for the KING. Connect the strips together to make a PRAYER CHAIN to hang around the classroom! (Ideas: pray, read my Bible, obey, no swearing, inviting others to SS, repent, tell others about Jesus, prayer walks, praise the Lord, etc).

Ready for the Christ of Christmas



Theme: John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus. 2nd Sunday of Advent Yr. A

Object: Some Christmas objects -- decorations, gifts, etc.

Scripture: In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." Matthew 3:1 (NIV)

"Are you ready for Christmas?" You will hear that question many times over the next several weeks. What do people mean when they ask that question? Well, they usually mean is your Christmas tree up and your house decorated? Or have you finished your Christmas shopping? Perhaps they mean have you written your annual Christmas letter or sent out your Christmas cards? There are many things that come to our mind when someone asks, "Are you ready for Christmas."

There is another question that we should be asking ourselves today. It is more important than, "Are you ready for Christmas?" The more important question is, "Are you ready for the Christ of Christmas?"

Many years ago, a man called John the Baptist preached about what it means to be ready for Jesus. John the Baptist was a different kind of man. He wore clothes made of camel's hair with a belt around the waist. His diet was rather unusual as well. He ate a diet of locusts and wild honey. Do you know what a locust is? Many of us today might call it a grasshopper. I'm not sure I would want to eat grasshoppers and honey. How about you? John the Baptist traveled throughout the wilderness of Judea. His message to the people was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Do you think people would listen to someone dressed in camel skins and eating locusts and wild honey? Well, they did! People came to John the Baptist from all over the entire area. They confessed their sins to

God and were baptized by John in the Jordan River.

After John baptized the people, he told them, "I baptize you with water for repentance. But there is one coming who is more powerful than I. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Who do you think he was talking about? Right! He was talking about Jesus. John the Baptist wanted the people to repent of their sins so that they would be ready for Jesus.

During this special season of the year, as we get ready for Christmas, you and I need to make sure that we are ready for the coming of the Christ of Christmas. We need to look into our hearts and ask God to make us clean so that we can walk with Jesus each day of our life. Let's ask him to do that now.

Dear Father, we want to be ready for the Christ of Christmas. Prepare our hearts for his coming. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

Interactive Group Activities

by Carol Williams & Charles Kirkpatrick

Sermon Title: "Ready for the Christ of Christmas"

Scripture Reading: Matthew 3:1-12

READY, SET, GO: The children will run relay races together from one side of an open designated area to the other side. One time can be hopping, one time can be skipping, one time can be running, one time can be walking backward, etc. Tell children to be READY to listen to what command they'll be doing when the teacher says READY SET GO!

BE READY MUSICAL VARIETY: Have the children form two teams. Team one will stand in a circle facing in. The other team will form a circle facing out. When the teacher begins to play some upbeat Christmas music, the inner circle will walk clockwise and the outer circle of children will walk counter clockwise. When the music stops, the children will stop and face a partner and do as the teacher tells them to do, such as shake hands, say their names to each other, clap hands, or other ideas. Toward the end of the musical game, tell children that when the music stops, they will face a partner and remind their partner to BE READY and the outer circle will do whatever the inner circle partner does. Continue to play as time allows

BIBLE VERSE BELL or STAR: Have the children cut out a Christmas bell or a star and write words from today's Bible verse on it. Tape or glue the bell or star to a piece of construction paper and fold the bottom of the paper to form a card stand and stand the bells and stars around the bottom of the classroom Christmas tree.

CHRISTMAS HUNT: Before class time, the teacher will put pictures that depict the Christmas story such as a manger, angels, stars, wise men, shepherds, nativity, a Bible, praying hands, or a church. HIDE the pictures around a designated area and tell the children to run and find ONE picture and RUN back to the Christmas poster board and tape that picture on the board; then run and get another picture, with each child running back and forth at the same time to find pictures and taping them on the PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS poster board that the teacher has taped to the wall. Tell children that these are all ways to be PREPARED for Christmas.

BE READY TUG OF WAR: Divide the children into two teams and each team can place themselves on either side of the large rope. Tell children to BE READY so when the teacher says .. PULL.. each team member will be READY by standing with legs apart and firm on the floor and hands in position to PULL!

PICK AND DRAW: Place strips of paper in a basket after writing words depicting the Christmas Story such as manger, angels, stars, shepherds, wise men, Mary, and Joseph. The children will then take turns drawing the word on the slip of paper that they chose. Provide children with construction paper

and markers, glitter, and glue. Children will tape their picture on a long wall paper runner that is taped to the wall. Encourage the children to tape their picture in the proper spot so the picture will tell the story of keeping CHRIST in Christmas.

HEART ORNAMENTS: Give the children supplies to cut out red paper hearts and hang them on the classroom Christmas tree with red ribbon. Each heart should have words from today's lesson on it such as PREPARE, REPENT, BE READY, KING OF HEAVEN IS NEAR, or KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS. If there is no Christmas tree in the classroom, the teacher can cut out a large green poster board triangle and place on the wall for the children to hang their heart ornaments.

BE READY CHRISTMAS CARDS: Have the children cut out old Christmas cards and make a card of their own on folded construction paper, with words from today's lesson to BE READY FOR THE CHRIST of Christmas, or other ideas from the children. Have Christmas stickers available, as well as markers and glitter glue for decoration.

CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS BELLS: Give the children a bell that has been traced and cut out. Trim the bell with ribbon or yarn or Christmas string. Write words from today's Bible lesson to KEEP CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS. Hang the bells from the wall or the ceiling in the classroom.