

1st Sunday Advent Year B

The Waiting Place

Theme: Celebrating Jesus' birth and waiting for his return. 1st Sunday in Advent

Object: Book: "Oh, the Places You'll Go" by Dr. Seuss

Scripture: Mark 13:24-37 **Key Verses:** "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' " Mark 13:35-37 (NIV)

I have heard that if you live to be seventy years old, you will spend three years of your life just waiting. Waiting in line at the grocery store, waiting in the doctor's office, waiting for lunch to be ready, waiting for recess time at school.

In his book, "Oh, the Places You'll Go," Dr. Seuss talks about a place called "the waiting place." He describes it as a useless place where people are just waiting.

Waiting for a train to go
or a bus to come, or a plane to go
or the mail to come, or the rain to go
or the phone to ring, or the snow to snow
or waiting around for a Yes or No
or waiting for their hair to grow.
Everyone is just waiting.

I don't particularly like waiting, do you? I don't like it, but I don't know of any way to avoid it. We all have to spend some time in this "waiting place" that Dr. Seuss talks about, but I don't think it has to be a useless place. While we are waiting, life goes on, and we must make good use of our time. What can we do? Well, we could read a good book or call a friend on the cell phone. We could make a list of things we need to do today or, we could even study for our weekly spelling test. Well, maybe that's going a bit too far, but there are many things we can do besides just waiting.

Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent means "to come." Do you know what's coming? Of course, Christmas is coming. This is an exciting time, but it may also be a difficult time of waiting -- especially for children. Waiting for the day when you can open the gifts that you see under the tree. What can we do to make this time of waiting for Christmas more than just a useless time in the waiting place? Well, we can think about the true meaning of Christmas. We can think about Jesus and his love. We can think about giving instead of receiving. We can enjoy all of beautiful music and the decorations of the season. When we do those things, we will find joy in the waiting place.

We are waiting for Christmas, but we are also waiting for something else. We are waiting for Jesus' return. He told us that he would come again and he told us to watch and be ready for him. What should we do while we are waiting? We should worship and praise him, love and serve him, and share his love with others. When we are doing those things, we will be ready for his return, and we will find joy in the waiting place.

Heavenly Father, as we spend time in this waiting place, we look forward with great joy to the celebration of Jesus' birth and to the day when he comes again. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CELEBRATION BALLOONS. Let children blow up red, green and white balloons to "celebrate Jesus' birth".

BIBLE VERSE BULBS: Give children pictures of Christmas bulbs to trace, cut out and decorate with glitter or flocking. Write parts of today's Bible verse on the bulbs and hang them on a large green poster-board tree (either with the branches in the drawing or just a triangle). Children will enjoy learning their Bible verse from their own designed bulbs.

CANDLE ART: Give children small rectangle strips of paper to glue to a piece of construction paper to look like candles. Children can draw the yellow flame or be given cut out yellow flames to glue on their art as well. Give children ideas of words to write on their candles, such as CELEBRATE JESUS' BIRTH, or WATCH FOR HIS RETURN, or GREAT JOY, etc.

MANGER BUILDING: Give children supplies to build a manger scene, and let them be creative to make their very own manger. Supplies can be chenille wire, building blocks, craft sticks, molding clay, etc.

PAINTING A JOY CHART: Children can work together to make their JOY chart or they could EACH make a JOY chart to take home. The children can PAINT the word "JOY" in the middle of their paper and use smaller paint brushes for words around the chart such as Worship, Praise, Love, Serve, Share God's love, etc.

HAPPY FACES: Give each child a very LARGE CIRCLE for them to decorate and draw their happy face of their choice. For younger children, the teacher can have the face "lightly" drawn on the big happy face for the little ones to trace. Let children be creative and write JOY along the edges, or on the mouth, or in the eyes, etc. Around the edges of the happy face, children can write "Jesus is coming back"! Yarn for hair, to glue on the top of their happy face, will make their little faces come alive!

CHRISTMAS IS...BANNER: Provide a long piece of white paper for children to decorate in ways that will help them to anticipate Christmas and to know the TRUE MEANING of Christmas, such as JESUS IS CHRISTMAS, or GIVING INSTEAD OF RECEIVING, CELEBRATE JESUS' BIRTH, or WORSHIP AND PRAISE JESUS, SERVE AND LOVE JESUS, SHARE HIS LOVE!

BALLOON POPPING: At the end of the class, let children play a balloon popping game as balloons from the first activity of this lesson, are divided evenly among the children. When the teacher says, POP, the children will see which team can pop ALL of their red, green and white balloons, the quickest! The first team to complete popping all of the balloons can have first pick of some Christmas Hershey kisses or other treat. After all the teams have picked up all of their balloon pieces and thrown them away, they can all share in a treat and talk about the JOY and celebrating in our story today!

Ready for His Return



Theme: Watching for Christ's return. First Sunday of Advent, Year B

Object: A regular calendar and an Advent calendar (see below)

Scripture: Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. Mark 13:33 (NIV)

I am sure all of you know what this is. (Hold up a calendar.) That's right, it is a calendar. Most of us use a calendar like this one every day. Sometimes we write important things that we want to remember on the calendar. Today I also have another type of calendar. (Hold up the Advent calendar.) Have you ever seen a calendar like this one? It is called an Advent calendar. Advent means the arrival of an event or a person. Now, what event or person do you think we might be looking forward to at this time of year? Yes! The Advent calendar helps us to count down the days until Christmas and the celebration of Jesus' birthday.

Since some of you might not have seen an Advent calendar before, let me show you how it works. As you see, there is a picture of a manger scene and above it, there are twenty-five numbered stars. Today, we

are going to color the manger scene. We'll color the stable, Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, the angel, shepherd, the king, and the animals. Then, beginning tomorrow, we will color one star each day, starting with star number one. Finally, we will color the large star that is right above the manger. That's when we will know it's Christmas day, the day we've all been waiting for!

While we are waiting for Christmas, we should remember that we are also waiting for something else. We are waiting for Jesus to come again. When will that be? We don't know. We don't have a calendar that tells us when he will come again, but he promised that he would. Jesus said that even the angels in heaven don't know the day or hour of his return. Well, what should we do? We should do what the Bible tells us to do, "Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come."

What else should we be doing while we are waiting and watching for Jesus to return? We should be worshiping him, praising him, serving him, loving him, and loving one another as he commanded us to do. When we do those things, we will be ready, no matter when he comes.

Dear Father, we are watching and waiting for Christmas when we celebrate the day that you sent your Son, Jesus, to earth. We are also waiting for him to come again. Help us to be ready. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

BE READY RELAY: Divide the children into groups and tell the children to BE READY to do whatever is called out to do, but to be WATCHING the teacher for new commands when they're least expecting it (such as walking around the outside of the room area, march with hands over their heads, turn in circles, walk quickly to get a cookie treat, count the Bibles in the room, etc).

MUSICAL CHAIRS: Play the musical chairs game and tell children to be alert and watching for a free chair and listening carefully for the music to stop and to be on GUARD!

READY, SET, GO GAME: Divide the children into 2 or more teams. Have a poster board for each group to run to when the teacher says, READY, SET, GO! Children will run as a group to their poster board area (with the poster board color that the teacher has given to each group). The children will work as a team to try to fill in the missing words of the Bible verse that the teacher has written out for them. When the group thinks that they can SAY the Bible verse together, they will stand and shout -- WE'RE READY!! Give each group an opportunity to say the verse together to their other classmates!

CHRISTMAS DRAWINGS ALERT: Let the children number off and the first child will begin by drawing a part of the Christmas story on a large poster board or the chalk board until the teacher shouts --- BE READY --- CHANGE! Then the next child will run to the board and continue to draw something from the Christmas story until the teacher shouts, BE READY ---- CHANGE! This will continue until all the children have had a chance to draw something from the Christmas story (manger, Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, angels, shepherds, star) and then tell today's story and what is on the Advent Calendar.

CALENDAR CREATIONS: Give the children the supplies needed to make a December calendar to decorate with Christmas stickers and bright colored crayons. Give the children 25 star stickers to stick around the calendar. The children will take their calendar home and hang it on their bedroom walls to remind them to be "Watching for Christ's Return"!

GARLAND BIBLE: Give the children supplies to draw the outline of a large Bible. Put glue all around the edges of the Bible and put thin Christmas garland on the glue so that the Bible is outlined with Christmas garland. Write in BIG and BOLD letters, WATCH FOR CHRIST'S RETURN, and in smaller letters, older children can write today's Bible verse (Mark 13:33) on the "garland Bible"! Younger children could glue on a small piece of paper that the teacher has written today's Bible verse.

WATCHING AND WAITING CHART: Give each child a STAR shape to cut out. (The star can be two triangles, putting one upside down and the other right side up to form a 6 pointed star). Write WATCH AND WAIT in the middle of the star to hang in the classroom. On each POINT of the star, write ways to watch and wait, such as worshiping, Praising, Serving, Loving Him, Loving One Another, and on the 6th point, write JESUS IS COMING AGAIN! Add glue and glitter around the edges of the Star and add a piece of yarn for hanging!