

2nd Sunday Advent Year B

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

Scripture

A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain." Isaiah 40:3-4 (NIV) Also, Mark 1:2-3

Does your family have any travel plans during the Christmas holidays? Do any of you ever go to visit out-of-town family or friends? We did when I was a little boy.

Some of my fondest childhood memories of the Christmas holidays were times when we went to visit my grandmother. I don't know how many times we made that trip to my grandmother's house, but there was always some part of the highway that was being repaired. There were signs that said, "Slow Down -- Construction Ahead" and we would see road graders, gravel trucks, and a lot of men working on the highway. I always thought to myself, "What a nice highway this will be when it is finished and there is no more construction." That was many years ago and I still travel that highway from time to time. Guess what? They are still working on it! You see, by the time they finish working on one part of the highway, there is another place that needs to be repaired! Even some part they have repaired before may need to be repaired again. They will never finish working on it.

The childhood memory of those holiday trips to grandmother's house reminds me of the story of the first Christmas. The Bible tells us that God sent a man named John to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus. John told the people to make a highway in the desert for their God. He told them to make the crooked ways straight and to make the rough places smooth. John wasn't really talking about building a highway upon which Jesus could travel. He was really talking about the hearts of the people. He was calling people to prepare their hearts to receive Jesus so that he could walk among them and live with them.

During this special season of the year when we celebrate Jesus' birth and look forward to the day when he will come again, you and I need to make sure that we are ready. We need to look into our hearts and ask God to make our crooked ways straight and smooth out the rough places. Oh, I know, we have done it before, but it is just like that highway to grandmother's house, the job is never finished. Every day we do things that we shouldn't do and we need to ask God to forgive us and to make our hearts clean.

Dear Father, prepare our hearts for Jesus' return. Make our crooked ways straight and our rough places smooth. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Activities

UNDER CONSTRUCTION BLOCK BUILDING:

Give children blocks to build things as they enter the classroom. Make comments about their building projects and let children know that our lesson today is about making crooked ways straight and making the rough places smooth and preparing our HEARTS too, to receive Jesus!

HIGHWAY BANNER:

Give children long pieces of paper to draw highways and roads and mountains and valleys on. After the highway banner is drawn, encourage children to write today's Bible verse on the roads and up and over the mountains, etc.

"CROOKED PATHS" WALK:

Follow the leader/teacher up and down and around and on a crooked path walk to look for HEARTS along the pathway. Each heart will have sections of the Bible verse on it. As children reach the end of their walk, they'll put the hearts in order to learn their Bible verse by memory.

SANDPAPER BLOCK ART:

Give each child a piece of rough wood or a little block and a small piece of sandpaper to sand the block of wood and make it smooth. Paint or use a marker to write on each block of wood, "Make our crooked ways straight and our rough places smooth."

MOUNTAIN AND VALLEY'S GAME:

Divide children into groups of 2. One will draw a mountain and the other will try to make the mountain look like a valley. The other children will draw a valley and their partner will draw a mountain over the valley, or draw some rough ground and the other child will try to make it look level! This can be done in turns like tic-tac-toe until the teacher says STOP! Then have discussion about our Bible verse today and see how many children remember the parts of the verse. It will be fun for the children to remember different parts of the verse and to just say THEIR own part and then put it all together!

"BIBLE VERSE" ROUND:

Each child reads one word of the Bible verse (from the chalkboard) and then the next child will say the next word and keep going, faster and faster. If someone says the wrong word, they sit down until the last one is standing. The final child standing will shout out “PREPARE THE WAY” JESUS IS COMING!!!

A Messenger Sent From God

Explain to the kids that each time they hear the bell, they are to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”

Before the days of printed newspapers, town criers walked through the streets ringing a bell. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”) Then they shouted out the news from every street corner announcing the time of town meetings and other items of interest to the people. Even after printed newspapers came along, you could walk the streets of a city and hear the voice of a newspaper boy crying out, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it!" Then he would shout out the day's headlines, hoping to get the attention of those who were passing by so that they would buy a newspaper. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”)

Today, people get the news in many different ways. Think for a moment about how your family gets the news. (Allow time, and then invite children to shout out any answers.) Some rely on the newspaper and they read it from cover to cover, some get the news from the Internet, others get the news by listening to the radio. Probably the main way that people get the news today is by watching television. No matter how you get the news, it is important to know what is going on in the world around us. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”)

Long before Jesus was born, God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to tell how He would spread the news of the coming of the Messiah. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”) This is what God said through Isaiah, "I will send my messenger to prepare the way. He will be a voice of one crying in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the coming of the Lord! Clear the road for him.'"

John the Baptist was the messenger that God chose to bring this good news to His people. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with “Hear ye, hear ye!”) John was a very unusual man who wore clothes made of camel hair with a leather belt around his waist. His favorite food was locusts and wild honey. Everyone has something

unique or unusual about themselves. What's that for you? (Invite kids to shout out interesting things they like to eat or funny styles of clothes they like to wear like mismatched socks.) John traveled around in the desert preaching that people should repent of their sins and turn to God. Repent means to tell God when you know you have done wrong and stop doing those wrong things. When people listening to John the Baptist confessed their sins, he baptized them in the Jordan River. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with "Hear ye, hear ye!")

John the Baptist was very popular and had a great following, but he always told the people about Jesus. "Someone is coming soon who is greater than I am," he said. "He is so much greater that I am not even worthy to stoop down and untie the straps on His sandals." Yes, John was faithful in bringing the news to the people. (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with "Hear ye, hear ye!")

It's been 2,000 years since God sent His Son, but God still needs messengers to spread the news. This year, as we celebrate our Savior's birth, won't you be God's messenger to share the good news with others? (Ring bell and wait for kids to respond with "Hear ye, hear ye!")

Activities

Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8

PREPARE THE PATH MARCH: Set up an obstacle course by placing objects around the room which the children will have to navigate around as they follow a designated leader around the room. Give each child a small bell to ring as they march behind the leader through the objects that are in their path. The leader and children will pick up the items to clear the path as they march. The teacher or a designated helper will be at the end of the marching line putting things back in the path as the march continues and the PATH will have to be cleared each time they come to something in the way. Tell children that someone in today's lesson "prepared the way" for Jesus' coming!

SANDAL RELAY: Divide the class into teams. You will need a sandal for each team. There will be one person from each team at the SANDAL line. The teammates will take turns running to the SANDAL line where they will take off one shoe and the leader will quickly put on a sandal and hook or tie the latch. Then the team player will take off the sandal and put their own shoe back on and run back to the line so the next team player can continue the game. Explain to the

children that sandals are mentioned in today's lesson and that they should listen very carefully to what is said about sandals.

BELL ART: Give children a sheet of construction paper and a marker to draw and cut out a large bell. Let them add glitter glue around the edges of the bell. On the bells, the children can write SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS! Punch a hole at the top of the bell and put a piece of yarn through it to create a hanger.

BELL NECKLACES: The teacher will provide a jingle bell and a piece of red or green ribbon for the children to make a bell necklace to wear during class. Tell the children that whenever the teacher says, "PREPARE THE WAY" they should ring their bells.

BELL ROPE: Give the children a sheet of construction paper with the shape of a bell drawn on it for the children to cut out. Let the children decorate their bells and encourage them to write the names of people who need to hear about JESUS. Have a special prayer time to pray for all the names on their bells! The children will then attach their bells on a strand of Christmas garland using yarn or ornament hangers. The BELL ROPE will then be hung on a wall in the classroom.

BELL BIBLE VERSE: Give each child a large bell cut out of construction paper to decorate and write today's Bible verse around the edges of the bell and PREPARE THE WAY in the middle of the bell. Hang the bells by Christmas ribbon around the room, or let the children take them home to hang for decoration and a remembrance about sharing JESUS during this Christmas season!

SING A SONG: Sing RING THE BELLS, or GOSPEL BELLS (sung to the tune of Jingle Bells ,ie... Gospel bells, Gospel Bells, ring them all the day, ring them while you're at your work and while you're at your play! Hey! Gospel bells, Gospel bells, ring them all the day, ring-out-the-news that Jesus Christ is born on Christmas Day!)

SNACK: Bell shaped cookies that the children can decorate with icing.

Song: "Prepare the Way"

[Words and Music](#) (pdf)

[MP3](#) Accompaniment Track