

Third Sunday of Advent

Lead lives filled with goodness

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist told the people to ask for God's forgiveness for their sins and to change their hearts. They did not know how to please God or to make him welcome in their lives, so John showed them the way.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

As you light the altar candles and three candles on the Advent wreath, sing together the alternate Candle Song.

SORRY

Christmas is a time of joy and peace, and for wishing goodwill to everyone. As Matthew reminds us in his Gospel:

If you are about to come before God to pray and then remember that you have quarreled with someone, go away first, settle your argument, and make your peace with them.

(Matthew 5:23-26)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (LUKE 3:10-18)

The people listened to John the Baptist's message and asked him, "What must we do to be ready for the Lord?" John answered, "Be generous and kind and always ready to share whatever you have with others. Be honest and fair and be happy with whatever you have."

The people grew excited and many began to think that John might be the Messiah promised by God. So John told them, "I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. He is filled with the power of God, and I am not good enough to undo his sandals."

DISCUSSION

The crowds wanted to be ready to welcome the Lord. John told them that they should be:

—generous and kind;

—willing to share whatever they had;

—honest and fair; and

—content with whatever they had.

John came to prepare the people to listen to and act upon Jesus' message of love. The words of John the Baptist are just as important for us today as they were for the crowds long ago, so that we, too, will be ready for the Lord.

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent, and we have lit three candles in the wreath. Today's candle is pink; does anyone know why it is pink? The pink candle is a symbol of joy as we rejoice and look forward to Christmas. The crowds listening to John the Baptist were filled with excitement and joy as they prepared and waited for the coming of their savior.

Christmas is a very special time of year, an important celebration of Christ's birthday. Jesus came to share his love and happiness with everyone, and we try to do the same by giving presents and sending cards to each other. There are many people who spend Christmas alone or unhappy.

Think about the words of John the Baptist. Can you suggest some ways we can put them into practice this Christmas? Here are some ideas:

—by giving what we can to local charities;

—by bringing a card or small gift to someone who lives alone; or

—by giving the toys which we have outgrown to local children's homes.

(Encourage the children to share any suggestions and ideas.)

ACTIVITY

Continue decorating the Jesse tree using the figures on the next page, or add scenes to the Advent frieze. Discuss the work completed so far with the children.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

As Christmas draws closer,

help us to remember anyone

who is sick or lonely at this time of year;

the homeless and sad;

those who are hungry or at war.

May the peace and joy of Christmas

reach out and touch their lives.

