

Bar. 5:1–9
or Mal. 3:1–4
Luke 1:68–79
Phil. 1:3–11
Luke 3:1–6

Living toward God’s Reign

Goal for the Session *Youth will explore and commit to living according to the justice modeled in Zechariah’s prophecy.*

■ P R E P A R I N G F O R T H E S E S S I O N

Focus on Luke 1:68–79

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Robin Gallaher Branch

Although Zechariah’s is quite possibly the most endearing, heartwarming prophecy over a child in the biblical text, what makes the prophecy so compelling is that Zechariah is not primarily concerned about himself or about his miraculous son. Instead, Zechariah’s prophecy exalts God, points to the dominant work of the Dayspring, and foretells God’s tender mercies on upcoming generations of God’s covenant people. Zechariah conveys a sense of wonder that he is part of it. He—with all his arrogance and unbelief—basks now in the love, forgiveness, mercy of God.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Rosetta E. Ross

Zechariah identifies John as one who makes way for the work of the incarnation by delivering knowledge about salvation and forgiveness. Offered because of God’s “tender mercy,” the forgiveness coming through the incarnation will make it possible to see differently. New sight, resulting from the dawn breaking in and giving light, insinuates possible paradigm shifts and the reversals identified with Luke’s Gospel. Perhaps those identified as enemies earlier in the song may become friends. In fact, Luke’s Gospel and Acts feature many such reconciliations—the conversions of Zacchaeus and Paul and the openness to Gentiles being typical.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Randle R. Mixon

This ancient hymn is set in two parts. The first deals with social redemption, salvation of the people; the second addresses more personal redemption, salvation of the soul. Repentance that leads to forgiveness is to be John’s message, repentance and redemption that are both personal and corporate. We now look deeply into our hearts to see what changes may be needed, to understand where we must turn around and head in a different direction in our lives. We also ask where repentance and redemption are needed in the social and political realities of the world in which we live.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Randle R. Mixon

Zechariah’s hymn makes clear that true peace—in our hearts and in our world—will come only when we are right with God, when we have laid aside our own ambitions and passions, or at least turned them over to God. The condition of souls and the condition of creation is troubled by self-centeredness, self-absorption, and failure to understand what is available in true communion with God, what God has offered us in the ancient covenant and offers us still in the coming of Jesus, the Christ. Though we may live in between times, when we do not yet fully walk in the way of peace, Zechariah promises that his little boy, John, will prepare us to bridge those times as we live toward God’s reign in hope.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:68–79

Focus on Your Teaching

Adolescents, on the whole, want to make a positive difference in the world. The expectations of parents and others can have a significant influence on the dreams and ambitions they hold for their own lives. This week's focus scripture offers youth an opportunity to consider the ways in which they can be prophets and play a role in making the world a better place. In popular culture, prophecy is tied to predictions of the future. Youth can be helped to understand that prophesy in the Bible is not about foretelling, but about announcing the way of God's reign in the world.

Holy God, may my words and actions help to inspire the youth in my care to make the world a better place. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Advent wreath
- Advent candles
- lighter
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- colored markers
- copies of Resource Sheet 2
- tapers
- Internet-connected device

For Responding:

- option 1: paper, markers
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 1, colored markers
- option 3: large cardboard box, poster board, markers, used magazines, art materials

For Music Connection:

- Internet-connected device

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, contact youth and ask them each to bring a baby photo of themselves; bring one of your baby photos and those of your children or other significant people in your life. For option 3 in Responding, obtain information about any Advent congregational mission project. A new project may need to be cleared with church leaders in advance.

Greet youth as they arrive and collect their baby photos. Place all of the photos in the middle of the meeting space. Invite youth to gather around them and have fun trying to identify each person. Talk together briefly about any experiences they have had of siblings, cousins, or friends' siblings as babies. Then invite youth to imagine what their parents might have been feeling before their births. Ask:

✠ What are some expectations, hopes, and dreams that parents might have for their children?

Explain that today's biblical story is about a father's blessing and hope, spoken at the birth of his son.

Gather the participants around the Advent wreath. Ask a participant to light two of the purple candles and pray:

Holy One, on this second Sunday of Advent we remember that we are called to be the light of your hope and your justice in the world. Amen.

The House of David: God promised King David his family would rule forever. "House" refers to the lineage and legacy of David. Abraham: God made a covenant (agreement) with Abraham that he and Sarah would be the parents of a great nation.

In biblical times prophets were considered messengers from God. Explain that John grew up to be John the baptizer and was seen as a prophet.

EXPLORING

Recall that in the previous session Jeremiah spoke words of hope and promise. Note that another prophet speaks words of hope and promise in this session.

Introduce Zechariah (a priest serving in the temple in Jerusalem) and his wife Elizabeth (childless for many years, and a relative of Mary, mother of Jesus). Explain that Zechariah had a vision while serving in the temple; an angel said that he will have a son; Zechariah questions this possibility and is rendered mute for the next nine months. Distribute Bibles and ask for one or more volunteers to read the next part of the story, Luke 1:57–66. Ask:

✧ What was surprising about the naming of the baby?

At this point, Zechariah gains speech. Read Luke 1:67 and then invite volunteers to take turns reading a verse each from verses 68 to 75.

Explain that the beginning of Zechariah's prophecy was speaking about God.

Discuss the following questions together:

✧ What does Zechariah say about what God has promised?

✧ What does Zechariah say will happen when the "mighty savior" comes?

Zechariah then speaks a special blessing and prophecy for his son John. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (And You, Child . . .) and colored markers for the participants to highlight words and phrases in Luke 1:76–79 that describe what John will do with his life. Then read the four verses aloud, inviting youth to join in by speaking their highlighted words and phrases.

Note that the words spoken by Zechariah can also be words for Christians today, who are called to tell of God's way of peace and justice in the world. Invite youth to think of times when they have acted like prophets, speaking up or acting on a particular issue. Go to bit.ly/WEfounders and watch the video. Distribute Resource Sheet 2 (WE Day) and pencils. Have youth talk about the questions with partners, making notes about their conversation to report. To find more information, direct the youth to WE.org. Invite comments on WE Day and the ways youth have and are changing the world.

RESPONDING

Choose one or more of the following learning activities:

- 1. Prophet Poems** Youth will write acrostic poems as a way to ponder ways they can commit to live toward God's reign as described in Zechariah's prophecy. Ask participants to look again at the words and phrases from Luke 1:76–79 highlighted during Exploring and think of ways that they could prepare the way, practice forgiveness, give light, and so on. Distribute sheets of paper and have them print the letters of their names vertically down the left side of their pages. Ask them to use each letter to start a word or phrase that speaks of their commitment to live toward God's reign. Have them choose a line to focus on each week for the rest of Advent.

EASY
PREP

- 2. Star Reflection** Youth will explore what it would mean to have the words “And you, child, will be called. . . .” spoken to them at their birth. How might they be called to live out the justice modeled in Zechariah’s prophecy? Have them retrieve Resource Sheet 1 (And You, Child . . .) and colored markers. Point out the crib (representing birth) and the star (representing dreams, hopes, and aspirations). On the zigzag line have them draw a stick figure (representing self) on the pathway of life. Around this figure have them draw speech bubble shapes and add notes about some expectations their parents and others might have of them (in one color) and some of the things they feel called to do and be (in another color). Along the pathway invite them to write a prayer, asking for God’s guidance in their life.
- 3. Advent Service** Many congregations participate in a church-wide mission project during Advent. Invite youth to think of ways they can proclaim and work for God’s justice through the congregation’s mission project. If there is not one, provide materials about local mission groups and together choose one to support. Form three groups: one to decorate a collection box, one to design a publicity poster with information about the chosen mission, and one to write a short piece for the congregational newsletter or bulletin inviting church members to support the project. Ask for a volunteer to make an announcement about the project at next week’s worship services.

CLOSING

Gather around the Advent wreath and the two lit candles. Give each person a taper candle and ask youth to take turns naming something that could bring God’s peace and justice into the world. After a situation is named, the speaker lights the taper candle from a lit candle.

Close the session with prayer:

O God, help us to speak your words of hope in our world. Help us to be ready to bring light to those who sit in darkness. Guide our feet into the way of peace. Amen.

Extinguish all of the candles.

■ ENHANCEMENT

MUSIC CONNECTION

During Advent many churches focus on four different themes in their readings, rituals, and music. The theme for the second week of Advent is usually “Peace.” Invite youth to watch both of the music videos of the song “Let There Be Peace.”

- ✠ Zechariah spoke words of blessing and prophecy over his child. In the first video (Angel Choir) notice the images of children: What words of peace and blessing would you like to say to these children? What hope would you like to offer?
- ✠ In the second video, which quotations about peace attract you? Why?

The Angel Choir video:
tinyurl.com/noeb24
Vince Gill video:
tinyurl.com/nquogv8

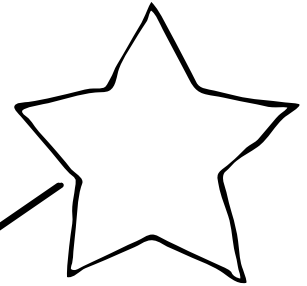
December 5, 2021

Living toward
God's Reign

Teaching the Revised Common Lectionary
FEASTING on the **WORD**
CURRICULUM

Youth
Resource Sheet 1

And You, Child . . .

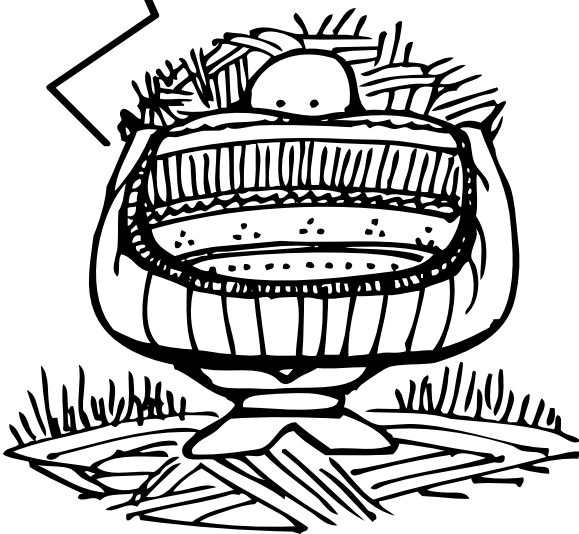


Luke 1:76–79

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.

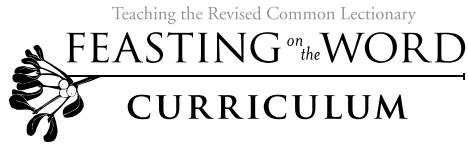
By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

—New Revised Standard Version



December 5, 2021

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Youth
Resource Sheet 2

WE Day

“Together, We Can Make a Difference.”

How would you describe WE Day to a friend at school?

To your parents?

How did watching the video “Who Are Craig Kielburger & Marc Kielburger? - The WE Movement & WE Charity” make you feel?

What kinds of things have you or you and a group of friends done to make a difference?

Where would you like to make a difference?

What might you do to make a difference?

Need some ideas? Explore the short videos at www.we.org/en-US/about-we/we-charity/ on the WE.org website.