

Advent – As Jesus was sent, so are we December 1, 2019

Overarching theme: Living a year in God's presence through the practice of following Jesus.

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point: In this Advent season, we see how Jesus was sent from the Father to bring onto earth the start of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was sent, and in that example, Jesus sends his disciples out into the world to deliver the Kingdom of God by what is presented, said, and done.

Start point: The Gospel of John was the last narrative written out of the four Gospels, sometime after 70 A.D. and before 90 A.D. The Gospel narratives were probably written to help people remember the story from actual witnesses. Most likely, decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the stories about Jesus had morphed into half-truths. Each Gospel had many similar stories but with a unique perspective from the eye witness. The Gospel of John emphasized Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. The people that received this writing were mature Christians who were struggling with the influence of the Jews who did not see Jesus as the Christ. So, the writer was encouraging them to see Jesus as the divine one who came from God the Father. The first chapter highlights the idea that Jesus was preexistent (verses 1:1-14). Through the whole Gospel of John, Jesus is referred to as the divine one.

The book of Jeremiah focuses on the prophetic mission of Jeremiah which started with the thirteenth year of King Josiah (about 627 BC) and finished in the eleventh year of King Zedekiah (586 BC). The time of its writing we do not have any clear evidence, but the stories are from the timeline given earlier. The book gives an account of the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah, whose personal life and struggles are shown along with a narrative of the most tumultuous times in the history of Judah and Israel. The empire of Babylon was on the move, as was prophesied, and eventually ruled the territory of Judah. The meaning of Jeremiah's name is uncertain, but may include "The Lord exalts" and "The Lord establishes," but a more likely proposal is "The Lord throws," either in the sense of "hurling" the prophet into a hostile world or of "throwing down" the nations in divine judgment for their sins (The International Bible Society). Jeremiah's contemporaries were possibly Habakkuk and Obadiah with Zephaniah having come before. Jeremiah's ministry was to prepare Judah for the impending invasion and then how to move past it to what God would do to restore them. In the midst of disaster and

struggle, hope can prevail and God can restore. Jeremiah, like Jesus, was sent to give a message of hope about God's work of grace in the world. If only, the people would choose to change their ways and receive it.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (NRSV)

¹⁴ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ¹⁵ In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

John 1:1-10 (NRSV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸ He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹ The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.

Questions to Ponder:

What jumps out at you from this passage?

What is God's promise here?

What is the righteous branch? And who is David?

What will happen from this righteous Branch?

What is the Word and the light? How does it relate to the righteous Branch?

Understanding who the Word is, what do verses 1-5 reveal about the Word?

How does the passage of John fulfill the hope of what God will do in the passage from Jeremiah?

Commentary: Written by Bentley Foster

John 1:1-10: The purpose of John's gospel is to record Jesus' signs so that readers would believe in him. "The Word became flesh" became the central focal point of early church fathers' mediation and study. John presented the Incarnation – God manifest in the flesh – as the foundation of the gospel.

Key terms:

- v. 4 Life and Light
- v. 5 Darkness
- v. 7 Witness
- v. 9 True and the World

Meaning:

- v. 1 Word (Logos – speaking, a message, or words)
- v. 2 Word was with God – helps clarify doctrine of Trinity. Word is eternal; in relationship to God (Father); and Word is God.
- v. 3 All creation made by the Word in relation with the Father and the Spirit.
- v. 4 Life is man's most important asset. John affirmed his life in Christ. Man's physical and spiritual life come from Christ. In scripture: Light – emblem of God
Darkness – denotes death, ignorance, sin, and separation from God.
- v. 5 Light invades the dominion of darkness. Satan will resist, but will be unable to frustrate its power. The "Word" is victorious in spite of the opposition.
- v. 6-8 Witness of John the Baptist
 - sent from God, this is the secret of his importance
- v. 7 Witness: John sent to be an additional pointer to the truth of Jesus
- v. 8 John great, but he is not the Light
- v. 9-13 Coming of the Light
- v. 9 Christ gives light to every man. Not universal salvation being taught here, but rather that Christ shines on each person either in salvation or in illuminating him with regard to sin and the coming judgment.
- v. 10 World – means world of men and human society now in disobedience to God and under ruler-ship of Satan. "Logos" came, but mankind did not recognize its maker. Failure to recognize him was not because God's nature was hidden, but rather because of human ignorance and blindness, caused by sin (John 12:37)

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Jeremiah singled out both the royal (v. 15) and religious (16) aspects of God's restoration. Both vital to Israel's existence as God's covenant community. The covenants mentioned a phase, "the days are coming," 16 times here. Negatively, it referred to coming destruction of Judah and surrounding nations. 9 times it points to a future period of blessing for Israel when:

- a) Nation restored from captivity
- b) Righteous branch of David will be ruling over a monarchs
- c) Nations experiencing peace and prosperity in the land
- d) New Covenant with its cleansing of sin will be in effect
- e) City of Jerusalem will be rebuilt as Holy City to never be destroyed again.

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

The general idea in both passages is that God is up to something, so what do you think God is up to now? In your life.

How does *hope* work in your life? For what do you hope in?

How can we help one another to be a hopeful people?

Activity of for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Focus on what is your hope this week. Christ came to show hope in the world, that God was seeking relationship with creation. It is through Christ that we have a grace filled personal relationship with God.

Romans 5:1-2 (NRSV)

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

Romans 5:5-6 (NRSV)

and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

John 17:3 (NRSV)

And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.