

“ADVENT AND SPACE”

(December Lesson)

For The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta

By Sally Ulrey

Key verses: Selected Advent Scriptures about light, salvation, hope

Objective: To compare being lost in the darkness of space to the idea of the Israelites’ waiting for the Messiah, so we can better understand what Jesus’ coming means for us.

The Set up: Minimal

The Plan:

- **Hook:** Lost in Space: Apollo 13 (20 mins)
 - Using selected clips from the movie Apollo 13, tell the story of being lost in space, not knowing if they’d make it home, and having to hold on to hope.
 - Play a song called “Daylight” by Brave Saint Saturn, which will help make the connection from Apollo 13 (seeing the sun and making it home) to Jesus and Advent.
- **Book:** Advent Scriptures: Light & Hope (20 mins)
 - Using a version of the Service for Light (BCP 109) adapted for Advent (see below), go through many of the Advent Scriptures on the themes of light, salvation, and hope.
- **Look:** Discussion (10 mins)
 - Using questions on the themes of Advent, discuss when youth have experienced those in their own lives
- **Took:** Advent Prayers (5 mins)
 - Close in prayer, and pass out Advent Devotion books for use at home
 - Optional addition: provide them with supplies to make an Advent Wreath to take home

The Supplies:

- Copy of lesson
- AV Equipment (this working well is a must)
- Advent Wreath (candles, matches)
- Copies of Advent Worship Booklets
- OPTIONAL: provide them with supplies to make an Advent Wreath to take home (that means at the very least 3 purple/royal blue votive candles and 1 pink candle per person)

*“Advent and Space” by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

Lost in Space: Apollo 13 (Hook, 20 mins)

In this section, you'll tell the story of Apollo 13, using clips from the movie. The story is about how the crew starts out hopeful for their journey, but things go horribly wrong, their lives are in danger, and they don't know if they can ever be saved and come home, or if they will die lost in space. We'll use this to illustrate what the Israelites were experiencing in waiting for the Messiah, and then use it to talk about what Jesus' coming means to the youth on a personal level.

(Notes: For added impact, I get the room as dark as I can and project this on the ceiling, with the kids lying down on the floor. Also, you may want to be prepared to mute the ads that pop up before basically every clip...)

Tell the story of Apollo 13 and being lost in space using the script and clips below:

- Say: We're going to go over the true story of Apollo 13, which was an American space mission to land on the moon (not the first one; one later on). However, the crew experienced a disastrous explosion that put their lives in jeopardy. This is a story about waiting for the unknown to be known, about hope in the midst of despair, and the light of the sun in the midst of the darkness of space.
- Clip: "Houston, we have a problem" (3:22 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kAmsi05P9Uw&list=PLC7F1DD960EC4EE94&index=4>
- Say: They started their journey so full of hope for this amazing adventure to the moon. Now they are panicking, they don't know what's wrong, they can't fix the problem, and they don't even know how much danger they are in. NASA pinpoints several problems, and they don't know if they can get them home. NASA decides to try to use the moon's gravity to slingshot them around, helping to propel them back to earth. That means, they have to go into the darkness, out of radio contact, away from the sun's light. Their hopes and dreams of a moon adventure are crushed, and now they don't even know if they will see their families again.
- Clip: "Dark side of the Moon" (2:56 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwOhTnEYbqU>
- Say: They have tried to solve what problems they can. They are about to come back into the earth's atmosphere, but their trajectory is shallow, and their heat shield was damaged in the explosion, and they do not know if it will hold out, and if they will make it home.
- Clip: "It's been a privilege flying with you" (3:26 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eURy8NskhGM&list=PLC7F1DD960EC4EE94&index=10>
- Say: They don't know if they will ever make it home. You can see their despair. They want to hold on to hope of home, but they need a miracle. They may not ever see their families again...even after so long a wait, on the last leg of the journey, when they're almost there, it seems they won't make it.
- Clip: "Re-entry" (3:23 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1BPx5Wsm7k&list=PLC7F1DD960EC4EE94&index=11>

Play the song "Daylight" by Brave Saint Saturn

- Say: I want to play a song for you now that puts the feelings of this story into music, and as you pay attention to the words, I want you to look for the ways that this story of Apollo 13 relates to Jesus.
- Play: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_u7UqY8K88

*"Advent and Space" by Sally Ulrey
for the Diocese of Atlanta*

Transition: The themes of Advent are

- 1) Waiting. Waiting for the unknown to be known. The Astronauts were waiting to see if they would be saved and make it home. Israel was waiting to see if they would be saved by the Messiah.
- 2) Hope in the midst of Despair. The Astronauts were waiting and hoping for home, but were left wondering if they would come through this or if they would be saved. The Israelites had been waiting and hoping for the promised savior for years, and for the past 400 years, no Scripture was written. God was silent. They were left wondering: Is the Messiah coming? Will God come through?
- 3) Light in the midst of Darkness. For the Astronauts, especially when they were on the dark side of the moon, the sun represented the hope of home, a light in the darkness of space. In the Gospels, Jesus is called the Light of the world, the hope for us all when we were in the darkness of our sin, away from God.

We are going to look at some Scriptures traditionally read during Advent that explore the concepts of waiting, of hope in the midst of despair, and of light in the midst of darkness.

Advent Scriptures: Light and Hope (Book, 20 mins)

In this section, we'll use some of the Scriptures traditionally used during Advent to explore the Advent themes of waiting, light in the midst of darkness, and hope in the midst of despair. Using a version of the Service of Lights (BCP 109) adapted for Advent, we'll go through those themes and Scriptures. You'll need an Advent wreath, and you can light the appropriate number of candles for what week you're on.

- Pass out copies of Advent Booklet, or project the service on PowerPoint.
- Assign readers for the Scriptures OR just go around in a circle and let them pass if they don't want to read
- Reinforce the story and ideas of
 - Waiting...for the unknown to be known
 - Hope in the midst of despair
 - Light in the midst of darkness

Transition: The Israelites were waiting for salvation, holding on to the hope that God was going to come through like God promised. Let's talk about some of the things you are hoping and waiting for...

Discussion (Look, 10 mins)

In this part, we're really just trying to help them process a lot of info and the analogy of Advent and space through discussion. The goal is twofold: first, make sure they understand all the connections, and second, look at how it applies to their own lives.

1. What connections did you make between the story of the Apollo 13 (lost in space) to the story of the Israelites (lost in sin/darkness, away from God)?
2. What did you learn that you didn't know?
3. What stuck out to you most in this lesson? Why do you think it resonated with you so much? How does it relate to your life?
4. Which theme of Advent applies most to your life right now: waiting, hope, light, needing rescue? How does it relate?
5. Tell a story about waiting for the unknown to become known OR about having to hold onto hope when all seemed lost OR being rescued

Advent Devotions (Took, 5 mins)

Allow them to take the booklet home. They can do this in the evenings on their own, or as a family before dinner with an Advent Wreath. Encourage devotional participation through the season of Advent.

You could also give them Advent Wreath-Making Supplies or make one at the end of the lesson to take home with the booklet.

Close in prayer, thanking God Jesus is our light and our hope of salvation, and that God will come through like God has promised!

An Order of Worship For Evenings in Advent

Adapted from "Service of Lights" BCP 109

The house is partially dark, the candles are unlit.

Officiant: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me, and the light around me turn to night," darkness is not dark to you, O Lord; the night is as bright as the day; darkness and light to you are both alike. *Psalm 139:10-11*

Let us pray.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Lighting the Candles

O Gracious Light *Phos Hilaron*

Once the candles are lit, the people say together:

O Gracious Light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed! Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.

Scripture Readings

One or more of the following Scriptures are read.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear... So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Like the blind, we grope along the wall, feeling our way like men without eyes. At midday we stumble as if it were twilight; among the strong, we are like the dead. *Isaiah 59:2, 9-10*

The Lord looked and was displeased...He saw that there was no one, He was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so His own arm worked salvation for [us], and His own righteousness sustained [us]. *Isaiah 59:15-16*

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. *Isaiah 60:1-3*

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a light has dawned...For to us a child is born...*Isaiah 9:2*

In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. *John 1:4-5*

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness...*Isaiah 9:6-7*

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for her sins. A voice of one calling: "In the desert prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God..."*Isaiah 40:1-3*

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. *Isaiah 53:4-6*

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?...Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!" *Luke 1:41-45*

Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel. *Luke 2:29-32*

Closing Prayers

One of the following prayers, or the Lord's Prayer or another suitable prayer may be said:

Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers, creator of the changes of day and night, giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent, bestowing upon us occasions of song in the evening. As you have protected us in the day that is past, so be with us in the coming night; keep us from every sin, every evil, and every fear; for you are our light and salvation, and the strength of our life. To you be glory for endless ages. *Amen.*

OR

Almighty, everlasting God, let our prayer in your sight be as incense, the lifting up of our hands as the evening sacrifice. Give us grace to behold you, present in your Word and Sacraments, and to recognize you in the lives of those around us. Stir up in us the flame of that love which burned in the heart of your Son as he bore his passion, and let it burn in us to eternal life and to the ages of ages. *Amen.*

Blessing and Dismissal

Officiant: May the Lord bless us and keep us
People: **Amen.**

Officiant: Let us bless the Lord
People: **Thanks be to God**