



CALL IN
the
NEW TESTAMENT

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell—5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell—silence

THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

EDITORIAL STAFF

• **Rev. Dr. Roderick Belin**, Publisher
• **Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce**, Editor
• **Dr. Karma Bowen-Johnson**, Lessons
• **A.L. Stanfield**, Copy Editor
• **O. Dotson**, Graphic Designer

THE APOSTLES' CREED

• I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

• I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

CALLED THROUGH HERITAGE

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 1:1-17; HEBREWS 1

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: HEBREWS 1:1-5, MATTHEW 1:1-6, 16-17

*Key Verses: Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son.
Hebrews 1:1-2a*

Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17 (NRSV)

Hebrews 1:1-5

1 Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets,

2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

3 He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

4 having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

Matthew 1:1-6

1 An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

2 Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob,

and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers,

3 and Judah the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram,

4 and Aram the father of Aminadab, and Aminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon,

5 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse,

6 and Jesse the father of King David. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,...

16-17

16 ...and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah.

17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.

VOCABULARY

- **Ancestors** – Family from whom we descended, e.g. your parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and so on.
- **Heir** – A person entitled to possessions of a family member after their death.
- **Imprint** – An impression or mark left on something or someone else.
- **Sustain** – To strengthen or support someone or something mentally or physically.
- **Purification** – Made spiritually or physically clean.
- **Inherit** – To receive property, blessings, or other assets after someone.
- **Surrogate** – A substitute.

INTRODUCTION

Jesse and his family went to their family reunion over the summer. This was the first time in seven years that they were able to attend. There were always sports camps or band camps that happened during the past reunions that Jesse had to attend, so he was really excited that he finally got the chance to go. When the family arrived, they were greeted by some cousins and an aunt and uncle. But when they got inside of the banquet hall, there were people there that Jesse didn't recognize. They were young and old, with various hues of blackness and several different accents. Jesse wondered who they were and where they came from. Fortunately, during dinner, a presentation was made about their family and the family heritage. It so happened, the oldest person in the room that Jesse spotted was his great, great aunt who was over 100 years old.

Gigi, as everyone referred to her, was the oldest living member of their family. Her great granddaughter told the story of Gigi's family and their travel from the "deep South" in the U.S.A.

to where they were now. Gigi's parents were enslaved in the South; but, they came from the Ivory Coast of Africa. Gigi and her sisters inherited the land that her ancestors purchased right after the Emancipation. Gigi and her husband, Antonio, a Brazilian, lived there for all of their lives. Together, they built homes and started a family farming business and a local grocery store that was run by Jesse's grandparents. Gigi's story was so interestingly rich that it left an imprint on Jesse the entire time that they were there.

When Jesse got home, he asked his parents to tell him more about their family. They made a family tree and committed to make sure that they were able to go to more family activities, so that they could learn more about their rich family history.

Many of us know our family members that we see every day or at special occasions like a family reunion. Over the past decade or so, there has been a strong desire for people to find out more about their heritage. As African descendants located all over the world, it is increasingly important for us to know, because of the stripping of everything native. One fact that has resonated among African Americans is that you cannot truly know your identity without knowing who you are, or where you come from. In this lesson, we will be talking about heritage and the importance of knowing whom and whose you are.

Activity #1: Who Are You and Where Do You Come From?

Make a list of as many family members as you can, then complete as much as possible on the Family Tree worksheet. If you do not want to do your biological family, you can do your family of choice or your spiritual or church family. Present your family to your groupmates.



THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew's gospel is the only one that details the lineage of Jesus from Abraham to his birth. The story itself is more than an historic record of the family line, but also a reflective glance on how God moved in and around the lives of Jesus' ancestors. It also shows that not all of the members of Jesus' family descended from Israel, but there are members listed that were foreigners. Included were the names of significant women, one unnamed, from the Old Testament. This account is formatted intentionally. It divides the lineage in three subsections: The first fourteen generations span from Abraham to King David; the second fourteen generations span from the reign of David to the Israelites' exile in Babylon; and the final span is from the exile to the birth of Jesus.

In the letter to the Hebrews, the author talks eloquently about the relationship between God and the people. It outlines the shift that happened from the old covenant to the new. In the old covenant, God spoke to the people through the prophets. In the new covenant, Jesus, God's Son, spoke to the people. This is

God's eloquent recount of Jesus. In it, God speaks with pride about HIS Son. Jesus is described as an heir to all things created together with God, a reflection of God's glory, and an exact imprint of who God is. When Jesus was sacrificed on the cross for the purification of sin, God beams with pride about Jesus' status, location, and inheritance. God is very proud of Jesus and the work that was done on behalf of their creation.

Activity #2: Quick Questions! In the lineage of Jesus, there are five women mentioned. Four of the women are mentioned by name and one is referenced. What is her name? (Hint: She is Solomon's mother). In what chapter and verse is she first mentioned?

LIFE APPLICATION

The story of Jesus' ancestry is very important because it paints a picture of Jesus' human side (Matt. 1:1-16) along with his divine side (Heb. 1:1-5) of the family. The lineage outlined in Matthew comes from Joseph, Jesus' earthly father and Mary's husband. This is a little confusing because Jesus has two fathers: an earthly father and a heavenly father. In today's terms, Joseph would be Jesus' stepfather, who adopted Jesus and took care of Jesus' physical needs as a youngster, as a surrogate for God. However, Mary is Jesus' birth mother and as wife to Joseph, she is adopted into his lineage as well.

We all have two sides of our family. A maternal (mother's) side and a paternal (father's) side. Jesus' ancestry outlines both. Jesus, just like Jesse in the **Introduction** of this lesson, is really important. Our family history helps make us who we are. When we know where we come from and who our relatives are, it helps us to understand ourselves better. It gives us a sense of identity and explains some of our qualities, resemblances, and traits, all of which are a part of our heritage. Knowing who you are and where you come from has its benefits.

However, some of us may not have the opportunity to know that information. Even so, there is still good news. Our heritage

includes adoption into the line of Christ. Those of us who have given our lives to Christ share in Christ's lineage by means of adoption, just like Mary. We are all included in God's story, and God's family!

Activity #3: Discovery. Listen to YouTube music "We Are Here" by Alicia Keys.

SUMMARY

Our families are a beautiful kaleidoscope of our earthly and heavenly families. As the trend continues through organizations like Ancestry, African Ancestry, and television shows like *Finding Our Roots*, we can discover the regions of the African countries from which we come.

Finding our roots, finding where we come from, and who your family is, offers more than connectivity and historical reference. You may discover that you look like your great, great grandmother, or act like your Uncle Bud, or share the same passions as other members of your family through your ancestors. Not to mention, the all-important health history.

Remember this one thing, even if you don't know or find out your family history, once we give our lives to Christ, we are adopted into the family of God. That gives us a divine heritage. God can redeem us from the circumstances of our lives and give us a new identity in HIM.

Activity #4: You Are My Hope for Tomorrow. Set up a worship center in the classroom with an Advent wreath, candles, a tablecloth, and other symbols of the season of Advent. Create a symbol reflecting the significance of **PEACE** and add it to the worship center.

CLOSING DEVOTION

As we close today, let us make sure of one thing: let us make sure that we are all a part of God's family. On this second Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of **PEACE**, let us reach out to

find **PEACE** in our hearts, the hope that we have been adopted into God's family. Pray this prayer together:

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin. Please forgive me. Come into my life. I receive you as my Lord and Savior.

Now, help me to live for you the rest of this life.

In the name of Jesus, I pray.

Amen.

CALLED BEFORE BIRTH

LESSON SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-25

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: Matthew 1:18-25

Key Verses: Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:20b-21

Matthew 1:18-25 (NRSV)

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.”

24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

VOCABULARY

- **Messiah** – Jesus, the chosen, anointed deliverer of the Jews.
- **Righteous** – Acting morally and spiritually right.
- **Emmanuel** – Hebrew name meaning, “God with us.”

INTRODUCTION

Every Christmas, Jessie is a part of the Advent production his youth group puts on each year. This year’s production is all about joy. Everyone is excited about the production because it is filled with dancing, singing, and pageantry unlike any other time of the year. Jessie has been practicing for his solo for weeks, and is absolutely amazing at his craft.

The rest of the cast is equally as wonderful. Everything is coming together, the dance numbers are completely choreographed, the pageantry is second to none, the choir sings with passion and power and the costumes are perfect. During the last week of rehearsal, a new member to the youth group is introduced. Dianne and her family moved from Los Angeles and joined the church just a few months ago. When Dianne learned about the youth Advent production, she joined the chorus. Dianne has been singing since she was a little girl and was a gifted and anointed worship leader.

Before the rehearsal, Dianne was heard singing the very song Jessie was going to be singing in the production. Her rendition moved the cast to tears and as a result the director asked Jessie to allow her to have his solo part, and then later they would sing a duet. Jessie was crushed! He really wanted to sing the solo and had been practicing for a long time. However, Jessie agreed to let Dianne have it. When Jessie got home from rehearsal, his parents could tell that he was unhappy about some-

thing, but Jesse didn't mention what was making him unhappy.

The night of the production came; it was awesome! Dianne's solo was just what was needed. Afterwards, in the youth room, Mr. Steven introduced another new member, David. Mr. Steven explained that David was lost, but was compelled to give his life to Christ during the production. Then Mr. Steven pulled Jessie and Dianne aside and thanked them. Because Jessie yielded so that Dianne could sing, the entire production shifted the atmosphere and God was able to move on the heart of a lost boy. This, Mr. Steven said, was what God wanted all along: to use the production to win lost souls. Both Jessie and Dianne agreed.

Activity #1: Would You Yield? Discuss the turn of events in this story. How are they similar to the Bible story? How are they different?

THE BIBLE STORY

Jesus' birth story is unique. Mary and Joseph are engaged, and Mary is pregnant, but they both know the child is not Joseph's because they had not been intimate. Upon learning this, Joseph would have been well within his rights as a Jewish man to expose Mary and witness her execution. In those days, Mary would have been accused of adultery which carried a punishment of death by stoning.

As Joseph contemplated what Mary told him about being overcome by the spirit and impregnated, Joseph decided to send Mary away in secret. That night when Joseph slept, an angel of the Lord came to him and confirmed Mary's story. Then the angel told him not to be afraid to marry Mary, because the child that she will have will be, not just any child, but a savior to the entire world. Since Joseph was a righteous man, he did exactly what the angel of God told him to do. Joseph's obedience fulfilled the prophetic scriptures as outlined in Isaiah 9:2-7.

When the baby was born, Joseph named him *Jesus* as instructed by the angel of God. The name Jesus was a common

Hebrew name that linked the child to his humanity. Jesus was also given a spiritual name, “Emmanuel,” which means “God with us,” fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy.

Activity #2: Acting Out. In groups of three, each group will roleplay the story of Mary, Joseph, and the angel in the 21st century. **Discussion:** How would this story play out today? What are some of the emotions, feelings, or thoughts the characters may have had?

LIFE APPLICATION

God’s purposes are not always transparently evident to us. However, for those of us who trust God, whose intentions are always loving, this story will cause us to take pause. It sounds like something from reality television; however, God’s plans always have a greater purpose no matter what we think.

In this story, Joseph planned to marry Mary but had second thoughts when he found out she was pregnant. Mary’s plans were altered as well. She must have been so excited to be betrothed (engaged) to Joseph. When God chose Mary to be the mother of the savior to the world, there had to be some reservations on how Joseph and her community would respond. Nevertheless, Mary trusted God, and her plans were altered. After hearing from the angel of God, Joseph knew what he had to do. He was instructed to marry Mary, adopt and name the baby, and raise him as his own.

Following God’s plan can be nerve-racking if we let it. Always know that if it is God’s plan, it will all work out. So, the long and short of it is, we should get to know God on a deeper level, because our plans may get altered by God. Just know that God’s plan is better than ours. We just need to do what we believe God would want, even if we don’t fully understand why God wants it.

In the end, this story is good for several reasons. It established Jesus as all human and all divine. We know now that

we have an advocate who understands us and can talk to God on our behalf. That is good news because for all intents and purposes, God (Jesus) became human and was one of us. For some of us, we have even more in common with Jesus than we think. After all, Jesus was from a blended family, and was adopted by his earthly father.

Activity #3: It's All Good. Working in the same groups as before, brainstorm things that would be considered good news, and circumstances that might temper the goodness of that news. Discuss how the good news about Mary having a baby was complicated by the timing and situation.

SUMMARY

This is the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy. In honor of the joy that Jesus brings in this season, let's once again look at the Bible story. My, how things can quickly shift! What started out joyful got scary, then became a matter of life and death, and finally ended up joyous again. Jesus was soon to be born, Mary got married to Joseph, Joseph proved himself to be obedient and righteous. All of which was God's plan all along.

God uses those who are in relationship with him to bring about his purpose. If we are obedient to and spend intentional time with God, we may be better prepared when things turn upside down. At the end of the day, we will be in position to do what we believe God would want us to do, even if we don't understand why God would want it.

Activity #4: God's Great Joy. Set up a worship center in the classroom with an Advent wreath, candles, a tablecloth, and other symbols of the season of Advent. Create a symbol reflecting the significance of **JOY** and add it to the worship center.

CLOSING DEVOTION

As we close today, let us make sure of one thing; let us make sure that we are all a part of God's family. On this Third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy, let us reach out to the God who

brings us joy, and ask him to fill our hearts with joy, because we have been adopted into God's family, and given a new family line. Pray this prayer together.

Dear Lord Jesus,

Thank you for adopting me and giving me joy. This week, to our Advent wreath, we add a joyous light with hopes for Jesus growing bright. We pray and share and do our part to welcome Jesus into our hearts.

Amen.