



a Kendall Hunt Company

Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, A-C, Junior High - RCLB Lectionary



Junior High Session

Isaiah 49:1-6

Luke 1:57-66, 80

Opening Prayer

Let us pray.

God of Grace,

You reach out to us with persistence and love.

Make us your servants.

Open our hearts so that we may receive your grace.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

Opening Life Reflection

Today we focus on the birth of John the Baptist and his response to God's grace. To begin today's session, invite the young people to reflect on what it is like to help someone else do something great. Discuss:

- Have you ever helped someone else to win a championship?
- Were you ever on a team that came in second place even though every player played their best? If so, describe the experience.
- When you are with your friends do you build them up or put them down?
- When your friends are with you do they build you up or put you down?

Allow time for discussion. It is not always easy to be the one who helps someone else win. It is not easy to come in second place. Sometimes we forget to value the support that others give to us. And sometimes we forget to be supportive. In many ways the prophet John the Baptist played a supporting role. He responded to God's call and prepared the way for Jesus. We too are called to listen and respond to God's call in our lives. It may not always lead to first place on a winning team, but living in cooperation with God's grace will lead to true happiness and fulfillment.

Listening to the Word of God

In the Old Testament reading listen to God call his servant.

Read Isaiah 49:1-6.

Allow for silence.

Scripture Discussion Starters

- When is the Lord's servant called?
- What does the Lord ask of the servant?

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- How does the servant respond?
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In the gospel, listen to the story of the birth of a great prophet.

Read Luke 1:57-66, 80.

Allow for silence.

- Why does Elizabeth decide to name her son John?
- How does Zechariah show his desire to name the child John?
- What is the reaction of the neighbors and relatives?
- What does the naming of John reveal about the child?
- How does John grow up?

Scripture Background

Provide 2-3 minutes of background information on the readings.

As early as the fourth century the birth of Jesus was celebrated. Not long afterward, Christians began to mark the day of John the Baptist's birth as well. The Church celebrates the feast of most saints on the day of their death. We celebrate the birth of only two saints: the Blessed Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. We believe that Mary entered the world sinless at her birth and tradition suggests that John the Baptist was also freed from original sin when he "leaped for joy" in his mother's womb upon meeting the Savior.

The Old Testament reading today tells us about the call of a prophet. We hear how a servant of the Lord is called even before his birth. This passage points to a servant who will be a great messenger of God's salvation.

In today's gospel the divine destiny of Jesus is shown in Luke's description of the miraculous events that surround the birth of John the Baptist. The grace of God is evident even before John's birth. God prepares John the Baptist for his role as messenger. He will announce a savior, who is Messiah and Lord.

Questions for Deeper Reflection

- What is John the Baptist called to do?
- How does John the Baptist respond to God's call?
- How are you called to tell others about Jesus?

[If you are not going to continue with the doctrinal discussion, proceed to the Gospel in Life.]

Doctrinal Discussion Starters

Human Cooperation with Divine Grace

The birth of John the Baptist reveals how God reaches out to us first. God calls and waits for



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us to listen and respond. John the Baptist responds to God's call in freedom. This shows how God's grace and human freedom work together to bring about salvation. God reaches out to us in love. That gift of love invites a response.

We believe that grace is the favor of God, freely given to us so that we might respond and become children of God. By baptism we receive the gift of grace and we become part of God's family. We are born anew into Christ and we receive the gift of the Spirit.

- How do you listen to God's call in your life?
- How can you better cooperate with God's grace?
- How do you live as a child of God?

The Gospel in Life

How can you be a messenger of hope this week at home and with your friends?

