

# GROW kids

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (B)



### Story of the week

**Mark 13:24-37**

Waiting for Jesus

### Focus of the week

Jesus urges his followers to be ready for his second coming



## Introduction

What is Advent? The season of Advent begins the church year and calls us to wait for Christ's coming. The word *advent* originates from Latin, and means 'coming', or 'arrival'. The weeks of Advent spark a sense of eagerness and anticipation in us. After all, when we are expecting someone or something important to arrive, we organise our lives around this anticipated event.

A season of waiting seems almost out of place in today's world of instant gratification. In our culture we are used to having what we want, when we want it. We don't like to wait for anything, so we should not be surprised that our society has little appreciation for Advent.

As Christians, however, we know that God's promises often take time to be born. Our spiritual ancestors waited thousands of years for the fulfilment of God's word. Countless generations of Hebrews hoped they would see the promise come true in their lifetime. As they faded into history, each generation handed on that promise to the next generation. Finally, in the fullness of time, when God saw that all was ready, a young woman named Mary gave birth to the promised Saviour, Jesus.

Advent traditions are oriented towards the theme of waiting and preparing in hope. They are designed to help us wait patiently, faithfully and confidently. During Advent we learn that waiting and believing are nurtured by prayer and ritual. It's the season that prepares us for the promise of God's coming at Christmas.



## Welcome

*Welcome the children and parents.*

*Invite participants to share a high or low of the week.*

*Make a note of some of the responses and include them in prayer at the end of your session.*

*You might like to respond to the following question.*

**Share what you might do to get ready for someone to visit your house.**



### Background story notes

*Much of what Jesus predicts about the future is gloomy and sometimes frightening. Tribulation, conflict, destruction, hatred. But in the midst of the doom and gloom there is the glorious promise that Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming. For Jesus' followers, the prophecies concerning the future are a source of comfort and hope. In the season of Advent our focus is on the coming of Jesus. We remember and celebrate his first coming at Christmas, and we look forward to his second coming at the end of the world. The signs tell us that Jesus is coming. But they don't tell us when. Only the Father knows. We are not to spend our time trying to guess or calculate the date. If we did know, it would be very easy for us to fall into a false sense of security, to fall asleep spiritually. But because we don't know when Jesus is coming, we have to be ready to meet him all the time.*

### You will need

- Bible (you might like to choose to read this from a children's Bible)

### Read Mark 13:24-37

**Do you like good surprises? Have you ever been surprised in a good way?** e.g. Birthday surprise. Nice present. Holiday surprise.

**How about bad surprises? What are some bad surprises people get?** e.g. You lose something special. Something bad happens to your house. Somebody you love gets sick.

**When Jesus comes back, it will be a surprise because nobody knows when that is going to happen. But Jesus tells us that it doesn't have to be a bad surprise. In fact, it can and will be a good surprise because God loves us, we belong to him, and he promises to look after us, whatever happens. So, it might be a surprise for us, but God knows exactly what he's doing. When Jesus comes back it will be the most exciting thing to ever happen to us!**



### Prayer

*We encourage you to invite the participants to pray. You may like to begin with the following prayer, and also include some of the participants' highs and lows as shared at the beginning.*

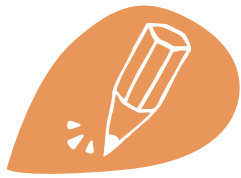
**Heavenly Father, thank you for promising to always look after us. Sometimes we don't know what is going to happen, and this can be scary. Thank you that you are in control. Give us your Holy Spirit, so that we can put our trust in you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**



### Blessing

*Encourage participants to bless each other, using the following words (or you can make up your own).*

**(Name), may your faith burn bright each and every day.**



## Creative response

### What to do

Give each participant a calendar template. Have them draw or write what they would do today if they knew that Jesus was coming tomorrow.

### You will need

- Copies of calendar template for each participant (see Appendix)
- Colouring pencils, markers



## Catechism spotlight

In the Apostles' Creed we say: *I believe in Jesus Christ.... he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

Jesus will come again. He will come back to earth to take to heaven all people who believe in him as their Saviour.

### You will need

- A copy of the Apostles' Creed.



## Liturgical significance

Advent is a time for preparing, a time of waiting and watching. We celebrate Advent with the colour blue, as this communicates the message of hope. Our Christian faith rests on the hope that one day Jesus will come again.

Many churches use an Advent wreath at this time of year. An Advent wreath is a circle of green foliage adorned with five candles – one white candle in the centre, and four blue or purple candles around it. Each Sunday of Advent, one or more blue candles are lit to represent how many weeks of Advent have passed, with the fifth (white) candle lit on Christmas Day. Originally a German tradition, the Advent wreath reminds us that the birth of Jesus gave us God's promised light of the world. The circle of the wreath represents God, with no beginning and no end. The green foliage reminds us of life, and God's active love for us.

**Appendix**

**CALENDAR TEMPLATE**

