

All Age Service Outline

Theme: A Christmas Journey (Based on Luke 2 v 1-5)

Introduction

How did people travel to the service today? Give a number of options including, walking, driving, minibus, car share, bike, buggy, etc.

Do a clap-o-metre to see what the most popular mode of transport is.

Song

Come thou long expected Jesus

Reading and Explanation

Luke 2 v 1-5

Show a PowerPoint visual of a map of the journey taken by Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem

See: http://www.sermonfollowup.org/Sermon_Follow_Up/Route_to_Bethlehem_files/dropped_image.jpg

Show some facts about the journey e.g.

Some information about the Journey

- The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is about 70 miles as the crow flies but walking it through winding mountain trails is more like 90-100 miles.
- With Mary being pregnant, it is likely that the journey would have taken the couple around 7 or 8 days.
- Jews travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem at that time would have wanted to avoid the mountainous terrain and Samaria. The route along the river Jordan is the most probable.
- Mary and Joseph may have travelled with a caravan of other travellers, perhaps with others returning for the census for the safety and companionship of travelling in numbers.
- While we celebrate the birth of Jesus in December, some scholars believe it is more likely that he was born in September, so Mary and Joseph may have journeyed in the oppressive heat of July or August.

Start with your location and pick out a few destinations of different lengths and calculate how long the journey would take if you had to walk or go by donkey with belongings e.g. 3 miles an hour/7 hours a day.

E.g.

Belfast – Dublin – 105 miles – 5 days

Belfast - Londonderry — 70 miles – over 3 days

Belfast – Cork - 266 miles – 12 ½ days

Cars mean we can travel long distances comfortably and quickly, or do they?

Show “The Journey to Bethlehem” video from Paperless Christmas at

<http://www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk/downloads/>

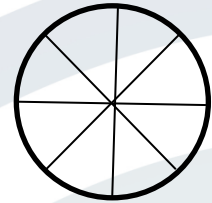
Shows Mary and Joseph in a car stuck in traffic trying to get to Bethlehem.

Game and Quiz

You will need

A wheel made from a hula hoop and 4 sticks which are the same length as the diameter of the hoop.

Pieces of paper with points attached to pew ends saying 50, 100, 150, 200 spaced out down the aisle with the 50 very near the front (1st or 2nd pew) and the 200 at the back (last pew).



Divide the congregation into two teams (e.g. 2 sides of the church or adults verses kids) and ask some questions about the text in Luke 2 1-5.

Ask alternate teams a question from the list. Tell people to put up their hands if they know the answer.

If you get a right answer the person comes up and rolls the “wheel” down the aisle. The wheel must roll past the paper with the points to get that number of points awarded. If it lands between 50 and 100, then 50 points are awarded etc. Be strict as it adds to the fun!

Example questions

1. Why was Joseph forced to make the trip to Bethlehem when Mary was soon to have a baby? **He had to register in the census**
2. Who was the Roman emperor (or Caesar) who issued the decree that a census should be taken? **Augustus**

1. How widespread was this census? ***Throughout the Roman empire***
2. Why could Joseph not have registered for the census in Nazareth where he lived? ***Everyone had to go to their ancestral (or home) town***
3. What well known important ancestor did Joseph have? ***King David***
4. Does the bible tell us that Mary travelled to Bethlehem on a donkey? ***Surprisingly no, it just says that Joseph took her with him***

Add up the points and give a cheer to the winning team at the end.

Song

O come O Come Emmanuel

Talk outline

You will need

A flip chart and pen

The preparations for Christmas can be a bit of a hassle sometimes. There's pressure to get everything just perfect. It's such a special time that you will want it to be happy, exciting and memorable for your loved ones. That can lead to stress.

Have any of these things happened to you this year?

Show a list like the one below and ask everyone to count how many of the list they have experienced. Can they think of any more Christmas calamities?

1. Couldn't find a parking space on Christmas shopping trip
2. Long queues in all the shops
3. Couldn't find where a present was hidden
4. This year's "must have" toy/gadget not available
5. Hard to afford all the family's gift requests
6. No idea what to buy that hard to please relative
7. Run out of sticky tape for presents
8. Forgot important item on a shopping trip
9. Homemade mince pies or Christmas cake disaster
10. Still waiting for item purchased online.

Our Christmas celebrations can cause us stress and hassle but just think what Mary and Joseph had to go through on that first Christmas. Mary was pregnant before she was married, her fiancé was going to refuse to marry her as he knew the baby wasn't his. When they got that sorted out they found out that they had to travel 100 miles to be registered in Bethlehem near the time of the expected birth. When they arrived, Mary's labour pains began and they couldn't find any accommodation. They had to make do with a stable!

Suddenly the queues and burnt Christmas cake don't seem so important.

Let's remember to be thankful for the birth of the Messiah, and give thanks to God for sending us the best gift of all – his own son Jesus to be our Saviour.

Prayer - Advent Ribbons

<http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2013/12/advent-hope-ribbon-prayer.html>

You will need

Thin purple ribbons, long enough to tie round wrists.

What to do

Talk about purple being the colour that a lot of people use to decorate churches with in Advent. Talk about what hope means (dictionary definition – 1. a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen 2. A feeling of trust).

Discuss the idea that Advent is a time of hope and waiting not only for Jesus' birth but also for Jesus to come again- waiting for a better time when there will be no more death or sickness or crying. Give everyone a purple ribbon and ask them to tie it round the wrist of someone beside them, saying "May you have hope in Jesus this Advent".



Prayer

Lord Jesus as we rush around shopping in preparation for Christmas
Lord, help us to find hope in You

When we face irritations due to the busyness of the season
Lord, help us to find hope in You

When we are worried about finances
Lord, help us to find hope in You

When we quarrel and fight with our families
Lord, help us to find hope in You

Help us to stop and remember to be joyful this advent
Lord, help us to find hope in You
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Song

Make Way Make Way for Christ the King