Living the Church Year Lesson Plan:
5th Sunday of Advent

Ages 9-17

Fifith Sunday of Advent (Hisnag)

Length: 30-40 Minutes

Theme: ***Advent Humility: "Christ Is Born and Revealed Among Us"***

Materials: Be ready to watch Fr. Vazken's Sunday Expressions video https://youtu.be/0wdfeRiWjL8

Scripture

- Luke 18:9-14

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students will:

1. Understand the meaning of humility in Christian life.
2. Compare the attitudes of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.
3. Learn why Armenian Christians celebrate Christmas and Theophany on January 6.
4. Reflect on how Christ can be "born and revealed" through their daily actions.
5. Practice a simple Armenian Orthodox prayer of humility: "Lord, have mercy."

Opening Prayer

[Begin with the sign of the cross]. Lord Jesus Christ, as we prepare for Your Nativity and Theophany, open our hearts to receive You with humility. Teach us to depend on Your mercy and reveal Your love through our lives. Amen.

Icebreaker: "Who Gets the Credit?"

Ask:

- Have you ever done something good and wanted everyone to notice?
- How does it feel when someone else gets credit instead?
- Is it possible to do good things and still become prideful?

Allow several students to answer.

Transition:

In today's Gospel, Jesus compares two religious people. One looks holy on the outside, but one has the right heart before God.

Video Review & Discussion

Quick Summary

Explain: The speaker reminds us that Advent is not simply counting down to Christmas. It is a time of preparation. We prepare our hearts for Christ.

The Gospel story presents two men:

The Pharisee

- Religious, Fasted regularly, Gave tithes, Compared himself to others, Trusted in his own goodness

The Tax Collector

- Considered a sinner, Stood far away, Would not lift his eyes, Prayed: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Jesus says the tax collector went home justified before God.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus praised the tax collector?
2. What mistake did the Pharisee make?
3. Is it possible to be religious but not humble?
4. How can social media encourage us to act like the Pharisee?
5. What does "Lord, have mercy" really mean?

Key Point: God is not impressed by our achievements. God desires a humble and repentant heart.

Armenian Orthodox Connection

What is great about celebrating Christmas on January 6th in addition to December 25th?

Teach: Armenian Christmas (Jan 6th) is the early date for Christianity, the Roman church moved the date to December 25th More importantly though, Christmas in the Armenian Church is called Theophany, all of the ways God reveals himself to humanity, not only his birth, but his baptism, his ministry and his ongoing presence in the sacramental life of the church and individuals. Christmas

is not shopping and gifts and not even baby Jesus in a manger, it is the ongoing action of Jesus Christ coming to the world and into our hearts.

Discussion

Ask: How do you celebrate the two Christmases in your homes and what might we do to recover the 'reason for the season'

Possible Answers:

- Remember that December 25th is just a start of a deeper season of knowing God through January 6th.
- Make it our New Year's Resolution (which comes between the two dates) to be more committed to church attendance, prayer and study about God.
- Take part in a charitable project locally or for Armenia in the Christmas season, or simply extend your gift giving to include those in need, near or far.

Activity: "Pharisee or Tax Collector?"

Read each situation.

Students vote which attitude it reflects.

Scenario 1

"I posted my volunteer work online mainly so everyone would see how good I am."

Answer: Pharisee attitude.

Scenario 2

"I helped someone and told nobody because I wanted only God to know."

Answer: Tax Collector attitude.

Scenario 3

"I thanked God because I'm more faithful than everyone else."

Answer: Pharisee attitude.

Scenario 4

"I made a mistake, admitted it, and asked God for forgiveness."

Answer: Tax Collector attitude.

Conclude:

Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself honestly before God.

Personal Reflection

Give students a moment of silence. Ask them to complete this sentence privately:

"Christ can be revealed through me this week when I..."

Examples:

- Forgive someone, Help a parent, Pray daily, Stop comparing myself with others, Show kindness at school.

Closing Message

As Armenian Christians, we prepare for Christmas not only by decorating homes but by preparing our hearts. The tax collector teaches us the prayer that opens our hearts to Christ: "Lord, have mercy." When we approach God humbly, Christ is born and revealed in our lives.

Memory Verse:

"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:14

Take-Home Challenge: Pray three times each day this week:

"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me and help me reveal Your love today."