

The Third Sunday in Advent

Gaudete · Middle School · Student Edition

For the student: Read along, fill in the blanks, and write your answers on the lines. Your parent has the answers.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation, for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which parts are missing?

2. To which Person of the Trinity is this collect addressed?

3. By what means does the collect ask Jesus to lighten our hearts?

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

Matthew 11:2-11

2 Now when John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples **3** and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" **4** And Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: **5**

the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. **6** And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? **8** What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. **9** What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. **10** This is he of whom it is written, 'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.' **11** Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

- 1.** John had preached that the Christ would come with an axe and a winnowing fork (Matthew 3:10-12). Now John sits in Herod's prison. Why might he ask this question?

- 2.** Why does Jesus answer with a list of works instead of a simple "Yes"?

- 3.** What does "blessed is the one who is not offended by me" (v. 6) mean?

- 4.** Jesus says the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than John (v. 11). How can that be?

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

2. The collect calls Jesus' visitation "gracious." How were His works in verse 5 gracious?

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The First Commandment. You shall have no other gods. **What does this mean?** We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

Cross-reference. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

1. John asked, "Shall we look for another?" Why is that a First Commandment question?

2. Luther names fear, love, and trust. Which one does verse 6 speak to most directly?

3. Proverbs says, "Do not lean on your own understanding." How does that fit John's situation?

Think about it. What should you do when you have doubts about Jesus? Look at what John did in verses 2-3 and what Jesus did in verse 4.

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short Advent collect of your own. Use all five parts.

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you when your heart is worried or unsure?
