REGULAR LESSON · ABOUT 45 MINUTES

# Stay Awake! Jesus Is Coming

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| BIG IDEA | Jesus promised to come back. We don't know when, so we stay ready by loving him and doing the work he gave us. |
| MAIN READING | Mark 13:24–37 |
| MEMORY VERSE | Mark 13:37, "What I tell you, I tell all: Watch." |
| YOU WILL NEED | Bibles, a flashlight, an alarm clock or phone timer, paper and crayons, index cards, one purple or blue candle (unlit is fine) |
| BEFORE CLASS | Read Mark 13:24–37 twice. Set the timer for a random time for the game. Have the memory verse written on the board. |

## 1 Who is coming? 5 min

Ask: "Has anyone ever waited for a visitor, like grandparents coming for Christmas? What did your family do to get ready?" Let three or four children answer (cleaning, cooking, watching out the window, wearing nice clothes).

Then say: "Today the church year starts over. It's called **Advent**, which means *coming*. For four weeks we get ready for Jesus. Advent remembers three comings: Jesus came as a baby at Christmas, he comes to us now in his Word and at his Table, and he will come again as King at the end."

Show the candle and explain the Advent wreath: one candle this Sunday, two next Sunday, and so on until all four are lit. Many Lutheran churches use blue for hope; others use purple.

**Teaching tip.** Children this age love to share. Keep it moving by taking only a few answers, and tell the rest they can share during the game.

## 2 Read and answer 15 min

Read the verses aloud yourself, or have a strong reader read. Stop after each section and ask the questions.

Mark 13:26 Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

1. **Who is the "Son of Man"?**

   TEACHER'S NOTE

   Jesus. It was his favorite name for himself; he uses it more than any other title in the Gospels. It comes from Daniel 7:13–14, where "one like a son of man" comes on the clouds and receives a kingdom that will never end. If a child says "a man," say: "Good! Jesus really is a man, and he is also God."

2. **How will Jesus come this time?**

   TEACHER'S NOTE

   "In clouds with great power and glory." Not as a little baby in a stable, but as King. Everyone will see him (Revelation 1:7). Contrast the two comings: first time, hidden and humble; next time, glorious and seen by all.

Mark 13:32–33 But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Watch, keep alert, and pray; for you don't know when the time is.

1. **Does anybody know the day Jesus will come back?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> No. Not the angels, and Jesus says not even "the Son," only the Father. If a child asks, "Doesn't Jesus know everything?", a simple answer is: "When Jesus became a man, he chose to live with human limits, and the Father kept this day a secret." Point out that anyone who says they know the date is wrong.

2. **If we can't know the day, what does Jesus tell us to do?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> Three things: watch, stay alert, and pray. Write the three words on the board. These are not scary words; they are what you do when someone you love is coming.

Mark 13:34–37 "It is like a man, traveling to another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, and to each one his work, and also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. Watch therefore, for you don't know when the lord of the house is coming, whether at evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he might find you sleeping. What I tell you, I tell all: Watch."

1. **In the story, what did the master give each servant before he left?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> "Each one his work." Everyone got a job. Jesus has given each of us something to do for him, too.

2. **What job did the doorkeeper have?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> To stay awake and watch for the master to come home. In Jesus' day, houses had a gatekeeper who listened for the knock in the night.

3. **Why would it be sad if the master found everyone asleep?**

> **TEACHER'S NOTE**
> Let children answer. Steer toward: they would miss welcoming him; they wouldn't be doing their jobs. Keep the tone warm, not scary. The master in the story is not looking for someone to punish; he is coming home to his household.

## 3 Jesus is a good master 7 min

Say: "Some people get scared when they hear that Jesus is coming back. But think about who is coming. It is the same Jesus who loved children, healed sick people and died on the cross for us. He is not coming to catch us being bad. He is coming to bring us home."

Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism so families could learn the faith at home. Read this part aloud and have the class repeat the last line with you:

> "in order that I might be His, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him"
>
> Luther's Small Catechism, Second Article · Read it in the Reading Room

**Teaching tip.** If a child is anxious about the end of the world, take them seriously. Say: "Jesus tells us this so we don't have to be afraid. The one who is coming loves you and already died for you." Then mention it to the parents.

## 4 The doorkeeper game 10 min

Pick a "doorkeeper" to stand by the door with a flashlight. Everyone else does a quiet job at the table: drawing a picture of what they think it will be like when Jesus comes. Set a timer for a surprise moment between one and four minutes. When it rings, knock on the door; the doorkeeper shines the light and calls out, "The master is here!" Everyone holds up their work. Play two or three rounds with different doorkeepers.

Then ask: "Was it hard to stay ready when you didn't know when the knock would come? How can we stay ready for Jesus every day?" Good answers: praying, going to

church, reading the Bible, being kind, saying sorry and forgiving.

> **Teaching tip.** If your room has no door, use a desk bell or have the doorkeeper face the wall. Keep the drawings; they make a nice bulletin board for Advent.

## 5 Live it 5 min

Hand out index cards. Ask: “Jesus gave every servant ‘his work.’ What is one job Jesus has given you this week?” Help children think concretely: helping at home without being asked, being a friend to someone left out at recess, telling the truth when it’s hard, praying for someone who is sick.

Have them write or draw it on the card to put next to their bed.

## 6 Pray 3 min

> “Lord Jesus, you are coming again. Keep us awake and ready. Help us do the work you gave us, and when you come, bring us home to you. Amen.”

Pray it line by line and have the children echo you. Close by saying the memory verse together.

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Scripture: World English Bible (public domain). Free to print and copy.