Diocese of Athabasca

Sunday School Lesson Plan

Here's a **Sunday School Lesson Plan** for **young children (ages 4–8)** and some activities for older children using the **Revised Common Lectionary readings** for the **Third Sunday of Advent (Year B).** Bible Verses: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28; Preface of Advent

✨ Sunday School Lesson Plan

Third Sunday of Advent – Year B

REJOICE! JESUS BRINGS US JOY!

Theme: Joy, Hope, Thankfulness, and Sharing God's Love

Big Idea: Advent is a special time of waiting for Jesus. God promises good news, comfort, and joy. John the Baptist came to tell people about Jesus, the true Light of the World. We can share God's joy by praying, giving thanks, helping others, and showing love.

Revised Common Lectionary Readings — As Requested

- Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11
- Psalm 126
- 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24
- John 1:6–8, 19–28

Preface: Advent
Liturgical Colour: Purple or Blue; Rose/Pink may be used on the Third Sunday
Age Group: Preschool to Young Elementary (approximately 3–9 years)
Suggested Lesson Length: 30–45 minutes, with additional activities as desired.

Lectionary note: December 13, 2026, is the Third Sunday of Advent in Year A. The readings you provided are the Year B readings for the Third Sunday of Advent. This lesson follows your requested readings throughout.

1. Lesson Title / Theme / Big Idea

REJOICE! JESUS BRINGS US JOY!

Theme: Sharing the Joy of Jesus

Big Idea: God brings joy to his people. John the Baptist told people that Jesus was coming. Advent reminds us to prepare our hearts, rejoice in God's love, and share joy with others.

Lesson Focus for Kids:

- The Third Sunday of Advent is often called *Gaudete Sunday*, the Sunday of Joy.
- The third Advent candle reminds us of JOY.
- God brings good news to people who are hurting or sad.
- God can turn sadness into joy.
- John the Baptist came to tell people about Jesus.
- Jesus is the true Light who brings God's love into the world.
- We can rejoice, pray, and give thanks to God.
- We can share joy through kindness, encouragement, and helping others.
- God's joy is more than being happy. We can trust God's love even when life is difficult.

This Week's Message:

REJOICE ALWAYS! JESUS BRINGS US JOY!

2. Scripture Readings — Kid-Friendly Language

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11 — God Brings Good News and Joy

Long ago, God gave his people a wonderful message.
God wanted people to know that he loved them and cared about them.
God promised good news to people who were poor.
He promised comfort to people who were sad.
He promised freedom and hope to people who were suffering.
God would help his people rebuild what had been broken.
God wanted his people to live with goodness, fairness, and love.
The prophet spoke about being filled with joy because God brings salvation.
God's goodness would grow like beautiful plants growing in a garden.

Kid Connection: When someone is sad, lonely, or hurting, we can share God's love by helping, comforting, and encouraging them.

GOD'S LOVE BRINGS HOPE AND JOY!

Psalm 126 — God Fills Our Hearts with Joy

God's people remembered a wonderful time when God helped them.

They were so happy that they laughed and sang joyful songs!
Their mouths were filled with laughter.
Their hearts were filled with joy.
They remembered the wonderful things God had done.
Even when they had been sad, God had given them hope.
They trusted that God could bring joy again.

Kid Connection: Sometimes we feel happy, and sometimes we feel sad. God loves us all the time. We can thank God for the wonderful things he does.

THE LORD HAS DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US!

1 Thessalonians 5:16–24 — Rejoice, Pray, and Give Thanks

Paul wrote a letter to people who loved Jesus.
He wanted to encourage them.
Paul gave them three important reminders:
"Rejoice always."
"Pray without ceasing."
"Give thanks in all circumstances."
Paul wanted people to remember that God was always with them.
He encouraged them to hold on to what was good and turn away from what was wrong.
God is faithful and will help us grow in love.

Kid Connection: We can rejoice because God loves us. We can talk to God whenever we want, and we can remember to say thank you.

REJOICE! PRAY! GIVE THANKS!

John 1:6–8, 19–28 — John Tells Everyone About Jesus

God sent a man named John.
John had a very important job.
He came to tell people about the Light.
That Light was Jesus!
John wanted everyone to know that Jesus was coming.
Some people asked John:
"Who are you?"
They wondered if John was the special person God had promised.
John told them that he was not the Messiah.
He was someone sent to prepare the way for the Lord.
John baptized people with water.
He told them that someone much greater was already among them, although they did not recognize him.
John was pointing people toward Jesus.

Kid Connection: John wanted everyone to know about Jesus. We can help others learn about Jesus by sharing his love and joy.

I CAN SHARE THE JOY OF JESUS!

3. Welcome & Opening Prayer / Circle Time

Activity — What Makes You Joyful?

Materials: Advent wreath, three battery-operated candles or candles for adult lighting, a large paper heart, and a picture of John the Baptist.

Gather the children in a circle.

Ask:

- "What makes you smile?"
- "What is something wonderful that happened this week?"
- "How do you feel when someone is kind to you?"
- "How can you help someone else feel loved?"
- "What do you think JOY means?"

Explain:

"Today is the Third Sunday of Advent. We have already lit the candles of Hope and Peace. Today we light the candle of Joy!"

Show the Advent wreath.

"Joy is a special gift from God. We can feel God's love even when things are difficult. We can share that love and joy with others."

Lighting the Third Advent Candle

Light the first three candles or switch on three battery-operated candles.

Say together:

"We light the candle of JOY. Thank you, God, for sending Jesus!"

Explain:

"The third Advent candle is often pink or rose. It reminds us to rejoice because Christmas is getting closer."

Opening Prayer

Dear God,
Thank you for this wonderful season of Advent.
Thank you for sending Jesus to bring love, hope, peace, and joy.
Fill our hearts with your joy.
Help us remember to pray and give thanks.
Teach us to share kindness with others.
Help us bring smiles and comfort to people around us.
May our hearts be ready to welcome Jesus.
Amen.

4. Memory Verse

"Rejoice always."

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Memory Verse Actions

Words	Actions
REJOICE	Raise both hands happily
ALWAYS	Stretch arms out wide

Repeat the verse several times.

Encourage the children to say the verse softly, loudly, while smiling, and with actions.

Memory Verse Game — Pass the Joy!

Have children sit in a circle.

Pass a large paper heart around the circle.

When the teacher says "JOY!", the child holding the heart says:

"REJOICE ALWAYS!"

Everyone responds:

"JESUS BRINGS US JOY!"

Explain that we can rejoice because God loves us and is always with us.

5. Bible Story Time

John the Baptist Shares the Good News!

Long ago, there was a man named John.
God had given John a very special job.
John was going to help people get ready for Jesus.
John lived near the Jordan River.
Many people came to listen to him.
John told them that someone very special was coming.
The people were curious.
They asked John:
"Are you the Messiah?"
John answered:
"No, I am not."
"Are you the prophet we are waiting for?"
John explained that his job was to prepare the way for the Lord.
He wanted people to turn toward God and get their hearts ready.
John told them that someone much greater was coming.
That person was Jesus!
Jesus would bring God's love and light into the world.
John was so happy to share the good news.
He wanted everyone to know about Jesus.
Today, during Advent, we remember John's message.
We are getting ready for Jesus too!
The first Advent candle reminds us of Hope.
The second candle reminds us of Peace.
The third candle reminds us of Joy.
God wants us to share that joy with others.
We can smile at someone who feels lonely.
We can help a friend who is having trouble.
We can share our toys.
We can thank God for our blessings.
We can pray for someone who is sad.
Every time we show love, we help others see the joy of Jesus.

Say Together

REJOICE ALWAYS! JESUS BRINGS US JOY! I CAN SHARE GOD'S JOY!

6. Craft / Activity

Craft 1 — My Advent Wreath of Joy

Materials: Paper plates or wreath templates, green crayons, four paper candles, yellow paper flames, glue, and scissors.

Give each child an Advent wreath template.

Have children colour the greenery.

Add four candles.

Place flames on the first three candles, leaving the fourth unlit.

Explain:

"The first candle reminds us of Hope. The second candle reminds us of Peace. The third candle reminds us of Joy."

Across the top write:

REJOICE! JESUS BRINGS US JOY!

Across the bottom:

THE THIRD ADVENT CANDLE IS THE CANDLE OF JOY!

Craft 2 — My Heart Is Full of Joy!

Materials: Large paper hearts, crayons, markers, and glue.

Give each child a large heart.

Inside the heart write:

JESUS FILLS MY HEART WITH JOY!

Children draw things that remind them of God's love:

- Their family.
- Their friends.
- Their church.
- Someone helping another person.
- Someone sharing.
- People praying together.
- A favourite blessing from God.

Explain:

"God gives us many reasons to be thankful. We can share our joy with others."

Craft 3 — A Joyful Christmas Card

Materials: Folded construction paper, crayons, stickers, and markers.

Have each child make a Christmas card for someone who might need encouragement.

On the front write:

JESUS BRINGS YOU JOY!

Inside write:

GOD LOVES YOU!

Children decorate their cards with hearts, stars, candles, and pictures of Jesus.

Encourage children to give the cards to someone who is lonely, sick, or in need of encouragement.

7. Games

Game 1 — Share the Joy!

Place picture cards around the room showing different ways to share joy.

Examples:

- Helping someone.
- Sharing toys.
- Comforting a friend.
- Praying.
- Saying thank you.
- Welcoming someone new.

Children take turns choosing a card and acting out the picture.

The group guesses what the child is doing.

After each turn, everyone says:

"I CAN SHARE JESUS' JOY!"

Game 2 — Joyful Choices

Describe different situations.

Ask the children whether each choice shares God's joy.

Examples:

"Someone is lonely, and you invite them to play."

"A friend falls down, and you laugh at them."

"Someone shares a toy with you, and you say thank you."

"A child is sad, and you comfort them."

"Someone needs help, and you walk away."

"You help someone carry something."

Children give a thumbs-up for loving choices and a thumbs-down for unkind choices.

Explain:

"God's joy grows when we share his love with others."

Game 3 — Rejoice, Pray, Give Thanks!

Teach the children three actions:

- **REJOICE:** Raise both hands and smile.
- **PRAY:** Fold hands together.
- **GIVE THANKS:** Place hands over heart.

Call out the words in different orders.

Children perform the matching actions.

Finish by saying:

"REJOICE ALWAYS! PRAY ALWAYS! GIVE THANKS!"

8. Song Suggestions

- **Joy to the World** — Celebrating the coming of Jesus.
- **I've Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy Down in My Heart** — God's joy in our hearts.
- **Rejoice in the Lord Always** — Based on Philippians 4:4.
- **Jesus Loves Me** — God's love for us.

- **This Little Light of Mine** — Sharing the light of Jesus.
- **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel** — Waiting for Jesus.
- **Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus** — Advent hope.
- **God Is So Good** — Thankfulness.
- **He's Got the Whole World in His Hands** — God's care.
- **Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah** — Advent candle lighting.

Simple Action Song

To the tune of "Are You Sleeping?"

We are joyful,
We are joyful,
Jesus comes,
Jesus comes.

Sharing love and kindness,
Sharing love and kindness,
Joy for all,
Joy for all.

9. Snack Suggestions

Joyful Face Snacks

Use round crackers or rice cakes and small pieces of fruit to make smiling faces.

Explain:

"Jesus brings joy into our hearts, and we can share that joy with others."

Advent Candle Snacks

Use banana pieces or other suitable foods to represent candles, with small fruit pieces as flames.

Make four candles, with flames on the first three.

Explain:

"Today we light the third Advent candle, the candle of Joy."

Sharing Snack

Invite children to help distribute crackers or fruit.

Explain:

"We can share God's joy by being kind and sharing with others."

Snack Prayer

Dear God,
Thank you for this food.
Thank you for the joy Jesus brings.
Help us remember those who are hungry.
Teach us to share what we have.
Fill our hearts with thankfulness and love.
Amen.

Check food allergies and choking hazards and supervise food preparation.

10. Wrap Up & Reflections

Gather the children in a circle.

Ask:

What special season are we celebrating?
Advent.

What does the third Advent candle remind us of?
Joy.

Who told people that Jesus was coming?
John the Baptist.

Who is the true Light of the World?
Jesus.

What does Paul tell us to do?
Rejoice, pray, and give thanks.

How can we share God's joy?
By helping, sharing, praying, encouraging, and loving others.

Does God love us when we feel sad?
Yes! God loves us all the time.

Say Together

ADVENT IS HERE! JESUS BRINGS US JOY! I CAN SHARE GOD'S LOVE!

11. Closing Prayer

Loving God,
Thank you for the joy of Advent.
Thank you for sending John the Baptist to tell people about Jesus.
Thank you for loving us and caring for us.
Help us rejoice in your goodness.
Teach us to pray and give thanks.
Help us share kindness and joy with everyone we meet.
Comfort those who are sad or lonely.
May the light of Jesus shine through us.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

12. Take-Home Idea

My Third Week of Advent — Joy Challenge

Encourage children to complete one act of joy or kindness each day.

SHARE THE JOY OF JESUS!

Sunday — Thank God for three blessings.
Monday — Smile and say something kind.
Tuesday — Share something with someone.
Wednesday — Pray for someone who is sad.
Thursday — Help someone at home.
Friday — Make a joyful card for someone.
Saturday — Tell someone that God loves them.

Invite families to light the first three Advent candles together, using battery-operated candles if preferred.

Family Prayer: "Dear Jesus, fill our home with your joy. Help us share your love with others. Amen."

13. Teacher Notes

Understanding the Third Sunday of Advent

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as *Gaudete Sunday*.
The word *Gaudete* means "Rejoice!"

This Sunday reminds us that Christmas is drawing closer and that Jesus brings joy into the world. The third Advent candle is often pink or rose to represent joy.

Connecting the Readings

Isaiah 61: God promises good news, comfort, freedom, and restoration. God brings hope and joy to people who are suffering.

Psalm 126: God's people remember the wonderful things God has done. They rejoice because God has helped them and restored their hope.

1 Thessalonians 5: Paul encourages Christians to rejoice, pray continually, and give thanks. God is faithful and helps us live in his love.

John 1: John the Baptist is sent by God to tell people about Jesus. John is not the Light, but he comes to testify about the Light.

Important Teaching Points

1. **Joy is a gift from God.** God's joy is deeper than simply feeling happy.

2. **God comforts people who are sad.** Isaiah reminds us that God cares for people who are hurting.

3. **We can rejoice in God's goodness.** Psalm 126 reminds us to remember and celebrate God's blessings.

4. **Prayer and thankfulness are important.** Paul teaches us to rejoice, pray, and give thanks.

5. **John the Baptist pointed people toward Jesus.** John wanted everyone to know that Jesus was coming.

6. **We can share God's joy.** Helping, encouraging, sharing, and comforting others are ways to show God's love.

A Note About Joy and Sadness

Young children should understand that being joyful does not mean they must always feel happy.
Everyone sometimes feels sad, worried, or upset.
God loves us in all our feelings.
Explain:
"Joy means knowing that God loves us and is with us, even when we are having a difficult day."
Avoid telling children that they must always smile or be happy.
Instead, encourage them to trust God's love and share kindness with others.

A Note About John the Baptist

John the Baptist had an important role in preparing people for Jesus.
He was not the Messiah.
He came to tell people about the true Light.
Explain:
"John was like a messenger. He wanted everyone to know that Jesus was coming."

14. Anglican Connection

The Third Sunday of Advent — Gaudete Sunday

The Third Sunday of Advent is sometimes called Gaudete Sunday.
Gaudete is a Latin word meaning "Rejoice!"
It reminds us to celebrate the joy of Christ's coming.

The Advent Wreath

Many Anglican parishes use an Advent wreath with four candles.
On the Third Sunday of Advent, three candles are lit.

In one common tradition:

Sunday	Theme	Candle
First Sunday	Hope	Purple or blue
Second Sunday	Peace	Purple or blue
Third Sunday	Joy	Pink or rose
Fourth Sunday	Love	Purple or blue

The candle themes and colours vary among Anglican parishes. Follow your parish's tradition.

The Third Advent Candle — Joy

Explain:

"Today we light three candles. The first reminds us of Hope. The second reminds us of Peace.
The third reminds us of Joy."

John the Baptist and the Coming of Jesus

John the Baptist is an important figure in the Advent readings.
He reminds us to prepare our hearts for Jesus.
John's message encourages us to turn toward God and live in his loving ways.

Joy in Anglican Worship

During Anglican worship, we express joy through prayer, singing, thanksgiving, and praise.
We remember God's love through the reading of Scripture and the celebration of Holy Communion.
The Eucharist is also a special act of thanksgiving.
Explain to children:
"When we gather at church, we thank God for Jesus and celebrate his love for us."

Sharing God's Love

In our Anglican Baptismal Covenant, we promise, with God's help, to seek and serve Christ in all persons.
We can live out that promise by helping others, sharing, encouraging, and showing kindness.
During Advent, we remember that the joy of Jesus is meant to be shared.

This Week's Message

Advent is a season of waiting, preparation, hope, peace, and joy.

Isaiah reminds us that God brings good news and comfort. Psalm 126 teaches us to rejoice in God's goodness. Paul encourages us to rejoice, pray, and give thanks. John the Baptist reminds us to prepare the way for Jesus, the true Light of the World.

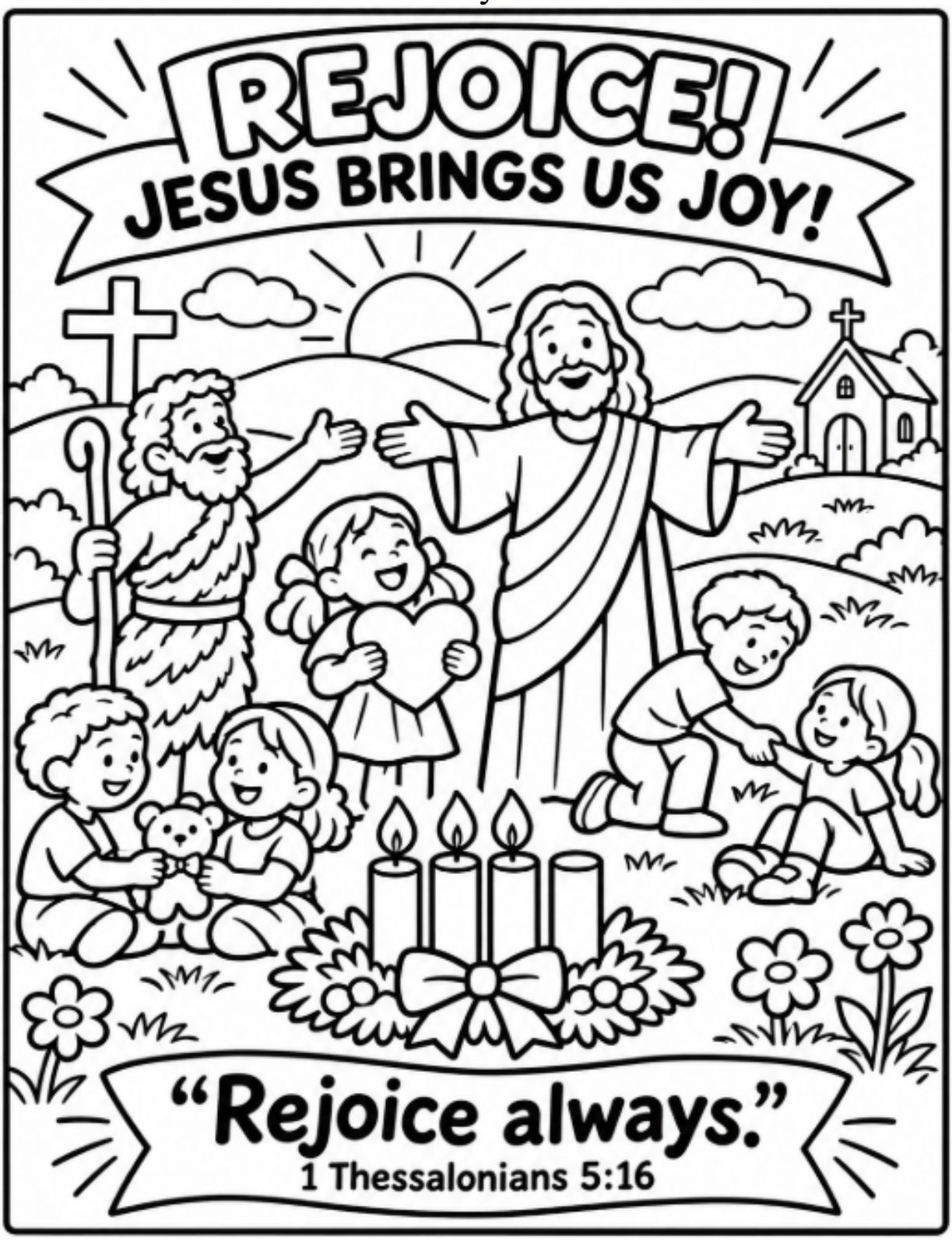
We can share God's joy by praying, helping, sharing, encouraging, and showing kindness.

REJOICE ALWAYS! JESUS BRINGS US JOY!

These lesson plans are intended as a collection of ideas rather than a single lesson that must be completed in full. Teachers are encouraged to select the stories, crafts, games, and worksheets that best suit the ages, abilities, and interests of the children they teach.

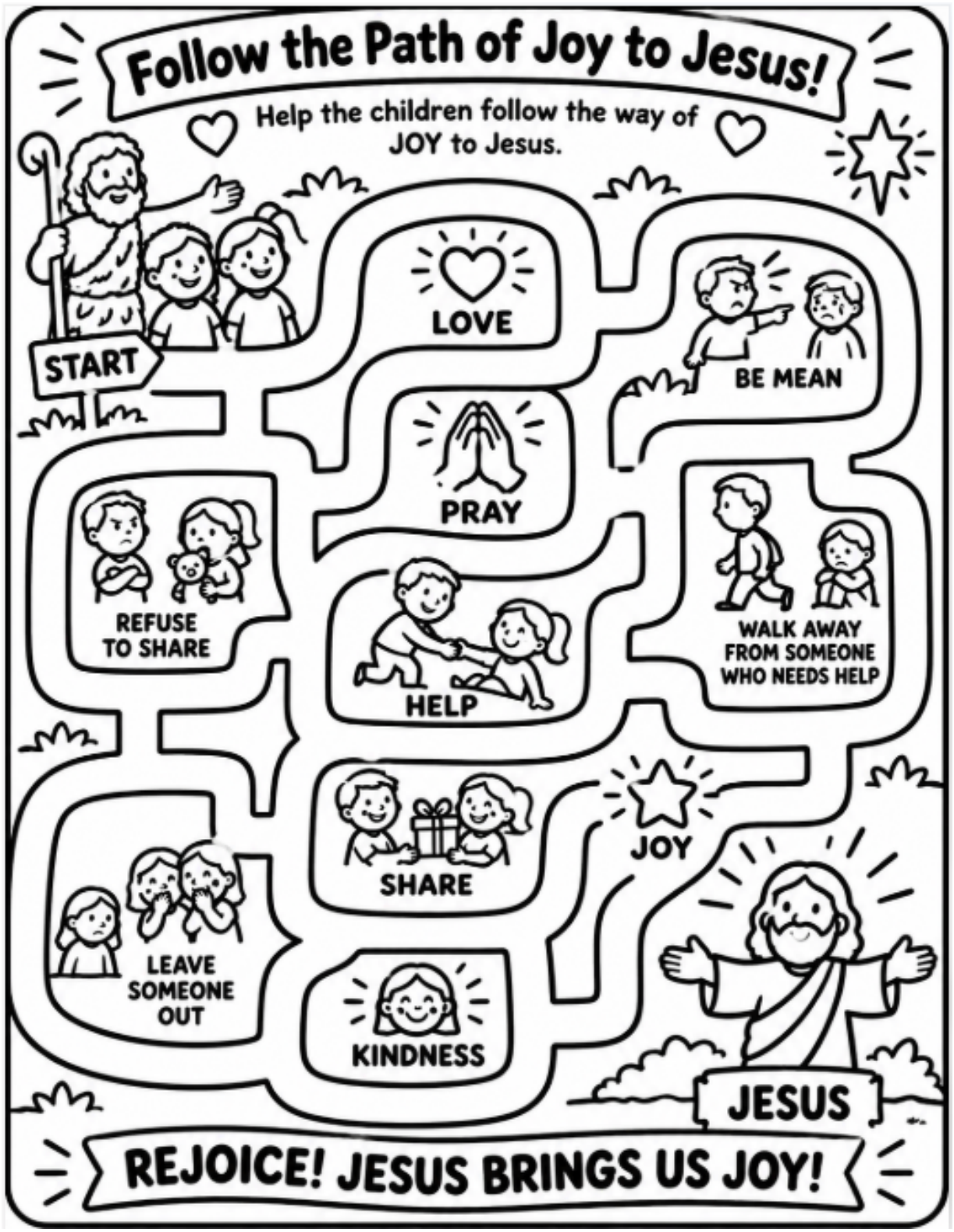
Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

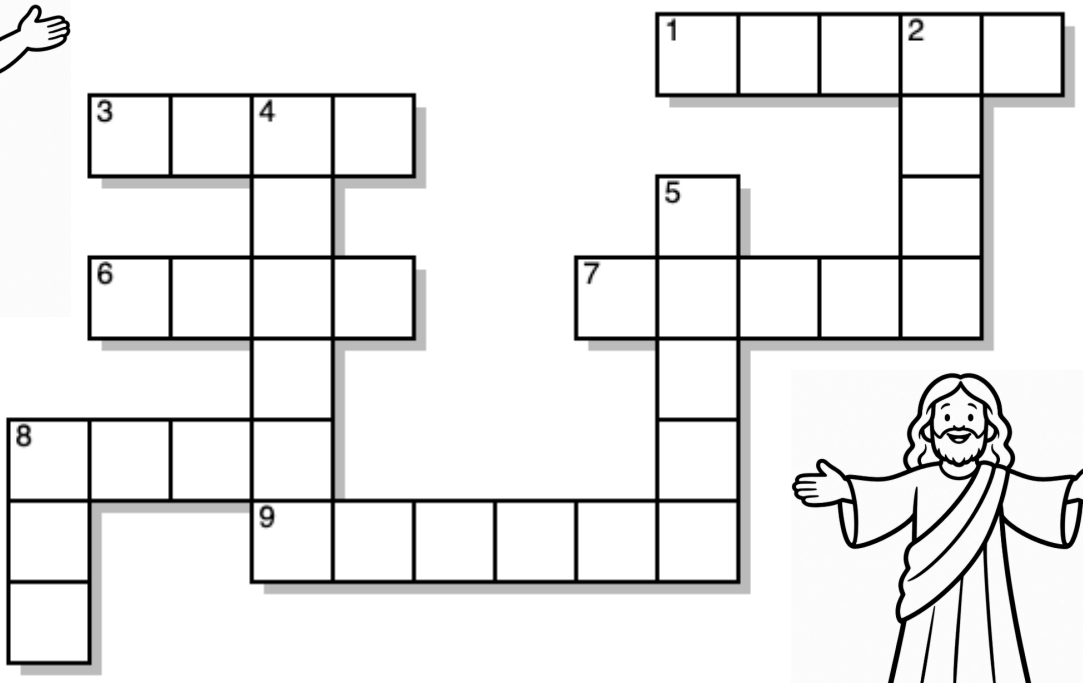
Third Sunday of Advent



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent





ACROSS

1 Jesus is the true _____ of the world.
3 We can talk to God when we _____.
6 We can show God's _____ by helping others.
7 The second Advent candle reminds us of this.
8 The person who prepared the way for Jesus.
9 We give _____ to God for our blessings.

DOWN

2 The first Advent candle reminds us of this.
4 The special season before Christmas.
5 The person John the Baptist told people about.
8 The third Advent candle reminds us of this.



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent

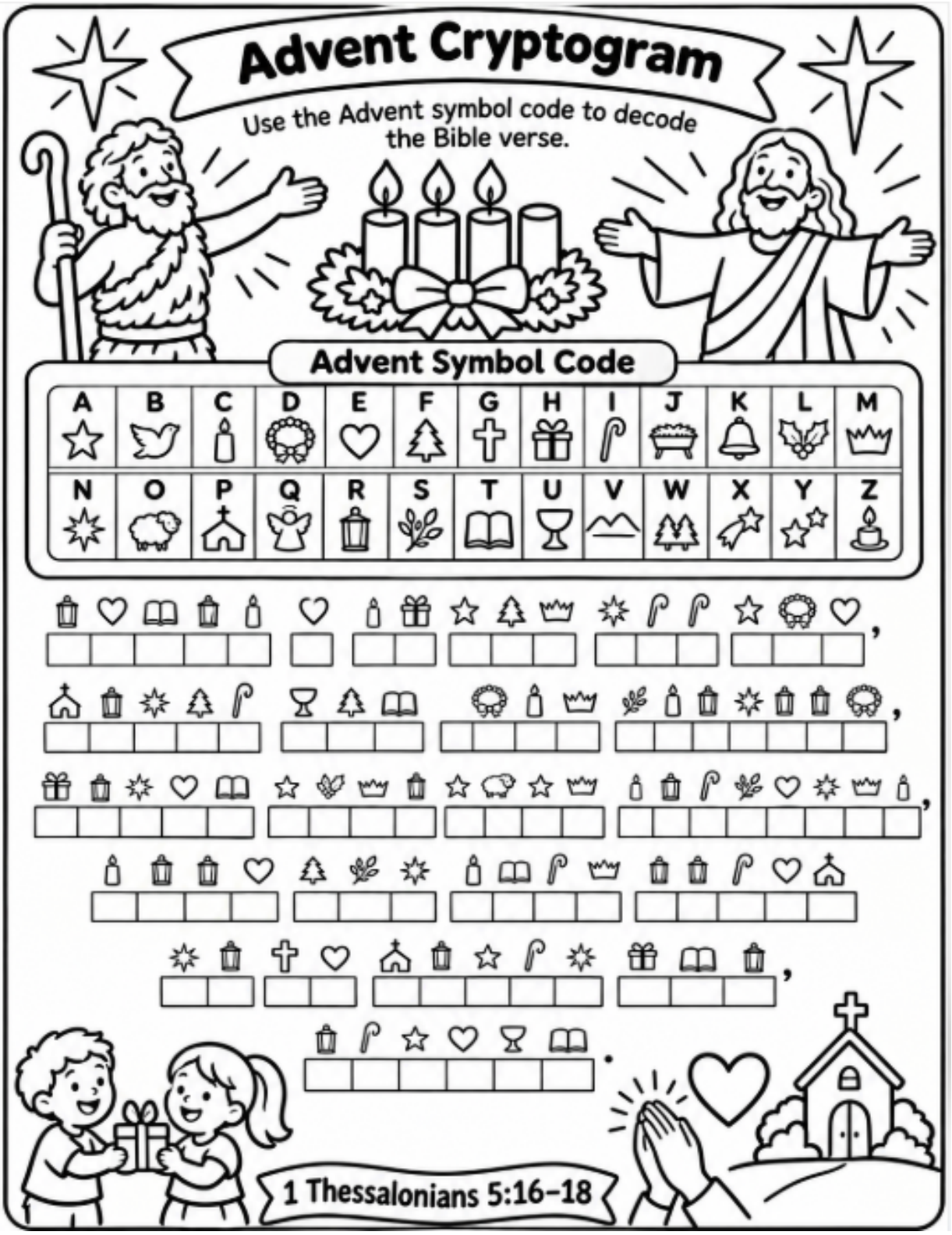
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Joy
Jesus
John
Advent
Pray
Thanks
Light
Love
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Peace
God
Christmas
Rejoice
Prepare



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent



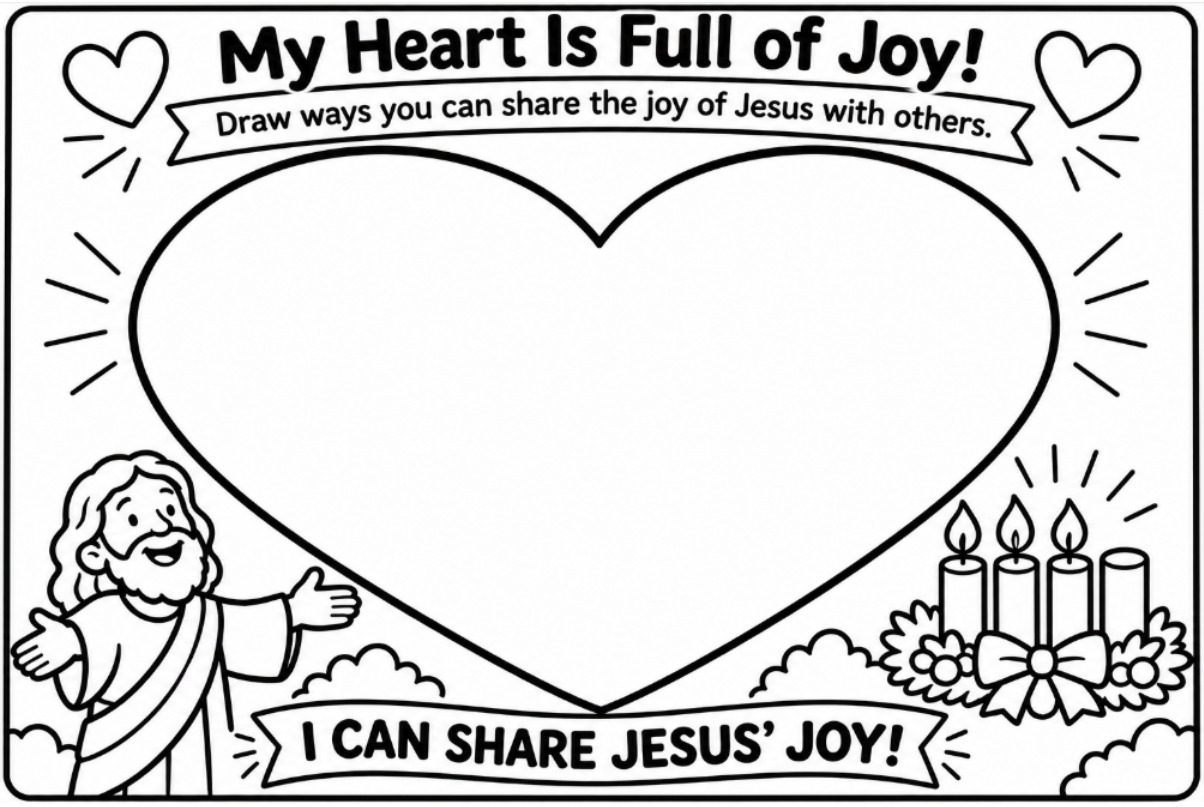
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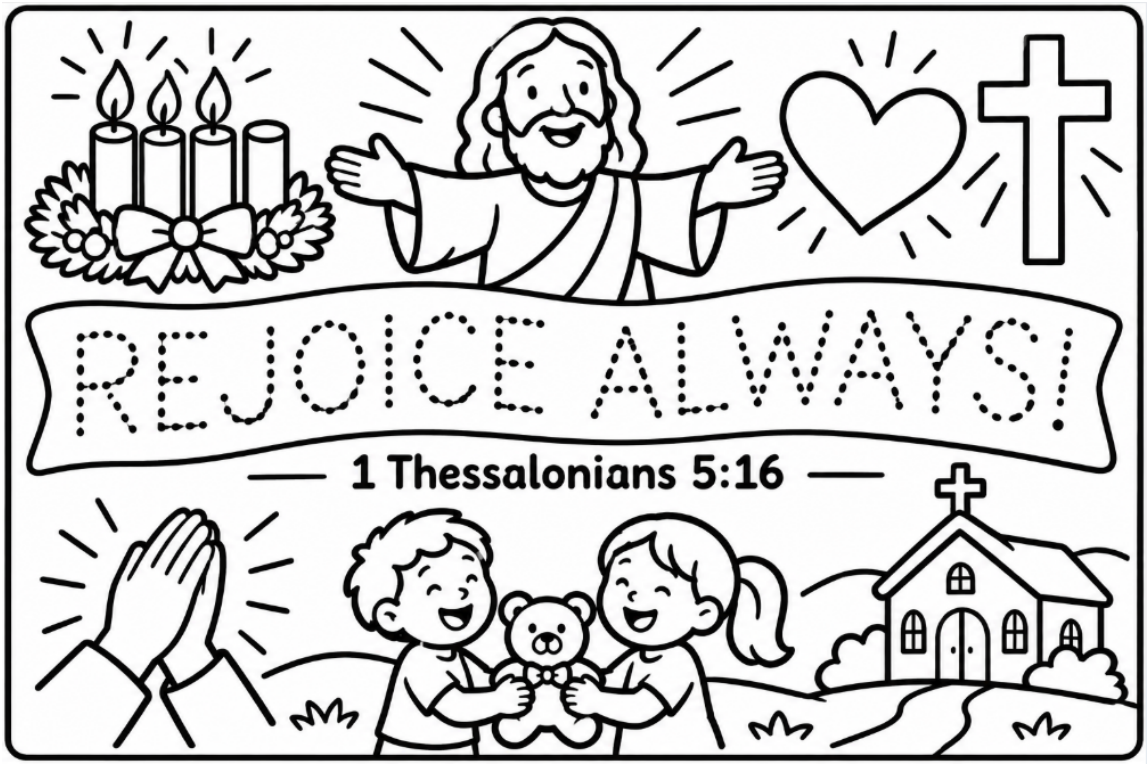
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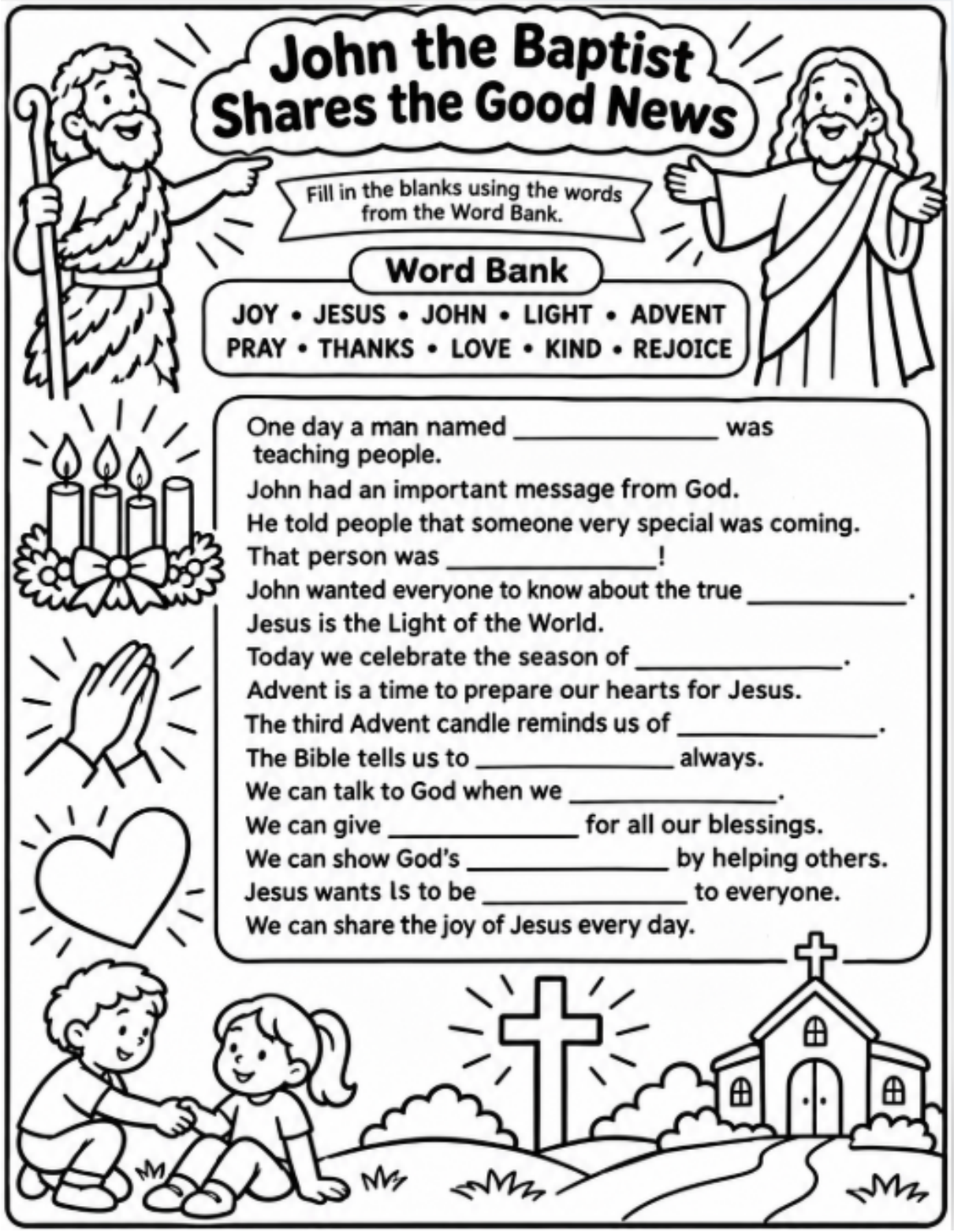
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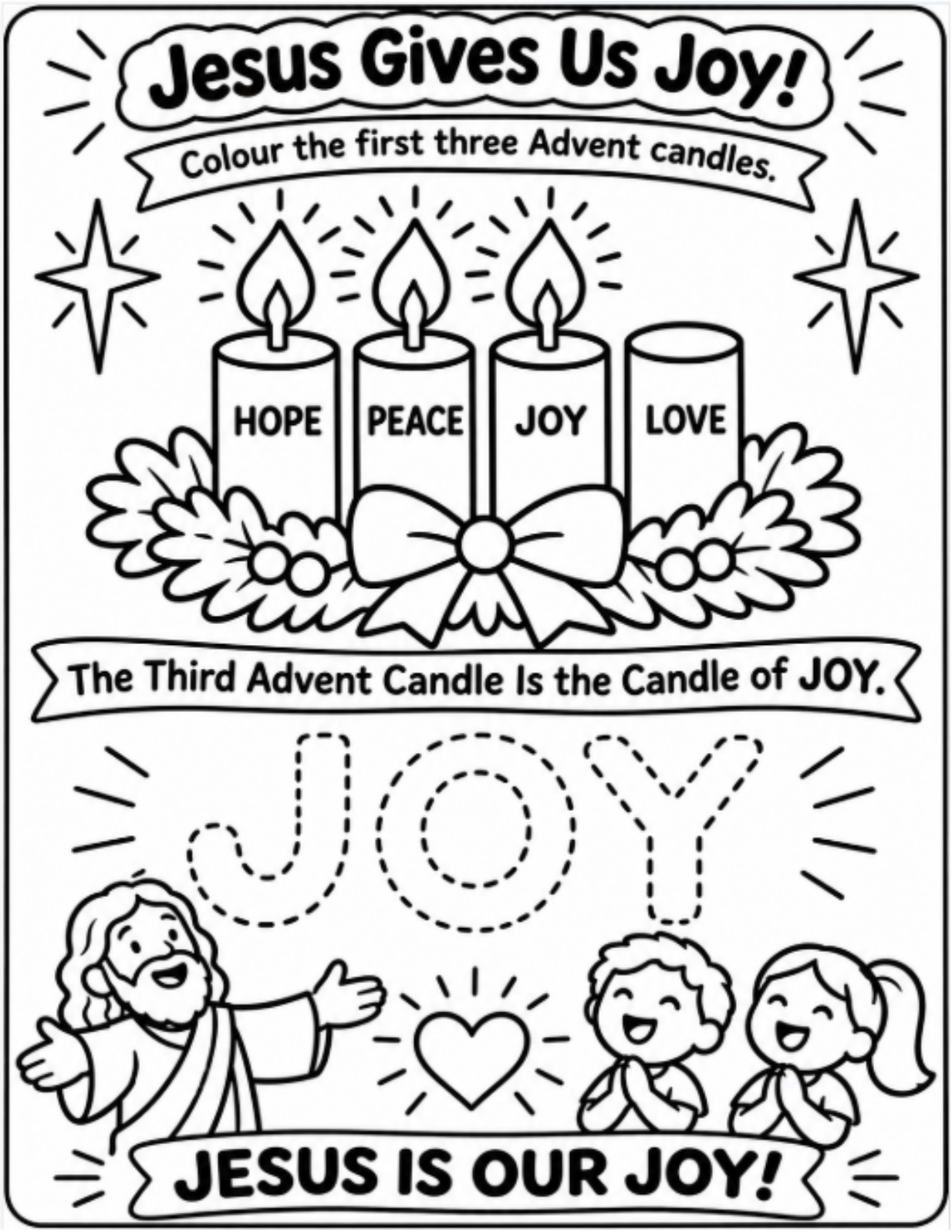
Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent



Rejoice! Jesus Brings Us Joy!

Third Sunday of Advent



Crossword - Key

Across	Down
1. Light	2. Hope
3. Pray	4. Advent
6. Love	5. Jesus
7. Peace	8. Joy
8. John	
9. Thanks	

Cryptogram – Key:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Fill-in-the-Blank – Key

John
Jesus
Light
Advent
Joy
Rejoice
Pray
Thanks
Love
Kind