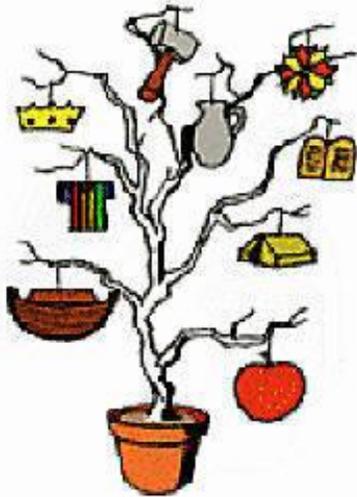


JESSE TREE



Making a Jesse Tree is a good Advent activity to prepare yourself for the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It's also a lot of fun and great to do with kids. You will need:

- a small branch, preferably one that has spreading branches, not the straight up and down kind.
- a vase or holder to put the branch in.
- craft supplies to make the symbols out of. You can draw or paint them on paper or fabric or anything else you feel like. You could embroider them on fabric or plastic canvas. You could make them out of small toothpicks. You could use craft foam and glue the symbols onto them. You could look them up on google and print them out and colour them. Or anything else your talent and imagination might suggest to you.
- string or ribbon to hang the symbols from the tree.

You could do one each day with the readings suggested. Or you could do a bunch on the Sundays in Advent or you could do them all at the beginning or you could spend a day sometime in the middle with your grandkids and do them then. It's entirely flexible. We provide a symbol for each day during Advent, ending on Christmas Day but if there are other symbols you would like to add as well, go ahead. Have fun with this. Hang your symbols on the Jesse tree with the Christ symbol last and at the top.

Why is this called a Jesse tree?

It starts with the prophecy of Isaiah, Chapter 11, vs. 1-3:

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

Christians understand this to be a prophecy about Jesus, who was descended from Jesse (and his son David). Christians see many of the things in the Old Testament as leading up to Jesus and so we read passages of the Old Testament as we prepare for the birth of Jesus at Christmas, to help us understand what he came to do, what God wanted him to do. And as we read the Old Testament (and some New Testament) passages, we understand more about who God is and how God interacts with human beings and what God desires for us.

Here are the symbols and some appropriate readings for each one.

November 29: Stump and Shoot. This is the symbol of the Jesse tree, the shoot coming out of the stump of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1-3

November 30: Land and Sea and Sky. A picture of the earth, with land and water, and of the sun or moon or sky (or several, if you like). This symbolizes God's creation, how he created everything in the beginning. Read all or part of Genesis 1.



December 1: Apple and Snake These symbolize the first humans whom God created in his own image, free to create and to make choices. Sometimes we choose to follow God and sometimes we don't. It is because we often don't (the snake tempted them to eat the apple, which God had told them not to eat), that we get into a mess and God sent Jesus to free us from our sins and reconcile us to God. Read Genesis 1:26-27 3:1-7.

December 2: Ark and Rainbow This is the symbol of Noah and how God saved him and all the animals when the earth was destroyed by a flood. Noah built the ark, a large ship for himself and the animals, and the rainbow is the sign that God will never again send a flood to destroy the earth. Read Genesis 6:11-22, 9:8-13

December 3: Tent and Camel These are signs of Abraham and Sarah, who lived in tents and rode camels. God chose Abraham to become the father of many nations, including the Hebrew people, of whom Jesus was part. Read Genesis 12:1-7, Hebrews 11:8



December 4: Ladder This reminds us of the story of Jacob, who saw a ladder going up to heaven. This shows us that God desires to be with us, because he makes a way between heaven and earth. Read Genesis 28:10-22



December 5: Star of David This is the symbol of the Jewish people and reminds us of all the great and faithful people in Israel who served God. They were the forefathers and mothers of Jesus. Read Genesis 17:1-8

December 6: Coat of Many Colours This represents Joseph, who was sold into slavery in Egypt by his brothers, but God was with him there and helped him prepare the way to save all his people when there was a famine. God used the evil that his brothers had plotted and turned it to good for everyone. Read Genesis 37:1-4, 18-28, 45:4-8



December 7: The Burning Bush This reminds us of when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and sent him to Egypt to rescue his people from slavery, just as he sent Jesus to rescue all his people from slavery to sin and misery. Read Exodus 3:1-12



December 8: Tablets of the Law God gave his children the 10 commandments on the tablets of the law, and other laws to guide their lives, so they could live in peace and prosperity and happiness together. When we follow God's law, it works out much better for us. Read Exodus 20:1-17

December 9: Wheat This is from the story of Ruth, a foreign woman from Moab, who returned to Israel with her mother-in-law and was gleaning wheat and married a good man, Boaz. She was the great grandmother of King David, and one of Jesus' ancestors. Her story shows us that God loves everyone. Read Ruth 1:15-18.

December 10: Horn of Oil The prophet Samuel used a horn of oil to anoint David as king of Israel. It also reminds us that Jesus is called the Messiah or the Christ, the Anointed One. We ourselves are anointed with oil in baptism and receive God's Holy Spirit. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13

December 11: Temple King Solomon built a temple so the people could worship God and God promised to hear the prayers anyone said to him. We still worship God in our churches, and God still hears our prayers. And Jesus said we ourselves were the temple of the Holy Spirit, because God dwells within us. Read 1 Kings 6:1; 37-38; 8:1, 6-7, 22-30



December 12: Rose and Candle These symbols remind us of the Old Testament prophecies that the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light and that Jesus would be the Rose of Sharon, which blooms in the desert as a sign of the return of God's people to the promised land. Read Isaiah 9:1-7; 35:1-10

December 13: Altar and Flame This comes from the story of Elijah, who challenged the priests of Baal to a contest, which he won when God sent fire from heaven onto his offering, and even burned up the stones. It reminds us that God is the one we should worship, and nothing else. Read 1 Kings 18:17-39

December 14: Sword and Hoe A sword is a tool for war and a hoe (or a ploughshare) is a tool for growing things. The prophet Isaiah told us to beat our swords into ploughshares and stop fighting. This symbol reminds us that God desires peace for us and Jesus was the Prince of Peace. Read Isaiah 2:1-4

December 15: Heart and Word This reminds us of Jeremiah's prophecy that in the days to come, God would make a new covenant with us and write his law on our hearts. We believe that it is through Jesus that we have this new covenant and come to know God. Read Jeremiah 23:5-6; 31:31-34

December 16: Lion This reminds us of the story of Daniel in the Lions' Den. Daniel was a Hebrew captive in the court of King Darius of Persia. Daniel's enemies persuaded the king to make a law that no one could worship anyone but him for 30 days or be thrown into a lions' den. Daniel kept worshipping God and God saved him from the lions. Read Daniel 6:10-23



December 17: Praying Hands The praying hands remind us of all the times in the Bible that people prayed for something and their prayers were answered. Zechariah and Elizabeth were getting old and they had been praying for a child. God granted their request and they became the parents of John the Baptist. Read Luke 1:5-25

December 18: Lily In art, the Angel Gabriel is usually shown holding a lily as he announces to Mary that God would like her to be the mother of the Messiah. It symbolizes her purity. Mary says yes to God, "let it be to me according to your word." She sets a wonderful example for all of us. Read Luke 1:26-38



December 19: Tools Joseph, Jesus' earthly father, was a carpenter and taught Jesus how to be a carpenter, and how to be a good man and follow God's laws. Joseph also trusted God and did as God told him to do. He is another good example for us all. Read Matthew 1:18-25

December 20: Scallop Shell This is John the Baptist's symbol, because he baptised people and we use scallop shells for baptisms. John called people to repentance and to follow the commandments of God and he said the Messiah was coming. He also baptised Jesus at the beginning of his ministry. The shell reminds us of our own baptism. Read Matthew 3:1-17



December 21: Angel The angel Gabriel announced to Zechariah that he would have a son, to Mary that she would bear the Messiah and he explained things to Joseph. A host of angels praised God when Jesus was born. Angels are God's messengers to us. Luke 2:13-14

December 22: Staff and Sandals These represent the shepherds, who used their staffs to herd the sheep. They were the first people who were told about the birth of Jesus, by angels. They were ordinary people, like us, and God chose them as the first witnesses to the birth of his Son. We, too, witness to his birth every time we speak of him, as the shepherds did. Read Luke 2:8-20

December 23: Star of Bethlehem Wise men from the east saw the star when it rose and knew that it meant a great king had been born in Israel. They travelled a long way to see Jesus and give him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Read Matthew 2:1-12



December 24: Manger Jesus' parents travelled to Bethlehem for the Roman census, and when they arrived there was no place for them in the inn. They took refuge in a barn and Jesus was born that night His mother wrapped him up and laid him in a manger, an animal's feeding trough. Read Luke 2:1-7



December 25: Chi Rho These are two Greek letters which correspond to our Ch and R, the first two letters of Christ, which means the anointed one. They are often put together in Christian art into the chi rho symbol like this:

These remind us that Jesus is the anointed one, the king who shall reign forever and ever. Read Revelation 11:15-17; Philippians 2:5-11

**Leave the Jesse Tree up over the whole 12 days of Christmas.
Let it remind you that God has loved all people from the very beginning of creation
and continually calls us into loving relationship.**

(Instructions shared by Rev. Michelle Bull, Emmanuel Church, Spryfield, NS)

