



The Jesse Tree

- Why have a Jesse tree? Because then it is clear that, for the Christian, it is about belonging to the family of Jesus, and to all his ancestry....that is what we stand on....that is what gives us hope...
- Why not place a number of the symbols on the tree each week? – often if the images are made from Styrofoam, they stand out most clearly, or use white card..... We need to use the rich symbolism of the Jesse tree carefully – it can't come all at once or else the image is spoiled...
- Add the explanation of the images nearby with the scripture references....
- Let this tree become the tree on which lights are placed at Christmas, and/or the crib could be built underneath....
- If you use a Christmas tree in your church during Advent and Christmas, you might keep it for Lent and Easter also. When the time comes to take down the tree after Christmas, trim off the branches and transform the trunk into a rugged cross. [You may need to lash one of the branches on again to make the crosspiece.] It is fitting that the Christmas tree should be used in this way, for Christmas has meaning only in relation to the message of Christ's Passion and Resurrection.
- The denuded trunk of the Christmas tree is an apt symbol of the rejection of our Lord. On Good Friday it could be veiled in black, and after sunset on Saturday, decorated with fresh flowers to symbolise the joy of the Resurrection.

Making a Jesse Tree

- A Jesse tree, either at home or in the sanctuary, can be either a banner or a poster on a wall, with the symbols fastened to it; or a tree, with the symbols hung from the branches.
- A banner can be made of heavy felt or cotton, or other appropriate fabric and the symbols can be attached with pins or Velcro.
- Background of Purple with a large cut stump and a single green branch growing from one side. The symbols are attached around the branch, usually with a star as the last symbol at the top.
- If a tree is used, it should be one that can be seen in the church without being too dominant. The symbols can be widely varied, from simple hand coloured paper by children, to more elaborate craft items. Styrofoam or polystyrene can be a good material for its ease of cutting and also as a way of reusing it.

Prayer with the Jesse Tree

Let's face it - the four weeks leading up to Christmas are the worst possible time to try and prepare **spiritually** for anything. It is a time more attuned to shopping and parties than to **greater** prayer or reflection. But in many ways that's exactly the point. Advent is not easy and it's not convenient.

The word Advent means 'coming'. It is the time of year when we get ready for the coming of the most important guest of all time Jesus. It's a time to pull back from the busyness just far enough so that we can concentrate on the significant event in a stable two thousand years ago, the coming of Jesus then, the coming of Christ in our lives everyday and preparing to meet Christ who will come again.

The story of God in the Old Testament can be told either in terms of the main characters of the story, or of pivotal events that helped shape and define the people's journey of faith through the Old Testament. The actual story being told is the unfolding witness of God's desire to reveal Godself to us throughout history. The continuity of God's love, patience, and grace across the centuries to the most unlikely people in the midst of their struggles and failures is the focus.

This story climaxes in the Incarnation, God becoming one of us, a mere baby, a child, a human person who lived among us. As Christians we need to listen to the Old Testament Story for what it teaches us about God and ourselves....

Reader 1: The Tree - Isaiah 11:1-1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him -
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord -
and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;
but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 2: Rainbow- Genesis 9:12-13

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: 13 I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 3: Stars – Genesis 15:5

And the Lord took Abraham outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them " And God said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 4: Ladder - Genesis 28:12 – 16

Jacob had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.

"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it."

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 5: Burning Bush - Exodus 3:4-5

When the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am."

Then He said, "Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 6: Scallop Shell – Luke 3:3-4

He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 7: White Lily - Luke 1:28-32

The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you." Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Reader 8: Carpenter's Hammer – Matt 1:20-21

An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.

Sung Response: Come to us O Emmanuel

Concluding Prayer

Come to us, Lord, Come into our lives
as you entered the lives of your people all down through the ages.
Open us to your presence as you are born in our world
this day, this Christmas and always.
Amen