



# Jessie Tree

A FAMILY ADVENT DEVOTION



**Holy Family Parish - Family Ministry - Advent 2024**

love God   love others   make disciples

## **Dec 1 - Creation: Genesis 1**

In the beginning there was only God. God had so much love to give that creation just had to happen. God started with light because up until then, there was nothing except God. God created the sun, moon, and stars – all the light possible. Next came our Earth and other planets around other stars.



Then God wanted to fill up the Earth – with oceans, seas, rivers, lakes – all the water possible. Then God worked on the land part of our Earth – mountains, hills, valleys, and plains – many different spaces. Finally, God knew that this part of Creation was finished. Creation was God’s first gift of love.

- *What do you think it means that creation was God's first gift of love?*
- *How do you think the different parts of creation (like light, water, and land) work together to make our world special?*
- *What is your favorite thing God made?*

## **Dec 2 - The Garden: Genesis 2:4**

After the Earth with its land and water was completed, God wanted to fill our Earth with plants and animals. Finally, God created humans – a man and a woman, called Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve gave each of the plants and animals a name.

God gave Adam and Eve a wonderful Garden for them to live and to play. They never had to work, and they could visit all day with God. There were lots of plants and trees. In the centre of the Garden were the tree that gives life and the tree that gives knowledge of what is good and what is bad. God told Adam and Eve that they could eat fruit from any of the trees, except the Tree of Knowledge. If they ate that fruit, God told them, they would die. God thought, “If Adam and Eve love me, they will do what I have asked them to do. Then we can all stay forever in my wonderful Garden.”



- *What do you think it means to love God, and how can we show our love for Him in our daily lives?*
- *Why do you think God gave Adam and Eve the choice not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, and how does having choices help us learn and grow?*

## **Dec 3 - The Apple: Genesis 6:9 – 9:17**

One of the creatures in the Garden was very evil. This creature was called Satan. Satan hated God, and wanted to hurt God. Satan pretended to be a snake, and lied to Adam and Eve. Satan told them that they would not die if they ate fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. “If you eat some of that fruit”, hissed Satan, “You will be just like God!” Adam and Eve believed this lie. They ate some of the fruit, and then they knew that it was a wrong thing to do. They were ashamed and they hid themselves. God came looking for them. God knew that they had not listened to what they were told, and was so sad. God found Adam and Eve, and told them that they could not live in the Garden anymore. “I still love you so much, but now you will have to leave the Garden, and work hard for the rest of your lives.” God hoped they would be sorry and that they could still love each other. God promised them, “Someday, I will send a special person to help people find their way back to loving Me.”



- *What do you think Adam and Eve felt when they realized they had made a wrong choice? How can we learn from their experience when we make mistakes?*
- *Why do you think Satan wanted to trick Adam and Eve? How can we recognize when someone is trying to lead us away from what is right?*
- *What do we do when we are told not to touch something? Can we listen & be good like Adam & Eve should have been?*

## **Dec 4 - The Rainbow: Genesis 6:9 – 9:17**

Adam and Eve had children and grandchildren. Soon there were many people living on the earth. Some of those people were wicked and forgot about God. God was sad, but found one family that still remembered and loved God. This was Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives. God spoke to Noah and told him that it was going to start to rain – for a very long time. God planned to flood the entire Earth, and drown all of the wicked people.



God told Noah to build an ark – a very big boat that he could live on with his family and the animals that God wanted to save. Noah built the ark, filled it with two of each kind of animal and all of his own family. Then it started to rain. It rained for forty days and nights, and the entire Earth was flooded. All the wicked people drowned and died. When the rain stopped and the flood waters dried up, Noah came out of the ark with his family and all of the animals. God promised Noah that the Earth would never be flooded again. God loved all of us too much to ever punish us like that again. God placed a rainbow in the sky, to remind everyone of this promise. Maybe you've seen one too?

- *Why do you think God chose Noah and his family to save from the flood? What qualities did Noah have that made him special in God's eyes?*
- *What does the rainbow symbolize in the story, and how can it remind us of God's promises today?*

## **Dec 5 - The Stars, Abrahams Family: Genesis 12:1–7**

Many years passed. Once again there were many people. One of them was called Abram. He and his wife Sarah loved God and God loved them. When God asked them to travel far away from their home, they did what God asked. God helped Abram and his wife. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and promised him that even though he and Sarah had no children yet, eventually they would have a very large family. There would be so many that no one could count them – like the stars in the sky. God promised Abraham that one of his great grandchildren would be that special person that Adam and Eve had been promised. This person would come to help people learn how to love God again.



- *What do you think it means to trust someone, like how Abraham trusted God?*
- *Why do you think Abraham and Sarah decided to follow God's instructions and travel to a new place, even though they didn't know where they were going?*
- *What do you think it means to have a large family like the stars in the sky, and why is it important that one of Abraham's great-grandchildren would help people learn to love God?*

## **Dec 6 - THE TENT: GENESIS 18:1-6**

Abraham and his wife Sarah lived in the desert, where everyone lived in tents. They were shepherds, following their sheep and goats to new pastures, whenever they needed to. Their tents were open at the bottom, to let air move easily, since it was often very hot. Tents were woven from black goat hair that they cut from their flocks. There were different rooms in each tent – one for the women in the family, one for the servants, and one for the men.



One day three visitors came to Abraham in his tent. Abraham brought food for them to eat, because travelling in the desert was dangerous and lonely. The visitors told Abraham that his wife Sarah would have a baby boy in the next year. Sarah was in another part of the same tent, so she heard what they said, and she laughed. She and Abraham were very old by then, and she didn't think a baby was possible for them anymore. Sarah and Abraham didn't know it, but their visitors were really God and two angels. When the same visitors came back a year later, Sarah had a baby boy. She called him Isaac, because that was how you said the word "laughter" in their language. Abraham and Sarah loved Isaac very much – but they loved God even more, because God had given Isaac to them.

- *What do you think Sarah felt when she heard the visitors say she would have a baby? Why do you think she laughed?*
- *How do you think Abraham and Sarah showed their love for God after having Isaac? What can we learn from their story about trusting in God's promises?*
- *How do you think Abraham and Sarah felt when they finally had their baby Isaac after waiting for so long?*

## **Dec 7 – Sheep: GENESIS 22:1-18**

When Isaac was still a young boy, God called Abraham and told him to kill Isaac and offer him to God as a sacrifice. Abraham loved Isaac, but he also loved and trusted God. He didn't know what God's plan was, but he hoped everything would be fine in the end. Abraham took Isaac up a mountain. Isaac asked, "Father, we have everything we will need for the sacrifice, except the sheep." Abraham replied, "Don't worry my son, God will provide everything we will need." Abraham tied up Isaac and placed him onto a rock. He was about to kill Isaac, but just in time, God called Abraham and said, "Do not hurt your son. Because you were ready to kill Isaac, your only son whom you love, now I know that you really do love Me." Abraham found a ram tangled up by its horns in a bush close by. He and Isaac caught the ram, killed it, and offered it to God instead of Isaac. Both Abraham and Isaac knew now that God really did love them.



- *Why do you think Abraham trusted God?*
- *How do you think Isaac felt when God told Abraham to stop?*
- *Why do you think Abraham was willing to obey God even when it meant sacrificing his son? What does this story teach us about trust in God, even when we do not understand His plans?*
- *When Isaac asked about the sheep for the sacrifice, Abraham responded, "God will provide." What do you think this means? Can you think of a time when you had to trust that God would provide for you or your family?*

## **Dec 8 - Ladder: GENESIS 28:10-22**

When Isaac grew up, he married Rebecca and they had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. When the brothers were grown, Isaac sent Jacob to a faraway country to find a wife. One night on the way, Jacob dreamt a very strange dream. In the dream, there was a ladder reaching up from earth to heaven. Angels were climbing up and down the ladder. God spoke to Jacob in the dream, and said, "I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and your father Isaac. All of this land here will be yours. You will have many children, and I will look after your family forever." And so Jacob knew that God loved him, just as God had loved his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. He marked the spot where he had fallen asleep with a large rock. Jacob decided that he would come back to that place after he had found a wife. This spot is very close to the town of Bethlehem, that we will talk about later. But I think you already know something about Bethlehem!



- *What do you think Jacob saw in his dream?*
- *How do you think Jacob felt when God talked to him?*
- *Why do you think Jacob wanted to remember the place he fell asleep and what does this tell us about the importance of places where we feel close to God?*
- *What do you think the ladder in Jacob's dream represents, and why do you think it was important for God to show Jacob this vision?*
- *How did Jacob feel when God spoke to him in the dream, and what does this tell us about God's relationship with Jacob and his family?*

## **Dec 9 - Coat of Many Colours: GENESIS 37&50**

Our friend Jacob had twelve sons! The second youngest was called Joseph. Jacob loved him the most, and gave him a special coat with many different colours. Like his father Jacob, Joseph also had strange dreams. In one dream, his brothers told him that he could be their boss. Joseph's brothers were jealous and they decided to kill Joseph. The youngest brother, Benjamin, loved Joseph. He told his brothers that they should not kill Joseph, but sell him to traders along the road. So that is what they did. They took away Joseph's beautiful coat and spilled animal blood on it. Then they told their father Jacob that a wild animal had killed Joseph. Jacob was so very sad that his son Joseph was dead, and thought he would never see him again. But God had such a wonderful plan! Joseph went with the traders to Egypt. The king (called a Pharaoh) learned about Joseph's strange dreams and his gift of understanding dreams. He treated Joseph like his own son and soon Joseph was very powerful. One day Joseph's brothers came to Egypt.



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Joseph forgave them for sending him away from home. Jacob's entire family came to live in Egypt with Joseph. God changed Jacob's name to "Israel" and so his family would be called the "Israelites".

- *How do you think Joseph felt when his brothers betrayed him, and how do you think he felt when he later forgave them?*
- *What does it mean to say 'I'm sorry'? What does this story tell us about the power of forgiveness in our own lives and relationships?*
- *What does this teach us about handling our own feelings when someone hurts us?*
- *Why do you think Joseph's brothers were jealous of him? Can you think of a time when you felt jealous? How did you handle that situation?*
- *How do we show love to our family?*

## **Day 10 - Babys' Basket: EXODUS 1:1–22 & 2:1–17**

Jacob's family (the Israelites) grew and grew in Egypt, just as God had promised Abraham many years before. Soon the Egyptians were frightened because there were so many Israelites. The Pharaoh decided that it would be a good idea to kill all the baby boys in the Israelite camp.

One Israelite mother hid her baby boy in a basket and floated him onto the river. The Pharaoh's daughter found the basket and kept the baby as her own son. She called him "Moses" because that meant "I drew him from the water". Moses grew up as a Prince in the Pharaoh's house.

One day Moses discovered that he was actually an Israelite. Later he killed an Egyptian soldier in a fight. This made Pharaoh very angry and he wanted to kill Moses. Instead, Moses ran away into the desert to escape Pharaoh. Moses found a family of shepherds there, and began to live in the desert. He had to learn what it meant to be an Israelite and not an Egyptian, but God helped him.

- *Why do you think Moses' mom put him in a basket on the river?*
- *How do you think Moses felt when he helped his people escape?*
- *How do you think Moses felt when he discovered that he was actually an Israelite and not an Egyptian prince? What does this story teach us about understanding who we are and where we come from?*
- *Courage and Choices: Why do you think Moses decided to help the Israelite who was being mistreated, even though it put him in danger? What can we learn from his choice to stand up for what is right?*
- *God's Help in Difficult Times: In the story, Moses had to run away and live in the desert. How do you think God helped him during this tough time? Can you think of a time when you needed help and how you felt when you received it?*



## **Day 11- Burning Bush EXODUS 3-15**

The Egyptians treated the Israelites very badly. The Israelites prayed that God would rescue them, and God heard them. One day while Moses was taking care of his sheep, he saw something strange - there was a fire in a bush, but it didn't burn up. He went close to the bush, and God called to him from the bush: "Moses - I have heard my people, the Israelites, praying to me to rescue them. Go to Pharaoh and tell him - Let my people go!" Moses did not want to, but he obeyed, because he had learned to love God. At first, Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites leave. God sent ten terrible disasters to the Egyptians. The last of God's punishments was to kill the first-born baby of all of the Egyptians, even of their animals. After that, the Pharaoh ordered Moses and all of the Israelites to leave. Almost immediately, he changed his mind, and sent his soldiers after them. The Israelites came to a large sea. God sent a strong wind to blow a path through the sea. The Israelites walked right across on dry land. When the Egyptians tried to follow them, God stopped the wind. The sea swallowed up all of the Egyptian soldiers. And so Moses and all of the Israelites left Egypt safely. They began to wander in the desert, looking for the land that God had promised Jacob so many years before.

- *Who helped the people escape from Egypt?*
- *What did Moses see in the bush?*
- *How did God help the people escape?*
- *Why do you think Moses was afraid to go to Pharaoh at first?*
- *What do you think the Israelites felt when they saw the sea parting for them?*
- *How do you think the Israelites showed their trust in God during their journey out of Egypt?*



## **Day 12 - Mana: EXODUS 16:1-35**

God's family wandered for many years in the desert near Egypt. They were returning to their own land, where Jacob had his dream. On the way, the people complained to Moses that they were thirsty. God told Moses to hit a rock with his shepherd's staff. When he did that, water came out of the rock for all of the people to drink. It was so good! But the people were still very hungry. The food they brought from Egypt was gone. There was not much to eat in the desert. One morning, God sent them a special gift. Something that looked like snow began to fall all over the land. They ate it, and it tasted very good. They called it "manna", because that meant "what is this?" in their language. The Israelites used these little flakes to make bread. And every night after that, God also sent flocks of wild birds into the camp for the Israelites to catch and eat. This is how God fed the Israelites in the desert for forty years until they found their way back to their own land. Didn't God take such great care of all those Israelites?



- *What did God send to help the people when they were hungry?*
- *How did the bread from heaven taste?*
- *Why do you think the Israelites complained to Moses about being thirsty and hungry?*
- *What do you think the Israelites felt when they saw the manna falling from the sky?*
- *How can we remember to trust God to take care of us, just like He took care of the Israelites in the desert?*

## **Day 13 - Ten Commandments EXODUS 19:1 - 20:20**

Moses and the Israelites wandered a very long time in the desert. Some forgot how much God loved them, and began to be wicked. God called Moses to come up a high mountain and they talked together. God gave Moses rules for the Israelite people to follow. The rules were carved into rock, so that they would last for a very long time. There were ten rules, called Commandments. The first three rules told the people to love God more than anything else. The other seven rules taught them how to love each other. This helped God's people to love God and to be more caring of each other. Finally, after forty years in the desert, the Israelites found their way back to the land God had promised Jacob. They stayed there and grew into a very powerful nation.



- *What did God give to Moses on the mountain?*
- *Why is it important to be kind to each other? What are some rules we should follow to be kind?*
- *Why do you think rules are important for us?*
- *What do you think it means to love God more than anything else?*
- *How can we show love and care for each other, just like the Commandments teach?*

## **Day 14 - Wheat: RUTH**

Naomi was an Israelite woman. She and her husband lived in Bethlehem and they had two sons. The family moved far away and both sons married wives from that land. When Naomi's husband and both sons died, she told her two daughters-in-law that they should go back to their own country. Naomi wanted to go back to Bethlehem. One left, but the other one, called Ruth, told Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." Ruth and Naomi travelled back to Bethlehem. Ruth continued to look after her mother-in-law, because she loved Naomi very much. There was a famine, which means there was little food for anyone. Ruth and Naomi were poor and hungry too. Ruth got permission to go into the wheat field. She picked up the little bits that had fallen to the ground. This was all the food that she and Naomi had to eat. The owner of the field was a very rich man. He noticed how hard Ruth worked and how well she cared for Naomi. He fell in love with Ruth and married her. Ruth continued to look after her mother-in-law until Naomi died.



- *How do you think Naomi felt when Ruth stayed with her?*
- *Why is it important to help our family and friends?*
- *What does Ruth's decision to stay with Naomi teach us about loyalty and friendship?*
- *How did Ruth's actions help both her and Naomi during their time of need?*
- *What can we learn from the relationship between Ruth and Naomi about caring for the elderly?*

## **Day 15 - Oil Lamp: 1 SAMUEL 1-3**

Another Israelite woman called Hannah had no children. She loved God and prayed for a son. Finally, her son was born. She called him Samuel. When Samuel was just three years old, Hannah brought Samuel to the priests to say thank you to God and to help the old priest. No one had heard God's voice for many, many years. In those days, they used oil lamps in the darkness. One night, before the lamp went out, God called, me." Once again, the priest told Samuel to go back to bed. When God called Samuel a third time, the priest realized that it was God calling. He told Samuel, "The next time you hear a call, say, 'Speak Lord, I am listening.'" God did come back to Samuel that night, and began speaking with Samuel. From then on, Samuel became a great friend of God, telling the people what God wanted them to hear. That was the way that God chose to talk to people from then on – telling special people, both men and women, who were called "prophets", important messages to share with everyone.



- What did Samuel say when he heard God's voice?
- What do you think it means when God calls us? What do you think it means to listen to God?
- How can we show that we are listening when someone calls us?
- How do you think Samuel felt when God called him?
- What can we do to listen better when someone is calling us?
- How can we share important messages or help others in our community, just like Samuel did for the people?

## **Day 16 - Shepherd's Staff: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-16**

Many years passed and now Samuel was an old man. God told him many things, and even to make Saul the King of the Israelites. But God was not happy with King Saul because he had been wicked. God sent Samuel to the town of Bethlehem to see a man called Jesse (YES – that Jesse!) Jesse had eight sons. God told Samuel that one of them was to be the new King of the Israelites. Jesse brought seven of his sons to meet Samuel. Each time he saw one, Samuel told Jesse, "No, God has not chosen this one." Finally, Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all of your sons?" "No," said Jesse, "The youngest one, David, is out looking after the sheep." "Bring David here," said Samuel. David came in from the hills, with his shepherd's staff over his shoulder. When Samuel saw David, God said, "He is the one." And so David was named the new King, to take over after King Saul died. No one was allowed to know except Jesse and his family, because King Saul was very jealous.



- *Why do you think God chose David instead of the older brothers?*
- *How do you think David felt when he was chosen to be king while he was still a shepherd?*
- *What lessons can we learn from Samuel listening to God when he went to find David?*

## **Day 17 – Harp: 1 SAMUEL 17-31**

King Saul was unhappy, because he had let God down. He was so sad that only gentle music could make him feel better. He asked, "Who is the best harp player in the land?" His helpers told him, "David, Jesse's son in Bethlehem plays the harp very well." And so, David came to stay with King Saul. Remember, no one there knew that God had chosen David to be the next King! David loved to sing and play the harp. We have many of David's songs that we can read or sing even today. They are in the part of the Bible called "The Psalms". King Saul loved David like a son, and took him along with him, even into battle. David had many adventures with King Saul, including killing a giant called Goliath, with his shepherd's slingshot. King Saul found out that David was really the one whom God wanted to be the next King for the Israelites. He was very angry, and tried to kill David. God always kept David safe so that he could one day be the king.



- Why did King Saul need music to feel better? Why do you think King Saul felt sad?
- How do you think David felt playing for the king?
- What did David use to defeat the giant?
- What can we learn from David's bravery when he faced Goliath, and how does that relate to facing our own challenges?

## **Day 18 - Crown. 2 SAMUEL 7: 1–16 & KINGS 3:1-16**



After King Saul died, David became King of the Israelites. He was a great warrior king. David wanted to build a house for God – called a Temple. But God said, “No – not you, but your son will build the Temple. I will build you a house – a great family.” God promised David, “The special person, whom I promised Adam and Eve that I will send, will be one of your descendants – a great grandchild!” David’s son, Solomon, became the next King. God asked Solomon, “What would you like most for me to give you?” Solomon could have asked for anything. But instead, he asked God, “Please make me very wise.” God was pleased. “Because you asked me for wisdom, and you did not ask me for a long life or strength or riches or victory in battle, I will give you all of that – wisdom and everything else too.” Solomon built a Temple for the people to pray to God. God promised Solomon, “If you do everything I ask you to do, and always love me, someone from your family will always be King for my people, just as I promised your father David.” Solomon was King for 40 years. There are many stories of the other Kings in Israel.

- What did David want to build for God?
- What did Solomon ask God to make him?
- What does it mean to be wise? *Discuss with the children what wisdom is and how it differs from just being smart. Encourage them to think of examples of wise decisions they or others have made.*
- Why do you think God wanted Solomon to ask for wisdom instead of riches or power?
- How do you think wisdom can help someone be a better leader or friend?
- How can we show our love for God in our daily lives? *Encourage the children to think about ways they can follow God's teachings and show love to others, similar to how Solomon was promised to do.*

## **Day 19 - Whale: JONAH**

Some of Israel’s Kings did not love and obey God. God punished them by sending the people away to faraway lands. God still loved them, and sent prophets to bring them messages. One of these prophets was called Jonah. God told Jonah, “Go to the city of Nineveh, and tell them I am very angry that they are being wicked. I am going to destroy their whole city!” Jonah was afraid to go to Nineveh so he hid on a ship, sailing far away. God knew where Jonah was, and sent a storm so fierce that the ship was about to fall apart. Jonah knew that he was the one who had made God angry. He jumped into the sea. The storm stopped right away. A great fish (like a whale) came and swallowed Jonah up. Jonah stayed three days inside the whale. Jonah prayed to God from inside the whale, and said he was sorry for not obeying God. Jonah promised to go to Nineveh. The whale spit Jonah out onto dry land and Jonah went to Nineveh. He called out in a loud voice, “God is angry. Stop being wicked or He will destroy all of Nineveh!” When the people in Nineveh heard Jonah’s message, they were sorry for being wicked. They asked God to forgive them. And God did!



- What did Jonah do when God asked him to go to Nineveh?
- What happened to Jonah when he ran away on the ship?
- Why do you think Jonah was afraid to go to Nineveh?
- How do you think Jonah felt in the whale?
- What do you think Jonah learned while he was inside the whale?
- How do you think the people of Nineveh felt when they heard Jonah's message?

## **Day 20 - Lion: DANIEL 6:1-28**

God’s people, the Israelites, did not always love and obey God. When they were being very wicked, God let their enemies defeat them in battle. Then the Israelites had to go far away to the land of their enemies. But God had not forgotten the people, and still loved them very much. God sent the Israelites another messenger called Daniel. Do you remember hearing about Joseph who had strange dreams and knew what other people’s dreams meant? Daniel also had many strange dreams. He could also tell other people what their dreams meant too, because God helped him to understand the dreams. The King of this land loved Daniel because he could help the King understand his dreams. Some wicked people were jealous of Daniel so they told lies about him.



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The King believed their lies, and threw Daniel into a den with lions. The lions did not hurt Daniel, and in the morning, Daniel told the King, "My God sent an angel to shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me. I have done no wrong against you, my King." Then the King was happy. He took Daniel out of the lion's den, and instead threw in the wicked people who had lied about Daniel. The lions ate them up!

- How do you think Daniel felt when he was thrown into the lion's den?
- What can we learn about being honest from this story?
- How did Daniel's faith help him in a scary situation?
- Why do you think the wicked people who lied about Daniel were punished, and what can we learn about honesty and integrity from their fate?
- The Role of Faith: In what ways do you think Daniel's faith helped him in the lion's den, and how can we apply the lessons from his faith to our own lives when facing challenges?

## Day 21- Angel: LUKE 1: 39-80

Finally, after many years, God brought the Israelite people back home. One of God's friends was called Zachary. He and his wife Elizabeth were very old, and they had no children. God sent the angel Gabriel to talk to Zachary. The angel told him that Elizabeth was going to have a baby. His name would be John. The angel told Zachary, "John will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord." Zachary did not believe the angel. So, the angel told Zachary, "Until John is born, you will not be able to talk." As soon as the baby was born, Zachary could talk again. He told everyone about the angel who had visited him. Zachary and Elizabeth named their baby John, just as the angel had told them to do. John grew up to be one of God's messengers – the last great prophet. He told the people that God's holy one was coming soon. John was called "John the Baptist", because he baptized people in the river Jordan, pouring water over them. Just as the angel Gabriel had said, John's job was to help God's people get ready for that special person who was coming to help them learn how to love God again. "Get ready!" John told the Israelites, "God has loved you for so long, and now at last God is keeping this promise."



- Why do you think Zachary didn't believe the angel? Can you think of a time when you found it hard to believe something that seemed impossible?
- How do you think Zachary felt when he could finally talk again?
- The Role of John the Baptist: What do you think it means to "prepare the people for the coming of the Lord"? How can we prepare ourselves and others to be ready for important events in our lives?
- The story mentions that God has loved His people for a long time. How do you see God's love in your life today? What are some ways we can show love to others, just as God loves us?

## Day 22 - Mary: LUKE 1: 39-80

Mary was a young girl who loved God very much. She was part of King David's family. God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary too. Gabriel told Mary, "The Lord is with you!" Mary was afraid at first, but the angel told her that she would become the mother of a baby who would be called Jesus. He would be that special person that God had promised Adam and Eve so many years before. The angel told Mary that her very old cousin Elizabeth was also going to have a baby. Mary agreed to be Jesus' mother, even though she was afraid. Then Mary went to help Elizabeth with the birth of her baby. As soon as Elizabeth saw Mary coming, her baby jumped inside of her. Elizabeth knew that Mary's baby would be someone very special – and her baby John did too! So imagine that – John the Baptist and Jesus were cousins because their mothers were cousins!



- Why do you think Mary was afraid when the angel came to her? What does it mean to be brave like Mary?
- How do you think Mary felt when she agreed to be Jesus' mother?
- What can we learn from her response when we face our own fears?
- Do you know the name of the symbol used for Mary in today's ornament? It's the **Immaculate Heart of Mary** and it shows us her deep love for Jesus and all people, reminding us to love and care for others just like she does.
- How did Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth show the importance of family support during significant life events? Can you think of a time when you helped a family member or a friend during a challenging moment?

## **Day 23 – Joseph, Carpenter: MATTHEW 1:18-25**

Do you remember meeting Jesse? He was David's father. God's people remembered all of the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren from Jesse. They kept a list for many hundreds of years. Even when God sent them far away into other lands, they still remembered who was in God's special family of kings. After all those years, there was a man called Joseph, who was one of those great-grandchildren. Joseph was a carpenter, and he was engaged to Mary. Suddenly, he found out that she was pregnant, before they were married. Joseph was not happy, but he loved Mary and did not want to hurt her. One night, an angel came to Joseph in a dream.

"Joseph," said the angel, "Don't be afraid. Mary's baby comes from God. You should marry her and take care of her and the baby. The baby will be called 'Emmanuel' which means 'God is with us.'" When Joseph woke up from his dream, he did exactly what the angel said. He promised to look after Mary and her baby.

- How did Joseph feel when he found out Mary was pregnant?
- What does this story teach us about handling difficult emotions in relationships?
- What do you think it means that the baby would be called 'Emmanuel'?
- Why do you think it was important for Joseph to listen to the angel's message in his dream? How can we recognize and respond to guidance in our own lives?
- What does Joseph's decision to marry Mary and care for her and the baby tell us about love and responsibility? How can we show love and responsibility in our own families?



## **Day 24 - Jesus: MATTHEW 1:18-25**

There was a Roman governor who ruled over the Israelites. He wanted to count all the people – this is called "taking a census". Joseph and Mary both came from the family of David.

Mary's baby would be born soon. They had to leave their home and go to Bethlehem, the City of David, to register for this census. There was no place for them to stay. Mary and Joseph ended up in a stable for the night. While they were there, baby Jesus was born. Shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem saw and followed a bright star in the sky and heard angels singing.

They hurried to Bethlehem to meet the new baby. The angels had told them he was the new king. Wise people from faraway lands also came, following that same bright star. It was all very exciting for the people of Bethlehem. Finally, God had kept the promise that was made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesse, David and so many others along the way. God loved us so much that Jesus was born as one of us in that stable in Bethlehem.

- *What do you think it means that Mary and Joseph had to stay in a stable instead of a comfortable inn?*
- *Why do you think the shepherds and wise people were so excited to visit baby Jesus?*
- *How does the story of Jesus' birth show us about God's love for humanity?*



Is that the end of the story of God's love for us? Of course not!

Jesus grew up. He died on a cross, and rose back to new life. Then he promised his friends that God would be sending the Holy Spirit to keep us company forever. This Holy Spirit would comfort and guide us, reminding us how much God loves us. All we have to do is listen.

love God    love others    make disciples