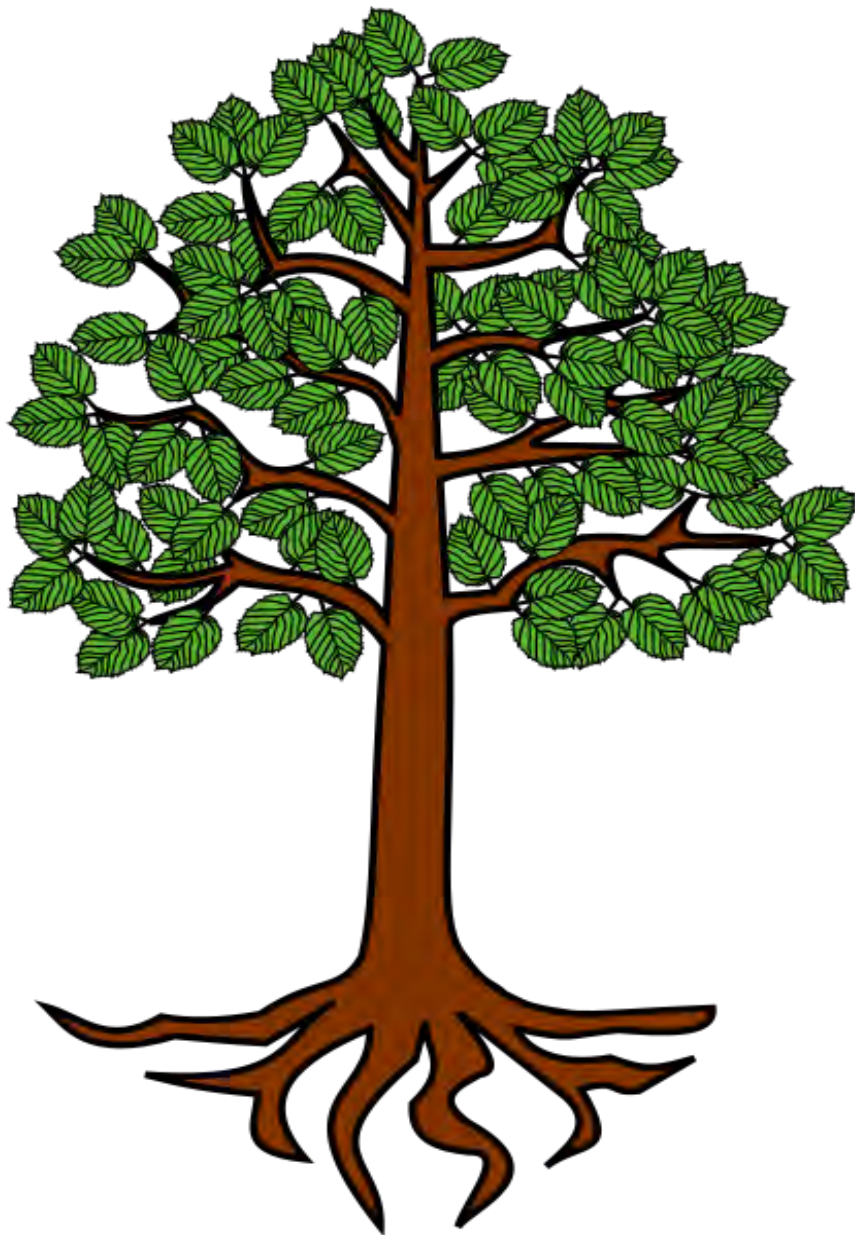


# The Advent Jesse Tree



# The Tradition of the Jesse Tree

Jesse Trees are a very old Christmas Tradition and first started in medieval times. They are used to help tell the story of the Bible from creation to the Christmas Story.

The name comes from Jesse who was the Father of the great Jewish King David. One prophecy in the Bible, in the book of Isaiah, says:

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

*2 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--*

*3 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;*

*4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.*

*Isaiah 11:1-4 (NIV)*

A branch is a sign of new life and new beginnings. Jesus was a descendant of King David and Christians believe that Jesus is this new branch.

The first Jesse trees were large carvings, tapestries or even stained glass windows put in churches that helped illiterate people (people who can't read or write) to learn about the Bible from creation to the Christmas Story. But now Jesse Trees are used as a kind of an Advent Calendar. You can use a normal Christmas Tree or a banner in the shape of a tree. Each day through advent (or sometimes just on the four Sundays of advent) a special decoration or ornament (similar to a Chrismon) that tells a story from the Bible, is hung on the tree. We have chosen four symbols for each week of Advent for you to decorate and create your own Jesse Tree.

# FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## Creation

*But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. Isaiah 11:1*

The first Jesse Tree symbol is a dove, reminding us of the peace and harmony of creation as God intended. You can read the full story of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1-10 and David in 1 Samuel 16:1-13. Jesse is the father of David, beginning a line of descendants that will lead to Jesus, the Messiah.

## Adam and Eve

*The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.*

*Genesis 3:6-7*

The Jesse Tree symbol for this reading is an apple, representing original sin. Christ is called the “second” or “new” Adam because he ushered in a new creation, forgiving sin and restoring humanity to God’s grace. The whole story of Adam and Eve can be found in Genesis 2:4-3:24.

## Noah

*Then God said to Noah: Go out of the ark, together with your wife and sons and your sons’ wives. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you—all bodily creatures, be they birds or animals or crawling things that crawl on the earth—and let them abound on the earth, and be fertile and multiply on it. Genesis 8:15-17*

The Jesse Tree symbol of the ark reminds us that although God was displeased with the wickedness of the men and women he had created, he also sees the best in us and renews his covenant with us through forgiveness and mercy. You can read the full story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 6:11-22, 7:1-8:22.

## Abraham

*“He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can. Just so,’ he added, ‘shall your descendants be.’ Abram put his faith in the Lord, who credited it to him as an act of righteousness.” Genesis 15: 5-6*

The symbol for today’s reading is a field of stars, representing God’s promise to Abraham, the father of our faith, whose descendants became the chosen people of God. You can learn more about Abraham’s great faith in God in Genesis 12:1-7 and 15:1-6.

## SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

### Isaac

*But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, 'Abraham, Abraham!' 'Yes, Lord,' he answered. 'Do not lay your hand on the boy,' said the messenger. 'Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son.'"* Genesis 22: 11-12

The ram depicted on today's ornament is the sacrifice God provided Abraham when he saw Abraham was willing to give up his only son, if that is what God required of him. Read about Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-19.

### Moses

*...When he looked, although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed. So Moses decided, "I must turn aside to look at this remarkable sight. Why does the bush not burn up?" When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to look, God called out to him from the bush: Moses! Moses! He answered, "Here I am." God said: Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, he continued, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said: I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering...Now, go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt. Exodus 3:2-10*

Moses, raised as an Egyptian by the pharaoh's daughter, is witness to God's word when an angel appears to him as a burning bush, depicted in today's symbol, and instructs him to lead the people of Israel to the Promised Land. Read Moses' story in Exodus 2:1-4:20.

### Ruth

*Wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God, my God. Where you die I will die and there be buried.*

Ruth was a woman of great faithfulness. She left behind her home and friends because she loved her mother-in-law and wanted to take care of her. She did what was difficult for her because she loved others and was faithful to God. She was the grandmother of Jesse. We can learn about faithful love from the story of Ruth. Her symbol is wheat.

### Jesse

*I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem for among his sons I have decided on a king.*

Jesse is the grandson of Ruth and the father of King David. We name Jesus' family tree a "Jesse Tree" because Jesus was born from this family line. When we make a Jesse Tree, we remember that we belong to Jesus' family through our Baptism. The symbol for Jes-

## THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

### David

*Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he arrives here." Jesse had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth with beautiful eyes, and good looking. The LORD said: There—anoint him, for this is the one! Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David... 1 Samuel 16:11-13*

David was first a shepherd, but when God called him to lead the nation of Israel, he became a shepherd of people to help them become what God wanted them to be. The shepherd's crook on today's ornament symbolizes Jesus as the Good Shepherd who will lay down his life for others. Read 1 Samuel 16, 17 and 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

### Solomon

*So God said to him: Because you asked for this—you did not ask for a long life for yourself, nor for riches, nor for the life of your enemies—but you asked for discernment to know what is right.*

Solomon was the son of King David. God told Solomon that he could ask for anything he wanted. Instead of asking for lots of money or a long life or anything else for himself, he begged God for the gift of wisdom so he could be a good leader. God was very pleased with Solomon. If we ask, God will give us the gift of wisdom which will help us to live by God's teachings. Solomon's symbol is the Scale of Justice

### Esther

*The King loved Esther more than all the other women and of all the virgins she won his favor and good will. So he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen...*

Although Esther was only an ordinary girl, God made her a queen. God had special plans for Esther. When an evil man convinced the king to pass laws forcing people to turn away from God, Queen Esther risked her life to save the people of God from punishment. Esther teaches us to be brave and trust in God and her symbol is a crown,

### Isaiah

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;*

*Upon those who dwelt in a land of gloom a light has shone.*

Isaiah 9:1

The prophet Isaiah is called to holiness, but he is afraid he is not worthy of revealing the living God. Isaiah sees angels around the throne of the LORD and one of them takes a hot ember—like the one on today's ornament—from a fire with tongs and touches it against Isaiah's lips. He is able to go forth, forgiven of his sins, to deliver the Word of God. Read about Isaiah and some of his prophecies about the Messiah in Isaiah 1:10-20; 6:1-13, 9:1-7.

## FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

### John the Baptist

*John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the holy Spirit and fire." Luke 3:16*

John the Baptist proclaims the coming of a new savior and renewed life for all through the repentance of sins. The ornament today features a scallop shell, a traditional symbol of baptism in addition to pilgrimages and spreading the word of the Gospel. Read more about John the Baptist in Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-20; 7:18-30.

### Joseph

*...behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins..." Matthew 1:20-22*

Joseph trusted God that Mary had conceived a child through the Holy Spirit and would bear the Savior who would bring salvation to all. The carpenter's hammer on today's ornament represents Joseph's profession and his unique role in the story of our salvation. Read more in Matthew 1:19-25.

### Mary

*Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Luke 1:30-33*

The angel Gabriel tells Mary she will be the handmaiden of the LORD, mother of our Savior, Jesus. The white lily on today's ornament symbolizes new life and resurrection—hope for the future. Read about Gabriel's visit with Mary and her response in the Gospel of Luke 1:26-38.

### Christ Jesus

*The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' Luke 2:10-12*

Christ Jesus is born and laid in a lowly manger, depicted on our ornament today. Shepherds are instructed by angels to witness the miracle of this child's birth, to show homage and spread the good news. Read the story of Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-15.

