

Jesse Tree Readings

Introduction:

Jesse Tree readings trace salvation history throughout all of Scripture, from Creation to Christ's coming, to help us experience our salvation in Jesus Christ alone. Through these readings we follow God's plan of salvation, from His choosing a people through whom to display His glory to the whole world, through His offering of the law and the writings of the prophets, and finally to the culmination in His coming in Christ, the perfect Lamb who was slain for the sin of the world.

These readings can be done when the whole family is present, after the meal or en route to bed, or during the school day, whenever children are gathered to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ our Savior and Redeemer. During this time we prepare our hearts for Jesus' Coming, both at Christmas as a baby and in His Second Coming in Glory.

This intensified Bible time serves to search hearts and to bring hope in Christ. These Advent readings are coupled with joyful, shorter readings in Epiphany. This season then culminates in the high point of penitential seasons: Lent, with its accompanying readings. With these two intensified seasons of Scripture readings that trace the Salvation of Jesus through Scripture, we can show our children the entire sweep of Scripture and prepare them for a lifetime of devotional reading. It also prepares the soil of their hearts for receiving Jesus as Savior, the point of all this devotional reading in the first place.

During the "Ordinary Time" of summer, relax on readings and do shorter prayer times, Psalms, other worship through Scripture, prayer, song. Advent readings are a high point of joy in our family worship that we look forward to every year.

The ornaments accompanying this booklet are intended to offer children a way to participate in the readings through cutting, coloring, and hanging on the tree. A tree filled with Jesse Tree symbols makes a visual way to recognize Christ as the center of Christmas, and to keep Christmas focused on His Second Coming as well as His birth in the stable. Purchased ornaments you reuse each year can be meaningful as well. Some families also purchase Arch books to tell the stories along the way and get them out every Christmas.

In order to retain some of the fun elements of a western Christmas season, we have used the custom of St. Nicholas Day to celebrate the Feast of Good Children. We use shoes under the tree and give small toys on December 6. Then, all those Santa Claus kind of things are packed away for next St. Nicholas Day. This retains the wonder of all of Advent to remember Jesus' miraculous birth as Incarnate God man, and helps us focus on Jesus all during Advent.

The Advent readings include several longer readings (for example, the Joseph passage) and one or two “extra readings.” Also included are five Epiphany readings, and a short note on how to expand that for a longer span between Epiphany Sunday and Lent, by adding stories from Jesus’ early ministry, healings, Sermon on the Mount, etc. Choose however many readings suit your family’s attention span.

Move through all of these at your own family’s pace, shortening for smaller children, going in-depth with older readers. Baby Bibles can be substituted to good effect, varying the routine. Our family also uses the NLT for variety, the Big Picture Story Bible by David Helm, and the Tyndale Baby Bible with Francis Hook illustrations written by Ken Taylor. Some people use appropriate Arch Books. The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd Jones is another option. Do what works for your family to engage interest; however, extending children’s tolerance for Scripture reading can be good discipling for growing Christians, and is amply rewarded by children who know Jesus and LOVE Scripture! Some years we have missed many readings, but doing this Jesse Tree plan, however fully, year by year, extends our experience of the Bible and however well we do it, is always a high point of our year.

Discussion points and Suggested Activities are jumping off points for parents to brainstorm ways to engage children with Scripture and help them walk into their inheritance in Christ, through asking Him into their hearts, and becoming children of God.

For the liturgically minded, prayers are included for the lighting of the candle. However, such are not necessary if it isn’t suitable for your family culture.

In addition, the custom of blessing the house with the Epiphany Prayer included can be a light-hearted way to turn over the house and household to Jesus at the beginning of every year. Taking the candle, the Word of God, and using Holy Water in each room through the house, each room is blessed in turn. To remind ourselves that the house belongs to Jesus, we write “20 + C + M + B” followed by the year numbers over each doorway. The initials stand for Christus mansionem benedictat, or Christ bless this home. Additionally, they stand for the initials of the traditional names of the three wise men, Caspar, Belthasar, and Melchoir, and serve a reminder that Christ came into our homes and lives at Christmas, to remain as we ask Him into our hearts as our Savior. It’s a fun object lesson for little children, and a visual reminder throughout the year that we set aside this house as God’s house.

One final note about the colors of the Advent candles. The purple of Advent candles represents the penitential season of self-examination in Advent. Purple typically stands for penitence, and is the color of Lent as well. The rose candle of the third Sunday in Advent is the candle for Joy and is the week we remember Mary and her “yes” to Jesus in the Incarnation. The Joy Sunday is meant as an alleviation of the penitential order of Advent and a spark note of joy before the joy of Christmas comes and our experience of our Savior Jesus dawns from on high.

Finally, whether or not your family is liturgically minded, following the Jesse Tree readings during Advent is a specific time to set aside to train your children in the Salvation History of the Bible, and is well worth the effort.

In time, a Jesus Tree booklet will follow this one to introduce children to the stories of Jesus and the buildup of Lent to Easter celebration of our Jesus as Savior. Pentecost will be included as well.

*With Prayers that this Advent Reading blesses you and your families, in Jesus,
Jeff and Margaret Beard*

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First Sunday in Advent

Jesse Tree

Advent Wreath

Light 1st Purple Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,

All: Free us from sin.

Thanks be to God.

Root of Jesse: Isaiah 11 & 12

For Discussion: Discuss how Jesus is the Root of Jesse, the shoot out of the dry stump of Israel who, in the fullness of time, came to save His people from their sins. Discuss how we are the “gathered in,” the remnant He reclaimed for His very own in Christ.

Note: Advent begins the time of preparation we go through each year, culminating in His birth, then extending through Lent to culminate in the ultimate celebration of Christ’s victory over sin and the grave at Easter. In walking through this time of preparation with the people of Israel we have the opportunity to re-appropriate for ourselves the promises that are extended to us through Christ, of eternal life in Jesus our Savior.

We can use this time to prepare ourselves for Christ’s coming again in Glory, His Second Coming. For this reason, Advent is referred to as a Penitential Season, a time to dig deep into trust in Christ and Get READY! Prepare your family for this walk with Christ in the Scripture, and convey the excitement of being the People of God.

Creation

Genesis 1 & 2, Psalm 19 optional; Hebrews 4: 9-13

For Discussion: Discuss how Christ was present at Creation, how we are His handiwork for the display of His Glory.

Activity: Spend time as a family thanking Him for His creation, and for His coming at Christmas. Prepare our Hearts, LORD Jesus! Make us ready for your Second Coming in Glory!

The Fall

Genesis 3

For Discussion: Discuss how Christ had to come for our salvation, how our sin necessitated His coming, and how this promise is hinted at in the First Covenant with Adam.

Activity: Recite the Confession from the Book of Common Prayer as a family, or some similar prayer of repentance, and revel in the absolution.

Child's Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.

Lord Jesus, come into my heart and make me clean.

Help me be your little child,

And help me live with you forever in Heaven Someday.

In Jesus' Name, AMEN.

Noah Saved through the Flood

Genesis 6:5-9:17

For Discussion: How does this reading point to Christ? Discuss how Noah being saved through the Ark is a reminder of how Christ saves us by folding us into His Body on the Cross; similarly, how the waters of the flood point to the waters of Baptism, which is His symbol of salvation.

God Calls Abraham and Sarah

Genesis 12: 1-9, 15: 1-6, Hebrews 11: 8-40

For Discussion: Discuss how God called one man, Abraham, and through him began to establish His covenant people on the earth. This is the nation of Israel, the people through whom He ordained to bring His Son, Our Savior, Jesus Christ, into the world for the purpose of Redeeming His sinful people. Discuss how God's foreknowledge and predestination of those whom He intends to save are His gracious gifts to us, how all are undeserving of His special favor and how obligated this makes us to want to share His good news in Jesus Christ.

Sacrifice of Isaac

Genesis 22: 1-19

For Discussion: Discuss the significance of God providing a ram to Abraham, a foretaste of His provision of Jesus our Sacrifice, for the sins of the whole world. Also discuss the significance of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his only son. (hint: the surrounding nations practiced child sacrifice routinely as the acceptable sacrifice to solicit the help of their 'gods.')

In asking Abraham to sacrifice his only son, God was putting to rest the notion that He was a god like other gods, and showing that He Himself would provide the lamb for sacrifice.) Discuss how God asks us to let go of our idols to accept His true gifts.

Jacob's Ladder

Genesis 28: 10-22; John 1: 43-51

For Discussion: *Jacob's vision signified the coming of Jesus, the one who would connect Heaven and Earth, and restore relationship with God and man. This was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, the one on whom angels ascend and descend in this Scripture from John, and ultimately fulfilled when the disciples witnessed the Transfiguration in Matthew 17 (and reflected on in II Peter 1: 16-21).*

Second Sunday in Advent

God's People

Advent Wreath

Light 2nd Purple Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,

All: Prepare us for You:

Thanks be to God.

Genesis 35: 9-15

For Discussion: *The next week will feature God's providence through successive generations of His people Israel, the descendants of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham. We will see their successes and their failures, their conformity to God's plan and their rebellion against God's plan. Through it all, we see God's unfolding promise as stated in Genesis 3, to provide a Savior for His sinful people. Revel in God's plan of salvation as you explain these truths of Scripture this week. God is SAVIOR!*

Joseph

Exodus 37-50

For Discussion: This is a long, long story, but well worth the reading, even if you chunk it up into several days and skimp on other readings. Seeing how God remained faithful when His people were faithless, how He raised up salvation for them using the results of their own sin--selling Joseph into slavery--to save them during time of famine, is a story that points to Christ in so many ways. Enjoy it, savor it, and use it to teach your children how God is faithful in our faithlessness. (For homeschool families, this story has so many elements of the ideal story that it is a good one to use in teaching literature. Elements to discuss include initial problem/conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, denouement; characterization; setting, etc.)

Activity: Watch or listen to *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat!*

Moses

Exodus 20- 1-21

For Discussion: Talk about God's Law, about His amazing and perfect Law, our inability to keep it, and our need for a Savior, Jesus.

Activity: read through or memorize the Ten Commandments as a family. Remind your children that the first half of the decalogue is about our relationship with God, and the second half is about our relationship with one another. The simplicity of the ten commandments is staggering. Also share the "one commandment with a promise," that of honoring our father and mother, as a life-giving principle for blessed life on earth. Finally, point out how the rest that God offers on the Sabbath is a rest for all of life, a rest that brings blessing. See Hebrews 4: 7-9.

Conquest of Canaan

Numbers 13-14:12

Joshua 1, 4, 5:13-15

Numbers 24: 15-19

For Discussion: Discuss how God ordained for Israel to conquer Canaan and how Israel disobeyed, by failing to trust God's power and sovereign will over the nations, even after they had received the deliverance of the Exodus. Discuss how God delivered Israel through the time of testing in the desert, and finally brought His promised people into the Promised Land under Joshua. In Numbers 24 we watch as Balaam, the prophet of Midian, when asked to curse the nation of Israel, is instead given a vision of the long-off promised Savior, Jesus. This happened long before Israel even knew how desperately she needed God's Salvation in Jesus. **Activity:** build your own stone of remembrance in your household, whether through an actual pile of painted rocks (write names for God on them, like Deliverer, Savior, etc.) or an altar of some other type. Remember God's goodness to you as a family and make a list of His goodness in

times past. On Youtube, find a recording of Mendelssohn's, "There Shall a Star from Jacob Come," and watch it together.

Ruth and Boaz

Ruth 1-4, Matthew 1: 1-17

For Discussion: This story not only is a beautiful love story (the best in Scripture) but it also points to our Kinsman Redeemer, Jesus, who supplies our need for salvation in the nick of time. It shows God's providence in Jesus' family tree, as Ruth and Boaz become the parents of Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, who was the ancestor of Christ. Ruth's inclusion in Jesus' family tree as a Moabite gives hope to all of us who are gentiles: though far off from Christ, we may be brought in through His salvific work on the cross.

Activity: Read Jesus' genealogy in Matthew and talk about your own providential family tree.

Samuel, David

I Samuel 16: 1-13, II Samuel 5: 1-5

For Discussion: Samuel was called by God to be a prophet to His people when he was still a young child, during the time of the Kings (I Samuel 1: 1-21). When Israel insisted on having an earthly king, rather than being led by God alone, God called Samuel to anoint Israel's first king, Saul. Saul was later shown to be corrupt, and God chose David from all his brothers: David, who trusted in God alone. This issue of the kingship showed both Israel's wayward heart in wanting a king "like the other nations," and God's sovereign choice of a man who would point His people toward Christ. David, a man after God's own heart, is an example of a flawed and sinful person who yet trusted wholeheartedly in God His Father for salvation, ultimately found in Christ alone. He points to Christ, the son of David, and shows us once for all that even the best king cannot save God's people, only Christ, the SON OF GOD can do this singular task.

Solomon and the Temple

I Kings 3: 3-15; 6-9: 9; I Chronicles 3-7, especially 7

For Discussion: Solomon was chosen by God to be the builder of the temple, the place where God's glory would dwell. God's glory remained in the temple for many long years, until in response to God's peoples' sin, the Glory of the LORD departed from the temple. In Christ, God's temple is restored. Jesus told His disciples He would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days (Matthew 26: 61, Mark 14: 58, John 2: 19) a reference to His death and Resurrection. In the epistles, Paul refers to we who believe as the Temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 3: 16, 6: 19) and Peter refers to Christians being built into living stones (I Peter 2:

5). *Read all these passages to your children and marvel: how blessed we are to be born again into a living Hope in Christ.*

Josiah Finds the Law

II Kings 22-23

For Discussion: *Throughout the history of the people of Israel in the Old Testament, God again and again used people who were committed to His ways to bring the people back to obedience and trust in Him; people like Josiah, who, when the books of the Law were rediscovered in the Temple, turned his heart to repentance and temporarily brought the people along with him. Unfortunately such reforms were short-lived and only lasted as long as a good king was in power, if that long. Such reforms are ever prone to die, because they rest in the hands of sinful people like you and me. Jesus is the only Redeemer who can effectively put to death our sins on the cross, as He bore them in our place, and who can, in His Risen Life, bring about lasting change.*

Activity: *Thank God for His redemption in Jesus Christ. Thank Him for His goodness, prepare for Sunday Worship.*

Third Sunday in Advent

Prophecy

Advent Wreath

Light Rose Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,

Response: You rule the World!

All: Come into our Hearts, Lord Jesus!

Thanks be to God.

Isaiah 42: 1-9

For Discussion: *All prophecy in Scripture points toward Christ and this is a prime example. Discuss how Jesus is the fulfillment of all our hopes and dreams for reunion with God in Jesus, how He never breaks a bruised reed or quenches a smoldering wick. Prepare for a roller-coaster ride through the prophets this week! Get ready!*

Elijah

I Kings 18

For Discussion: Discuss how Elijah, the prophet of God in the time of Ahab, was led by God to return the hearts of the people to Himself. Say the refrain of the people over and over to yourselves: *The Lord, He is God, the LORD, He is GOD!* Celebrate that the same God who sent fire down on Mt. Carmel, defeated the prophets of Baal on that day, and who sent rain when it hadn't rained in three years, rose Jesus from the Dead, and defeated Satan's hold on our lives through sin in a single day! *GOD IS GOD! The LORD, HE IS GOD! AMEN.*

Root of Jesse, The Lion and the Lamb

Isaiah 11: 1-12;

Isaiah 12

For Discussion: Some of the choicest passages of prophecy are contained in this passage; Discuss how these passages are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and celebrate how in that day the lion will lie down with the lamb, that when the root of Jesse appears, the place of His rest will be *GLORIOUS!* Remember, Advent refers to Jesus' coming as a baby, and looks ahead to His Coming Again in *GLORY!*

Prophecy of the Prince of Peace

Isaiah 2: 1-4, 7: 14, 9: 1-7

For Discussion: Like choicest fruit, these prophecies of Christ are the joyous morsels to savor all week. **Activities:** Memorize the names of Christ found in Isaiah 9: 6. Listen to Handel's Messiah as a family after supper.

Prophecy of the Suffering Servant, the Lamb who was Slain

Isaiah 52: 1-53: 12

Matthew 26-28

For Discussion: Here we come to the heart of the matter: Jesus came as a baby in a manger to die on the cross for our sins. It doesn't get any more *REAL* than that. Revel in Christ as Savior. **Suggested Activity:** sing Amazing Grace, or any such hymn that reminds us of why Jesus had to die for us, that little baby in the manger for our sins. For older children: Read Matthew 26: 57-27: 66. How were the prophecies in Isaiah 53 fulfilled in the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ? Why was it important that all these prophecies were fulfilled?

Prophecy of the New Covenant

Jeremiah 23: 5-6; 31: 31-34

For Discussion: *The Coming of Christ our Messiah has not only rolled away our sins in His death on the cross, but has also established a new world order, a Covenant between God and man in which God's Law is actually written on our hearts. **Suggested Activity:** read Acts 2 and discuss how the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfills this Scripture. The disciples were gathered in celebration of Pentecost, the day commemorating the coming of the first law of Moses down from Mt. Sinai in the Ten Commandments. We now think of Pentecost as the coming of the Holy Spirit and the indwelling presence of Jesus following our Salvation in the death and Resurrection of Christ. How amazing that we can have His law written on our hearts, engraved in living flesh through the indwelling presence of Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit. One God in Three Persons. Celebrate!*

Prophecy of Bethlehem

Micah 5: 2-5a

For Discussion: *Why was it important that Jesus be born in Bethlehem, the City of David? Notice its proximity to Jerusalem, the capital of Israel and the expected place of Christ's birth to the Wise Men in Matthew 2:1-6. How does this tiny place exemplify to you the kind of birth Christ had, and the kind of announcement God made to the unlikeliest of audiences (Luke 2: 8-20)? **Suggested Activity:** Sing "O Little Town of Bethlehem" or find a choral rendition on Youtube. Watch the Little Drummer Boy, also on Youtube.*

Fourth Sunday in Advent

The Exile

Advent Wreath

Light 4th Purple Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,

Response: You rule the world!

All: Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus!

Thanks be to God.

Daniel 3; 6: 10-28

For Discussion: God's people had sinned, and as promised, God sent them into Exile. Not without a promise, however, of a return more glorious than anyone could expect: salvation in Jesus coming around the corner. Daniel represents a type of Christ, and points to our once-for-all-times Messiah. These stories show God's faithfulness in the near run, and point to the eventual return of His people Israel, and our eventual in-gathering into Christ in His Salvific work on the Cross for our sins.

The Return

Ezra 1: 1-8; Nehemiah 1; 4: 15-23

Jeremiah 25: 1-14; 29: 1-10

For Discussion: God's people are restored to their former place, and the temple and wall are rebuilt. When they return, they are positioned in God's plan for His great revelation of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Zechariah and Elizabeth

Luke 1: 5-25; 39-45; 46-56, 57-80

For Discussion: "The Babe in her womb Leaped for Joy!" John is the first of God's people to respond with joy to the coming of Christ, showing us that he saw Christ's coming as the Good News that it is. Even as a baby in the womb, John leaped for Joy. In this passage we have what some call the first meeting of the church: the fellowship of Believers, recognition of Christ as Savior, and the first instance of worship of Jesus Christ in Mary's Song, the Magnificat.

John the Baptist

Luke 1: 39-45; Matthew 3: 1-12

For Discussion: Scripture tells us that John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin. In the womb he recognized his Savior. How can we leap for joy at the coming of Christ, and how can we share the Good News? How can we prepare for Christ's coming, both at Christmas and at His Second Coming?

Mary

Luke 1: 26-56

For Discussion: A favorite hymn is the Magnificat, or Song of Mary. Mary was the first to bear Christ, in her case, literally as she carried the tiny Christ in her womb, and as such she represents and symbolizes the church's "Yes!" to Jesus. **Suggested Activity:** recite the Magnificat together often until it is memorized. It is the first poem to Christ in Scripture and

our response to Jesus is typified in these words: “My Soul Magnifies the LORD! And My spirit rejoices in God my SAVIOR!” What a Savior! Listen to Magnificat by John Rutter, Mary’s song in Latin.

Joseph

Matthew 1: 18-25

For Discussion: Joseph represents the second Christian’s response to Christ’s birth. In the face of a difficult situation, he chose to respond by faithfully carrying out the work of shepherding Mary, acting as earthly father to Christ, and obeying what the angel of God told him to do. Simple obedience, can we do less?

BIRTH OF CHRIST

Advent Wreath

Replace 4 Advent Candles with White Candles, light all and Center White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

All: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: We Rejoice in You!

All: Come, Lord Jesus!

Thanks be to God, Alleluia!

Birth of Christ: Luke 2: 1-21; Revelation 22: 12-21

The Birth of the Messiah, the culmination of Redemption History beginning in the life of Christ, to come to complete fulfillment in His death and Resurrection 33 years later, the beginning of a never-ending story of Redemption and Joy. How We LONG TO SEE YOU COME AGAIN IN GLORY, JESUS OUR MESSIAH! HalleluYah! Praise the LORD. Maranatha. COME LORD JESUS.

Christ’s Birth told to the Shepherds

Advent Wreath

Light 4 White Candles and Center White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts!

Leader: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,

Response: You rule the world!

*All: Come into our hearts, Lord Jesus!
Thanks be to God.*

Luke 2: 8-20

For Discussion: Read Psalm 23. What significance did it have for Jesus' Birth to be announced by angels to shepherds outside Bethlehem? What does this mean for US? Truly, Good News of Great JOY for all people. **Suggested Activity:** Listen to the "Glory to God" portion of Handel's Messiah on Youtube. Sing along!

Epiphany

Note: "Epiphany" means manifestation, sudden insight into the divine nature, and specifically, the manifestation of Jesus to the gentiles when the Magi understood the King of all Kings had been born. Each of these stories sheds light on who Jesus is, who He came for, and what He came to do. The length of the Epiphany season varies depending on when Easter is and when Lent begins. Technically, Epiphany is the season between Epiphany Sunday and Ash Wednesday. Included here are five readings to cover this season, which may be longer or shorter depending on Easter. These five are standard fare. Other readings can include the Ministry of Jesus, the first healings, the Sermon on the Mount, The Road to Emmaus, the Breakfast on the Beach, etc. Enjoy this time of sudden understanding of who Jesus is and what He came to do and why He had to die for our sins! Teach your children how easy it is to say, "Come into my heart, Lord Jesus!"

Epiphany Sunday is a good time to use the liturgy and go into each room of the house, chalking the doorway as mentioned in the introduction with C+M+B surrounded by the date 20--. For instance, the year 2019 would be 20 C+M+B 19 over each doorway, standing for Christus Mansionem Benedicat, or Christ Bless this Home (and the names of the 3 wise men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar). We use a lighted candle, the Scripture, and holy water, representing Christ the Light of the World over the darkness, The Word of God as the Sword of the Spirit to light our way, and the Holy Water representing Christ's death on our behalf. We also lead the way with a cross of Jesus Christ. Each child can anoint the room with holy water, or pray a prayer over the room, as well as the head of the household. Especial care will be taken over the front and back door of the home, prayers for blessing, safety and holiness over all who enter through the doorway. We use the words, "Nations will walk in His light, and kings by the brightness of Your Splendor," as a refrain in each room.

Jesus Worshipped by the Magi

Christmas Wreath

Light 4 White Candles and Center White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Matthew 2: 1-18

For Discussion: Discuss the significance of the star's appearing to the Magi. Why is this Good News for us, the seeking by God Almighty of the lost from the nations. Reread Numbers 24: 15-19. Jesus was the Messiah for the Jews and for the Gentiles, Salvation. Read this passage again, focusing on this first recognition by Gentile leaders of Jesus as both King and Messiah.

Anna and Simeon Worship Jesus in the Temple

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Luke 2: 21-39

For Discussion: Who did Anna and Simeon say Jesus was? How is Jesus both Consolation and Glory? How did the preparedness of Anna and Simeon evidence itself in their lives? How did this enable them to recognize Jesus, the baby Jesus, as the Messiah for the whole world, on sight? How can we be more ready to see His handiwork and presence in our lives? How can we prepare for the Second Coming of Christ? **Suggested Activity:** Memorize the Song of Simeon, the best song of recognition in Scripture and an excellent bedtime recitation, part of the Book of Common Prayer Evening Prayer and Compline, or bedtime, liturgy.

Boy Jesus in the Temple

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Luke 2: 41-52

For Discussion: *We all resonate with this story of Jesus as a boy in the temple, confounding the elders, breaking away from his mother's apron strings. However, the main point of this story occurs in the simple, breath-taking words of Christ to his mother: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house? But they did not understand what He was saying to them." In this passage Jesus is revealed as God's SON! How astounding that must have been to His parents. How can we be aware of God's holy presence in our lives? How can we increase in understanding of His will for us?*

And, can we, like Jesus next did in obeying his parents, reverence those who do not understand without complaint?

First Sunday after Epiphany

Baptism of Jesus

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 1: 19- 42; Luke 3: 1-23; Mark 1: 1-13; Matthew 3

For Discussion: *This is the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, and the point at which God's plan in Christ is first made known: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." Here Jesus is identified, by God HIMSELF, as God's Son. In this announcement, Jesus' earthly ministry begins. In response, how should we align ourselves? All aligning of the will according to Jesus is our necessary act of obedience, and all love for Christ who died for us is*

implied in this blessing. Accept Christ's baptism in the water and into His Death and Resurrection, and all that is implied in this blessing becomes our inheritance in Christ. Our abiding in Christ allows us to receive the HOLY SPIRIT as well. Thank You JESUS. What a Savior, what a FATHER. PRAISE GOD.

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Miracle at Cana of Galilee

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 2: 1-11

For Discussion: *How is Jesus revealed in this passage? Who witnesses this "Epiphany" of Jesus? What significance does this miracle have, as the first miracle of Jesus, and why does it occur at a wedding? What sort of symbolism does this evoke? The Wedding Supper of the Lamb is our Eucharistic Feast. Come Lord Jesus.*

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Calling of the Disciples, Jesus in Nazareth

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Matthew 4: 12-25, Mark 1: 14-20, John 1: 35-51

Luke 4: 14-44

For Discussion: Do you remember the passage we read during the reading for Jacob's ladder at the beginning of Advent? Here we see Jesus Himself announcing that His disciples would see "angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man." In announcing this Jesus was showing His role as mediator between God and Man, and identifying Himself with prophecies in Ezekiel which portrayed the Son of Man, seated on a throne. He came to reign, as Savior of the world, in our hearts and lives. Enthroned Him now!

In the second passage, Luke 4, we see Jesus in Nazareth proclaiming that He is the fulfillment of all the prophecies, the one anointed to proclaim the good news to the poor, freedom to the captives, to give sight to the blind. And for this they wanted to stone Him! Again, enthrone Him now!

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

The Miraculous Catch of Fish

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candles

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Luke 5: 1-11; John 21

For Discussion: How is Jesus revealed to Peter, and to us, in this passage? What is Peter's response to his "Epiphany" of Jesus? What does he do? What does Jesus say? How does this make you feel, respond? In the second instance of the miraculous catch of fish, the nets are not torn. Now the disciples know who Jesus is, and are fit containers for His glory and presence. Thanks be to GOD. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Transfiguration of Christ

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Matthew 17: 1-23; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9: 28-36

For Discussion: *This passage, as amazing as it is, becomes even more meaningful in context. Let's think about this context for a minute: How did the disciples display their ignorance of who Christ is? In the story of the boy with a demon, how did they display their ignorance of who Christ is? What did Christ accuse them of? Reread verses 22-23. Do they understand any better here? How can we dig deep into our understanding of Christ, who He is, and why He had to die? The Glory of Christ is His death on our behalf.*

II Peter 1: 12-21.

Additional Readings:

Jesus the Light of the World

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 8: 12-20; John 1: 1-14; Revelation 21: 22-27

For Discussion: *Jesus said that He is the light of the world, who keeps us from darkness. In Revelation we read that Jesus is the light of the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem. COME LORD JESUS! Lighten our darkness, and send forth Your light.*

Jesus the Living Water

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 4: 1-44; John 7: 37-39; Isaiah 55: 1; Isaiah 12: 3; Ezekiel 47: 1-12;
Isaiah 44: 1-5; Joel 2: 28; I Corinthians 12-13; Acts 2; Revelation 22: 1-5,
6-21

For Discussion: *At the feast of Booths, the reminder of God's presence with Israel during the years of wandering in the desert, Jesus stood up and called out, "If anyone is athirst, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" According to John's testimony, this He said about the Holy Spirit, whom they were yet to receive, as the Spirit had not yet been given as Jesus had not yet been glorified. Now He has been glorified, and we have received the Holy Spirit. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN. This living water flows from the throne of God and from the Lamb, and is the free gift of God in Jesus Christ our Savior.*

Jesus the Bread of Life

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 6: 22-71

For Discussion: *Jesus is the true bread which gives life to the world. Explain the presence of Christ in the Eucharist as our Living Bread to your children. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in them."*

Jesus the True Vine

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 15: 1-17

For Discussion: *Jesus is the true vine, Our Father is the husbandman, and we are the branches. Abide in Jesus our Savior. "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." "Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."*
Thank You Jesus. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 10

For Discussion: *Jesus is the perfect Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. The little book, "A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23" by W. Philip Keller is a good one to read to draw near to Jesus as our Good Shepherd.*

Jesus the Gate for the Sheep

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 10: 1-9

For Discussion: *Jesus is the only Door for the Gate, He is the Way, and He is the narrow Way. Anyone who goes in and out through HIM finds safe pasture. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.*

Jesus the Resurrection and the Life

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 11: 17-27

For Discussion: *In the middle of the story of Jesus raising Lazarus is this amazing interchange between Martha and Jesus. Martha, who earlier had complained about her sister Mary sitting at Jesus' feet and asked Him to arbitrate for her with her sister, not understanding the role of abiding in Christ, here displays a superior understanding of Jesus as the Resurrection. "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world." Mary is sitting at home weeping, but Martha is ready for battle. We can take comfort in her growth and abiding in Christ Jesus as Savior. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.*

Jesus the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 14: 1-14

For Discussion: *One of my favorite passages of Scripture, here Thomas asks the question we all are asking, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how can we know the way?" Jesus rebukes him gently, "I AM the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." As if Thomas' folly wasn't enough, Philip reiterates what we all want to know, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus reminds*

him, "Have I been with you so long, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." It can't get any better than this, we do know Him, and HE IS ALL IN ALL. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.

Jesus the I AM

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

John 8: 48-59; Exodus 3-4

***For Discussion: I Am** is the name God gave for Moses to use with Pharaoh when asking him to let God's people go. In John 8 Jesus connects His name with God's name for Himself, showing the pharisees that He is indeed our Great I AM, our Messiah, our Savior. JESUS IS RISEN, ALLELUIA. JESUS IS RISEN.*

The Road to Emmaus

Christmas Wreath

Light White Candle

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our hearts.

Leader: Nations will walk in your light,

Response: And Kings by the brightness of your splendor.

All: Thanks be to God.

Luke 24: 13-35

***For Discussion:** Jesus was known to His disciples in the breaking of the bread. "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me and I in them." Jesus is Risen, Alleluia. Jesus is RISEN.*

The End....and the Beginning of Lent!

Note on Lenten Readings: An Accompanying Jesus Tree book will be forthcoming for Lent.....In general, Jesus Tree readings go through the Gospels and highlight the works and teachings of Christ. Holy Week readings cover the last week of Christ from the book of John, and culminate in the Jesus Eggs Easter Egg hunt to tell the story of Jesus' death and Resurrection.

This simple child's prayer typifies the spirit of Lenten readings, which go through the gospel and prepare the child's heart for receiving Jesus as Savior:

*Lord Jesus, Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins.
Lord Jesus, come into my heart and make me clean.
Help me be your little child,
And help me live with you forever in Heaven someday.
Amen.*

At mealtimes, and in particular after Pentecost, this prayer replaces our Jesse Tree Prayer:

Leader: Jesus, Light of the World!

Response: Shine in our Hearts.

Leader: Jesus is Risen,

Response: He is Risen Indeed!

Leader: Come Holy Spirit,

Response: Renew our hearts,

All: And help us pray.

