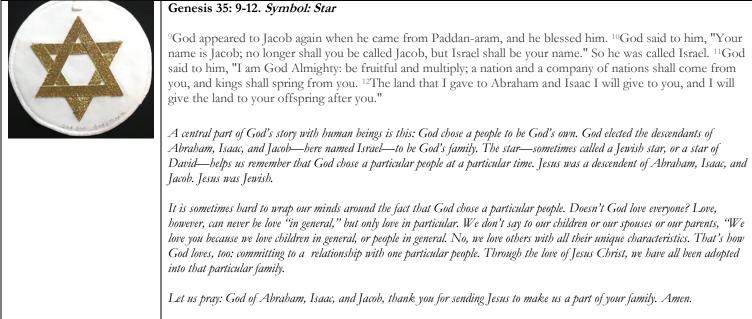
Jesse Tree Devotions for Advent 2020 Week 2

The Jesse Tree tradition echoes a prophecy made about Jesus in the book of Isaiah: that a shoot shall come out of the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:2). Jesse was the father of King David, one of the Israel's greatest kings and an ancestor of Jesus. The image of the stump points to the barrenness and despair that God's people can experience. The image of the shoot points to hope: from deep roots in God, new life comes. As an Advent tradition, a Jesse tree is a simple, barren branch on which one ornament is hung on each day of Advent. Each ornament represents a story from the Old Testament and reminds us how God was getting his people ready for the coming of Jesus.

In our sanctuary at First English, we have such a tree this Advent. A team of crafters—Marj Rogner, Deb Gallagher, Karen Boltz, Jeannette Cunningham, and Zema Schaney made the ornaments that will be hung each day. These ornaments form the basis for the devotions below. Our Sunday school kids also made their own Jesse trees and ornaments at our Lutherlyn Sunday school this fall.

Please read these stories and pray with us each day as we prepare for the coming of Christ!

Sunday, December 6





Monday, December 7

Genesis 37: 1-4. Symbol: Fancy coat

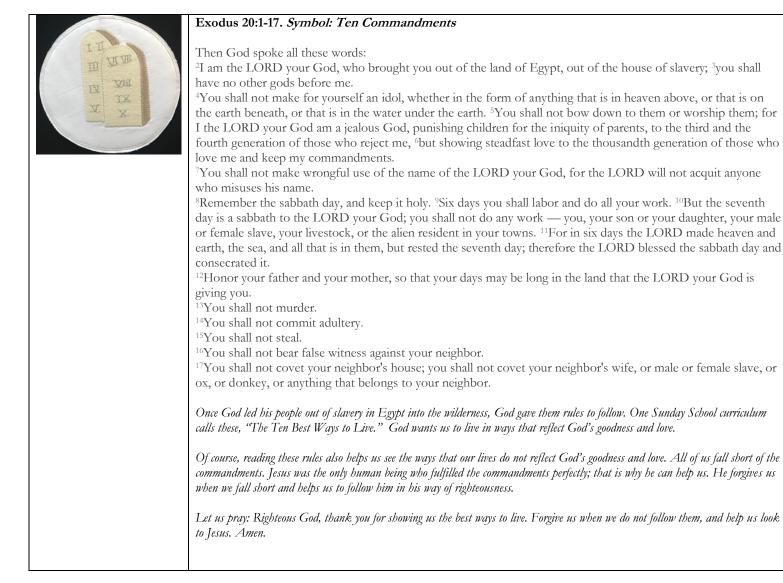
¹Jacob settled in the land where his father had lived as an alien, the land of Canaan. ²This is the story of the family of Jacob.

Joseph, being seventeen years old, was shepherding the flock with his brothers; he was a helper to the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives; and Joseph brought a bad report of them to their father. ³Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves. ⁴But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him.

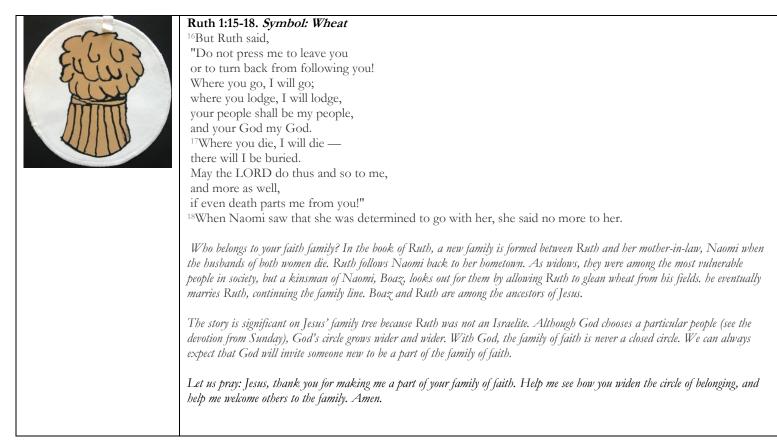
Jealousy is a terrible emotion to experience. It is more common than we would like to admit. It hurts to see others receive what we think we deserve! Israel loved Joseph more than his other brothers: how was that fair? The brothers' jealousy eventually led them to sell their brother into slavery in Egypt. But that story had a saving outcome. Joseph eventually became powerful in Egypt and was able to help his family through a famine.

Like Joseph, Jesus suffered the ill effects of jealousy: the good religious folks of his day were envious of his impact on the people. Their desire to be rid of him eventually led to his arrest and crucifixion. But through the cross and empty tomb, God stopped the evil cycle of jealousy, using the cross to save us all from sin and death. What human beings mean for evil, God uses for good.
Let us pray: gracious God, please help us see where envy and jealousy distorts our relationship with others, and help us trust instead in your freely given love. Amen.

Tuesday, December 8



Wednesday, December 9



Thursday, December 10



1 Samuel 16:1, 10-13a. Symbol: Horn of Oil

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."

Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

When it came time for the people of Israel to have a new king, God chose the youngest brother, the one who was herding the sheep. David was handsome, but compared to his brothers, he was not tall or strong. His experience was not in battle or government, but in farming.

David's kingship foreshadows that of Jesus. Jesus was born in humble circumstances and didn't look like a powerful ruler; he allowed himself to be crucified. God's choices are not our choices; God chooses what seems weak to the world in order to save it.

Let us pray: Loving God, help me trust in your ways of humility rather than in the world's ways of power. Amen.

Friday, December 11



2 Samuel 5:2b-3; Symbol: Crown

For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel." So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel.

Shepherds and kings seem like exact opposites. Kings sit in palaces and wear fine clothes. Shepherds work outside in the elements and talk to sheep. Their clothing gets dirty. Kings have soft beds in which to sleep and servants to assist them. Shepherds sleep in the fields and serve the sheep, chasing away the predators that stalk the flock at night.

But when God thinks of good kings, God thinks of shepherds. David became the shepherd-king of Israel. His descendent, Jesus, would call himself the good shepherd who knows us by name.

Let us pray: thank you, Jesus, for being my shepherd. Amen.

Saturday, December 12



1 Kings 5:2-5. Symbol: Temple

Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying, ³You know that my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. ⁴But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune. ⁵So I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD said to my father David, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, shall build the house for my name."

King Solomon, King David's son, wanted to build a temple where the people could worship God. A temple was not just a building—it was a place where people could meet God. God had specific plans for the place where his glory would dwell. It was a special room called the Holy of Holies. Only specific people were allowed to enter.

In his teaching, Jesus called himself the temple. To meet God, we no longer have to go to a specific place. Rather, God comes to us in Jesus. Through him, everyone can meet God.

Let us pray: Glorious God, help me seek your presence in Jesus Christ. Amen.