

The Jesse Tree

What it is, what it means, and how to make one.

Origin

The Jesse tree represents Jesus' family tree. The name is taken from Isaiah 11:1, in which Jesus is referred to as a shoot coming up from the "stump of Jesse", the father of David. The ornaments on the Jesse tree tell of Jesus' ancestors, and of the events leading to Jesus' birth.

Symbols

God

Creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3)

Adam and Eve

Apple (Genesis 2:4-3:24)

Noah

Ark or rainbow (Genesis 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12, 20-9:17)

Abraham

Stars (Genesis 12:1-7, 15:1-6)

Isaac

Ram (Genesis 22:1-19)

Jacob

Ladder (Genesis 27:41-28:22)

Joseph

Colorful coat (Genesis 37, 39:1-50:21)

Moses

Tablets of the law (Exodus 2:1-4:20)

David

Harp (1 Samuel 16:17-23)

Isaiah

Lion and lamb (Isaiah 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7)

Mary

Lily (Luke 1:26-38)

Elizabeth

Small home/mother and child (Luke 1:39-55)

John the Baptist

Shell (Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-7)

Joseph

Hammer or saw (Matthew 1:18-25)

Connection

Roots are important parts of a tree. As people, we need to know our roots, as well. Often, we run from one thing to another without reflecting on where we've been or where we are going. As we create a Jesse tree during this Advent season, let us pause and look at our lives to see on whose shoulders we stand.

Continue the Activity at Home

Make a Jesse tree for your home. First, take a large, bare branch and secure it in a pot of sand or rocks. (You can also use a large potted plant or evergreen.) Create ornaments that trace Jesus' royal line by making symbols for some of the people found in the Hebrew testament. Make the ornaments out of cardboard or construction paper and decorate as you like.

Instead of hanging all the ornaments on the tree at one time, you may want to hang one on every other day of Advent. Read the Scripture citation given here or as a family tell the stories of God's faithful people as you hang each ornament on the tree.