A VERY JESSE ADVENT



Daily Prayer

Heavenly Father,

As I journey through Advent, I ask that you open my heart. Please open my eyes to see Your story of love unfolding from the very beginning — from Eden to Bethlehem, from promise to fulfillment. Help me to wait with the wonder of Israel, to hope with the prophets, and to rejoice with Mary who carried Your Word Made Flesh. Teach me to see how Your hand has guided every moment in history, and how You are still writing salvation's story in my own life today. Come, Lord Jesus — prepare my heart to receive You anew.

Amen.

I also recommend:
The O Antiphons & the St. Andrew Novena

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Welcome

Welcome to Advent.
And *Happy New Year* liturgically!

When I was a kid, my mom handmade a Jesse tree set for us. We taped laminated, hand-drawn ornaments onto a paper tree each night at dinner and retold the Bible stories. The Jesse Tree was impactful for me. I wanted to match my older sisters and be able to tell the Bible stories. I wanted to look at a Burning Bush and recognize the story of the crazy prophet Moses in it. It inspired me.

The Jesse Tree tradition comes from the Scriptural prophecy regarding Jesse's family. Jesse was the father of King David. Isaiah said of him, "*A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*" The Jews had already been tracking the family line from Adam and Eve because of the promise that a savior would come from their line (Genesis 3:15). But this promise about Jesse is *specific:* after Jesse's line has been *cut down,* hope will come. Sure enough, the generations following Jesse and his son David included division, war, exile, occupation, and suffering. And then, Jesus emerged. *A shoot from the stump!*

Advent is a perfect time to *remember our family story*. We enter into the wait that the Old Testament Hebrews experienced - the wait for a savior. The wait for Jesus.

Whether your family used the Jesse Tree or not, this is your grown-up version of the tradition. As we journey through Advent to Christmas, each day you'll meet a new character. These characters are all from the bloodline of Jesus (or contemporary with them; that will be noted on each page.) This Prayer Companion follows the genealogy of Matthew found in Matthew 1. It's the gospel reading for the Christmas vigil. My hope is that by the time you reach Christmas Eve, you'll have a whole new appreciation for Jesus' family, the story of Salvation History, all the prophecies & expectations of the coming Messiah, and ultimately, how much God did to save you and me.



A roadmap of Advent...



For each day of Advent, there are two pages with which to pray and a new character to meet.

Each day you'll find:

A prophecy about Jesus, cited in the Old and New Testaments. I recommend reading this first, *aloud*. It doesn't relate to the character necessarily, but it shows the prophecies Jesus' coming fulfilled. There are hundreds more I didn't include.

A reflection on the chosen character for you to read – alongside a symbol for the character. Traditionally, the symbols are used as ornaments on the Jesse tree.

Bible verse to read and meet the character for yourself.

Reflection questions to take to prayer.

Allegorical lens box – this is how the Old Testament points forward to the New Testament. So many of these characters directly prefigure Jesus.

A brief audio bio of the character to familiarize you with the story of the character, connect the dots between the character & the bloodline, expand on the allegorical lens, and provide more background information. Scan or click the QR code to access.

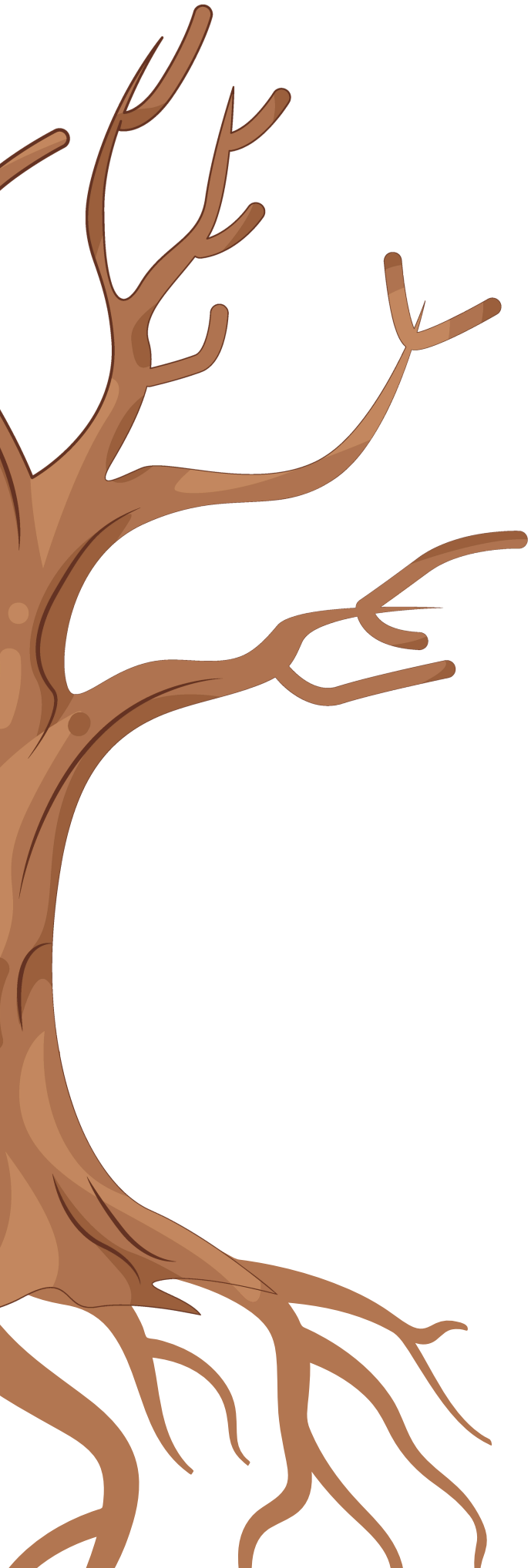
As you go through this Prayer Companion, **return to pages 8 and 9** to make notes about the names in Matthew's genealogy, and to **pages 6 & 7** to draw ornaments on your Jesse tree.

As you journey through Advent, return to this page to **draw ornaments of** the character symbol on each page. This is the tradition of the Jesse Tree. It usually involves children hanging ornaments on the tree and retelling the characters of Salvation History throughout Advent.

Alternatively, you can choose to use Jesse at the "trunk", and the characters preceding him as "roots", and the characters after him as "branches".

Enjoy using this visual however it aids you!





Genealogy from Matthew 1

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and **Isaac** the father of Jacob, and **Jacob t**he father of Judah and **his brothers**, and **Judah** the father of Perez and Zerah by **Tamar,** and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Aminadab, and **Aminadab** the father of Nahshon, and **Nahshon** the father of Salmon, and **Salmon** the father of Boaz by **Rahab,** and **Boaz** the father of Obed by **Ruth,** and Obed the father of Jesse, and **Jesse** the father of King David.

And **David** was the father of Solomon by the **wife of Uriah,** and **Solomon** the father of Rehoboam, and **Rehoboam** the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asaph, and Asaph the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and

read at Christmas Vigil Mass

Jotham the father of Ahaz, and **Ahaz** the father of Hezekiah, and **Hezekiah** the father of Manasseh, and **Manasseh** the father of Amos, and Amos the father of Josiah, and **Josiah** the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon.

And after the **deportation** to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and **Zerubbabel** the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of **Joseph** the husband of Mary, who bore Jesus, who is called the Messiah.

Hey! What about all those names that are NOT bolded, that we don't cover?

The names we skipped are actually fairly unknown, or at least have so little detail that they don't have enough for a page in this study.

Sunday



Prophecy: Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and
the woman,
between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel.

fulfilled: 1 John 3:8

The one who does what is sinful is of the devil,
because the devil has been sinning from the
beginning. The reason the Son of God
appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

Reflection:

God could have made man in any way he saw fit. He chose to touch him, to breathe on him, to form him with His hands. (Genesis 2:7). He chose to make him like himself (in 'our image and likeness', Genesis 1:26). He chose to concern himself over what man needed, and saw his loneliness, and provided for him! He chose to trust man with stewardship, naming animals, keeping the garden, obeying the law. He made Adam *a son, a priest, a prophet, a king, and a bridegroom.*

And Adam left it all behind. Being part of God's family wasn't enough. Adam and Eve didn't have eyes to see what God had done for them. They were convinced to only see what God hadn't given them. They betrayed Him.

And yet - hope. Before God breathes a word of punishment or curse to them, He gives them a promise: 'I will not let this story end here. *I will send a savior.* ' Genesis 3:15.

This story is yours and mine too. We have been given a place in God's family, and we betray Him by sin. But lean in and *listen to God's words here*. He promises hope for restoration. Generations kept that hope, followed the bloodline of Adam and Eve, and *waited* for the savior to come. This Advent, we enter into their wait.

Read:

Genesis 2, 3:9-21

Reflection Questions:

- Consider a **moment of sin** you have had recently. Take a moment to **remember it thoroughly.** What happened? What motivated you? What did you feel? Map it out in a journal.
- Receive the Genesis 3:15 promise **personally.** The language doesn't sound particularly sweet, so dive in there. What does it mean to you? Rewrite it in your own words.
- This is the first moment of many generations of hope and suffering for Adam and Eve's family. If you're in a season of **not seeing** how God is going to come through, talk to Jesus about your circumstances. Ask for **hope.**

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
Scan or click this QR code for a short lesson!



This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Jesus is called the 'New Adam'
- Adam was tempted in the Garden of Eden; Jesus was tempted in the Garden of Gethsemene
- Eve was pulled out of the side of Adam (his rib)
- The Church, Jesus' bride was pulled out of his side by the blood and water on the cross

Monday



Prophecy: Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

fulfilled: Luke 2:7

And she gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

Reflection:

Has it ever occurred to you that Noah very likely never even **saw a boat** before building the ark? Did you realize that Noah probably spent between 40 and 60 years building before he **ever saw** his mission make sense?

And then - notice that God asked him to get onto the ark a full week before a drop of rain fell? What must people have been saying about him?

Finally, when the rain stopped, notice that Noah had to send a raven and a dove and spend two more weeks in patience and trust.

You know what Noah had an abundance of? **Hope.**

He trusted in God, even when his life plan was interrupted and he was made to look foolish. He hoped in God's goodness. He know God was trustworthy, even when he didn't see it. I for one want to be more like Noah.

Read:

Genesis 2, 3:9-21

Reflection Questions:

- Consider any situation in your life that makes you feel frustrated, stressed, impatient, and hopeless. My guess is, **Noah also felt these things.** Can you talk to God, and invite Noah a seat at that conversation too?
- What is your *ark*? What are you building, even if it's slow? Your family? Your vocation? Your character? A project, business, ministry, or house?
- Genesis 6:6-9 shows us that among a whole generation, Noah lived blamelessly. He lived in a wicked world, but **he himself** was righteous. Noah may understand you, your culture, your workplace, your struggles, your moral choices, etc more than you realize. *How did he do it?*

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Noah built an ark to save people. If you get in, you're safe.
- Jesus built a church to save people. If you "get in", you're safe. *(Imperfect analogy!)*
- The flood is like the waters of baptism, washing away all the evil in our soul by waters.

Tuesday

Prophecy: Genesis 22:18

Through your offspring, [Abraham], all nations on earth will be blessed.

fulfilled: Matthew 1:1

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, *the son of Abraham.*



Reflection:

Abram is known as our Father in Faith and commended for his faithfulness in the book of Hebrews. But, a closer look at his story reveals that faith and hope were not his first instinct. He wanted a child. He wanted a child so badly that when God promised him descendants, he picked up and moved his family to an unknown land to get what he was promised.

And yet, *God made him wait.* God promised him land, family, and worldwide blessing in Genesis 12 when Abram was 75. He wasn't 100 years old until he actually saw that promise come true in his son Isaac in Genesis 22.

What did Abram do in the meantime, during the wait? It would be so nice to be able to say he patiently put his trust in God and went about his business. But he didn't. He grasped at the promise. He had a child with his wife's servant instead.

God has promised you good things. He has good plans for your life. If you're in your 'Abram moment', where you can choose to hope in God or you can choose to grasp at the things you want, pause. Think of Abram. Choose hope.

Read: Genesis 15, 17, 21:1-7

Reflection Questions:

- Read Genesis 16:16 to Genesis 17:1. In these two lines of the Bible, there is a 13 year gap. Read Genesis 16 and 17 with that awareness - that Abram waited 13 years **without seeing God at all.** Can you relate to that?
- Is there something you **really want** from God? Tell God openly and honestly about it, name it, and ask for patience and hope in the waiting.
- In Genesis 22, God asks Abraham to sacrifice Isaac to test him. He wants to know if Abraham loves God, or God's gifts. Are there any of God's gifts that you love **more than God himself?**

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Abraham was promised descendants, land, and worldwide blessing through his family.
- Jesus is Abraham's descendent. Heaven is the Promised Land, and the worldwide blessing comes through Jesus.
- Abraham almost sacrificed his one only beloved son. God the Father really did it.

Wednesday

Prophecy: Isaiah 53:7

He was like a lamb led to the slaughter...yet he opened not his mouth.

fulfilled: Matthew 27:27

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, *the son of Abraham.*



Isaac

Reflection:

Isaac, the *child of the promise*. The one whose parents waited, prayed, and longed for. He must have had such a loving childhood. He must have felt secure and safe, doted upon and treasured. Then, one day, his father tells him it's time to travel to Mount Moriah to offer sacrifice to the Lord.

We often picture Isaac as a young child in this scene, but it's more likely that he was a *young man.* Strong, able-bodied, stable. Much faster than his aged father. He asks the perceptive question near the beginning of their travels, "Where is the animal to sacrifice?" His father says that "God himself will provide the sacrifice." Isaac must have replayed that in his mind as they hiked for three days, the wood of the offering strapped to his back. Surely, he must have known. When they arrived at the mountaintop, built the altar, prepared the fire, and still there was no animal - Isaac must have known. Yet he didn't struggle or run. He didn't accuse his father. At some point, his father bound him in ropes. Isaac laid down on the altar, and watched his elderly father - the father who adored him - hold up a knife to strike. He didn't fight. He trusted. And of course, Abraham didn't have to sacrifice his son afterall.

The trust of Isaac! Oh, may I trust my Heavenly Father like Isaac trusted Abraham.

Read: Genesis 22: 1-19

Reflection Questions:

- Do you have an **'Isaac'** in your life? Do you have something that you adore - that you worked or prayed or waited for - and that you may actually love **more than God himself?**
- God tested Abraham with the Isaac Sacrifice, because Abraham had proved u**ntrustworthy** beforehand with Ishmael in Genesis 16. This time, Abraham did not falter in faith. Reflect on your life. Can you see a **growth** in virtue - faith, trust, etc - in God over the course of your life?
- Reread Genesis 22:17-18. Look at how much God **values obedience**! Reflect on your own life. Have you been **obedient** to God?

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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Isaac was a young man when he was almost sacrificed. It was a 3 day journey. He carried the wood of the sacrifice on his back. A ram with its head caught in thorns was sacrificed in his place.
- Jesus was a young man. He was in the tomb 3 days. He carried the cross on his back. He is the sacrificial lamb with a crown of thorns sacrificed in our place.

Thursday

Prophecy: Isaiah 35:5-6

Then the eyes of the blind will be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped
the lame will leap like a deer.

fulfilled: Matthew 11:4

Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you see. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear…”



Reflection:

Jacob means “thief”. More accurately, it means “heel-grabber”, “supplanter”, or “usurper”. Jacob was given the name at birth, when he was born second to his twin Esau. Infant Jacob had grabbed onto Esau’s heel, as if he was trying to claim the first-born status instead of his brother. His parents named him Jacob. *He was given the identity of a thief, from birth.*

Jacob goes on to steal more. He steals the birthright from his brother Esau. He steals sheep from his father-in-law Laban. To be fair, Laban tricks him first and steals 7 extra years of Jacob’s manual labor to win the hand of his daughter Rachel.

All this thievery. All these sins. Yet this is *Jacob,* renamed Israel, the namesake of the entire nation of Israel, the father of the twelve tribes. Those same twelve tribes have their names written in Heaven’s Gates, according to Revelation. These same twelve tribes are the reason Jesus chooses twelve apostles.

What changed?

What changed is Jacob wrestled with God until he got a new name. “I will not let go until you bless me,” he tells the angel in Genesis 32. He wants a fresh start, a new name, a new mission, and he gets it. Let us hope in God and be willing to wrestle with him like Jacob.

Read:

Genesis 31:22-32

Reflection Questions:

- Is there an identity that you need to ask God to replace? Have you felt labeled or judged? Sometimes even labels as seemingly insignificant as "Goody Two Shoes" or "The Dumb Kid" can stick and continue causing hurt.
- The story of Jacob wrestling with an angel doesn't make a lot of sense at first glance. Put it in context of your own life. Have you ever wrestled with God about anything? If not, have you ever given up on prayer or on relationship with God before the wrestle began?

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Jesus is the new Jacob's Ladder - the mediator between Heaven & Earth.
- Like Jacob met his bride Rachel at his well, Jesus the Bridegroom met the Samaritan Woman at that same well, and he "proposed" to her and all of Samaria through her.

friday

Prophecy: Numbers 24:17

A star will come out of Jacob,
a scepter will rise out of Israel

fulfilled: Matthew 2:2

We saw the star at its rising and have come to worship [the King of the Jews].



Reflection:

There's so much to Joseph's story. The jealousy, injustice, slavery, dream interpretation, famine, and forgiveness. But I want to start at the beginning and turn your eyes to the coat Israel gave him.

The coat was a sign of Joseph's *belovedness.*

Like Isaac before him, he was the much-anticipated child of his mother. Like Adam before him, he was the beloved son, clothed by the Father. And like Jesus after him, he was betrayed by his 11 brothers, sold into slavery, and unjustly imprisoned.

The coat got Joseph into trouble, because his brothers were jealous. Undoubtedly. But for a moment, imagine having a coat from your Father. Imagine that he went to great lengths to give you something special to mark you. Imagine wearing proudly a sign of God's love for you.

It goes without saying, but allow me to point something out to you: you and I are *much more beloved* to God than Joseph was to Jacob. He has given us much more than a colored coat to show us he claims us. He is proud to be seen with us. Proud to show the world he loves us.

In Genesis 45 and 50, Joseph remarkably loves and forgives his brothers for their crimes against him. I can't help but wonder if he is able to show such love, because he was loved first.
1 John 4:19: We love because he loved us first.

Read:

Genesis 37:1-4, 45, 50

Reflection Questions:

- Take some time to imagine, draw, label, and acknowledge **your own "coat".** What has God given you, blessed you with, surrounded you by, clothed you in? Claim and wear that coat.
- Consider the list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that you were given (to "wear" perhaps?) at your Baptism.

  Wisdom, understanding, knowledge,
  counsel, piety, fortitude, fear of the Lord.
- Pray with the lyrics of "Coat of Many Colors" by Brandon Lake.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Joseph was betrayed by 11 brothers, sold for silver, cast into prison wrongfully, and elevated to the right hand of the Pharaoh.
- Jesus was betrayed by 11 disciples (all but John abandoned him at his death), sold for silver, cast into prison & killed wrongfully, and ascended to the right hand of God.

Saturday



Prophecy: Psalm 72:9

May the desert tribes bow down before him...

fulfilled: Luke 2:15-16

The shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that the Lord has told us about. So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and the baby..."

Reflection:

Judah was not a perfect guy. He's the fourth of Jacob's sons, and he contributes to the unjust punishment of his younger brother Joseph. To his credit, he does try to keep Joseph from being killed, by suggesting slavery instead of death. But he allows his brother to be sold, even if he didn't intend the harm as much as the others did. He didn't stop it.

Chapters later, when the brothers re-encounter Joseph, disguised to them now as the second in command of Egypt, Judah is *different*. Joseph accuses their youngest brother, the new favorite, of a crime he didn't commit. He must assume the brothers would be thrilled to get rid of him.

But Judah surprises him.

Judah steps up and defends his youngest brother, to the point of offering himself in Benjamin's place. "*Let your servant, I beg you, remain in stead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go back with his brothers,*" he pleads.

He has made this mistake once - and he won't make it again. He has become a man who won't let evil happen without his intervention. We too have likely been guilty of standing by and things happen. Let us, with the courage of Judah the lion, step into danger instead of out.

Read:

Genesis 44:18-45:8

Reflection Questions:

- It's the Saturday of the first week of Advent. The first week is all about **Hope**, and tomorrow, we enter into the week about **Peace.** This is a perfect time to examine our consciences and make a good **confession.** We can feel at peace when we have entered into God's mercy.
- In imitation of Judah, **examine your own life** and where you've sinned before. Sometimes, we sin by *doing* something wrong. But sometimes, we sin by *not doing* something we ought, like Judah did. Do you have anything standing between you and God? Judah was able to change. So can we.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Judah was in the bloodline. The 'scepter shall not pass from Judah'. He was the fourth of Jacob's sons, but chosen to be the one in Eve's bloodline.
- Jesus comes from the line of Judah.

Sunday



Prophecy: Jeremiah 31:15

↓ Rachel weeps for her children and refuses to be comforted, because they are no more.

fulfilled: Matthew 2:16

When Herod realized he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under.

Reflection:

So much can be said about Moses. Wow, the man lived a *long life!* He bears a lot of labels: murderer, prophet, stutterer, covenant-maker, Prince of Egypt, author of the Pentateuch. But I want to talk about Moses' intimacy with God.

God in the Old Testament is, on first glance, more 'fire and brimstone' than Jesus. But that's not what Moses knew. Moses spent *time* with God up on the mountain and in the tabernacle. He first met God at the Burning Bush in the desert and resisted him. But years and plagues and Red-Sea-Crossings later, we find Moses a changed man. In his stress and fear about his role, the people, the massive task before him, he *turns to God*. He intercedes. He wants to *see* God. He wants to return to the Adamic intimacy of *walking with God*.

In Exodus 33, he pleads with God to show himself. Moses says, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here." *I don't want to go without you, God. If you're not there, I'm not there,* he says. He has come to rely on God more than on himself. Paragraphs later, we see his encounters with God have changed him; his face glows. He has to veil because of how brightly he shines. Moses encountered God deeply. I pray the same for you and me.

Read:

Exodus 33:12-23, 34:29-35

Reflection Questions:

- Often in prayer, we spend time talking to God about our lives, and asking him for help. Today, in imitation of Moses, try something else: try telling God how much you love him. Try telling God you will follow him anywhere. Ask God to **reveal more of Himself to you**, not to get answers for your life, but to *just be close*.
- Moses' face **glowed** after talking to God. Do you look "different" after prayer? Does encountering God change **you?**
- Check out Moses' Song in Deuteronomy 32 and Exodus 15. Consider **writing your own song of gratitude** to God.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Moses leads his people to freedom from slavery in Egypt. Jesus leads his people to freedom from slavery to sin.
- Moses was born into a baby boy massacre and survived by going to the Pharaoh.
- Jesus was born into a baby boy massacre and survived by going to Egypt.

Monday



Prophecy: Psalm 22:18

They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

fulfilled: John 19:23

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.
"Let us not tear it', they said to one another.
"Let us decide who will get it by lot."

Reflection:

Joshua has an entire book named after him, in which he leads Israel in conquering the Promised Land. It's epic. It's larger-than-life. It's impressive. Joshua is a Biblical hero!

But before he had his name splashed across the front pages, Joshua was just a faithful right-hand-man. It was probably a shock to him that Moses was not going to enter the Promised Land. From the amount of times Moses has to assure him, "Do not be afraid! Be strong!", we can infer that Joshua must have been afraid.

40 years before Joshua became the leader, he was a young man who trusted in God. Moses sent 12 spies into the Promised Land to scout it out. Upon their return, 10 despaired and convinced the people that it was hopeless to conquer. Only two - Caleb and Joshua - trusted that *God could do it.* "The Lord is with us! Do not fear them!" he said. Joshua remembered the Red Sea, and the plagues, and the manna, and the countless other miracles. He knew God as provider, and he put his faith in him long before he knew he would be the next one to lead. Joshua was a man of integrity, faithfulness, and trust before he was a man of military victory. Let's pray that in our 'right hand man' seasons, we stay faithful as Joshua did.

Read: Numbers 13:26-14:12

Reflection Questions:

- Do you ever feel like your life and your role to play in the world are **small**? I wonder if Joshua ever felt the same way. Joshua didn't know God's big plan for him for a long time.
- Joshua's big leadership role didn't start until he was at least 50 or 60 years old. Do you have **unconscious timelines** in your head of when you expect things to happen in your life? Bring those to God.
- What is your **"Promised Land"** that seems impossible to conquer? Ask Joshua and Caleb to help you trust radically in God's provision there.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Jesus and Joshua have the same Hebrew name 'Yeshua'.
- They both lead their people to freedom and conquest over sin.
- Jesus is a new Israel. They spent 40 years in the desert before their 'ministry' of conquest. He spent 40 days. They crossed the Jordan on their way to begin conquest in Jericho. He was baptized in the Jordan on the way to begin his ministry.

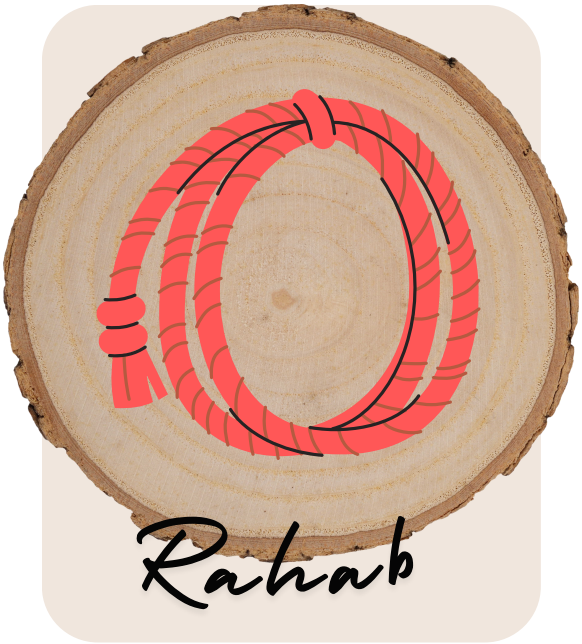
Tuesday

Prophecy: Isaiah 53:3

↓ Like one from whom people hide their faces, he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

fulfilled: John 1:11

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.



Reflection:

Rahab's story is incredible. She's a prostitute from Jericho whose faith in God - a God that is not her own yet - causes her to shelter Hebrew spies in her home, risk her life for them, and ultimately save her family from Jericho's ruin. She later joins the family of God - literally. She is in the bloodline of Jesus!

It's clear that Rahab's story is a beautiful indicator that we can change. Conversion is possible. But I like to read in between the lines of her story as well. She married Salmon. We don't know anything about Salmon except that he married Rahab. Was he one of the spies that came in through her window? She was a prostitute. Was he the first man that ever treated her with respect and tenderness? I like to imagine Caleb, the other good spy alongside Joshua, as one of the spies as well. He must have been an older man, having survived the 40 desert years, and he was the only experienced spy among them. Imagine Rahab, encountering Salmon and Caleb up her window. Men of courage, obedience, and faith. Imagine the fear she had when the Israelites marched around her city, blowing their trumpets and shouting. Imagine the faith she clung to that God would not destroy her, as he promised. And when Jericho came crashing to the ground, her tower alone stayed up. She had nothing left.

Imagine the judgement she felt, entering awkwardly into a new nation. Rahab knew fear and trauma, and yet her heart was open to change. I like to imagine God romancing her hurt heart through Salmon. He can do the same for the Rahab parts of our hearts too. We are not too far gone.

Read: Joshua 2:1-24, 6:17

Reflection Questions:

- Perhaps you've experienced great trauma and great sin in your life, and perhaps you haven't. Either way, sin - big or small - is wounding. We each have a **Rahab part of our heart.** Today, gently explore that with Jesus.
- Where have you sinned and fallen away from faithfulness to God?
- Can you let God speak through any shame or guilt, and romance your heart? **You have a place in his family,** and he is not embarrassed of having you in it.
- Talk with Jesus about **judgement.** Have you felt judgement from others, or imposed it on people in your life with too much harshness?

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
Scan or click this QR code for a short lesson!



This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- The walls of Jericho fell by a surprising victory: a procession & shouting.
- The victory over death and sin happened in a surprising way: the death of Jesus.

Wednesday



Prophecy: Micah 5:2

But you Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small
among the clans of Judah, out of you will
come for me one who will rule over
Israel, whose origins are from old, from
ancient times."

fulfilled: Matthew 2:1

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea...

Reflection:

Do you know that Rahab is Ruth's mother-in-law? That's right. Rahab, the ex-prostutite, raised Boaz. Imagine just for a moment Boaz's childhood. He's first-generation in the Promised Land, in a little town of Bethlehem. His dad fought in conquest; maybe he did as well. Likely, he faced a lot of judgement about his mother. He dealt with kids whispering about him. And then, he meets Ruth.

Ruth is a Moabite. Moabites were forbidden for the Israelites, because their ancestral line was incestuous. Ruth's first husband never should have married her, but he did. And then he died, leaving her a widow. When Boaz met Ruth, she was a widow, caring for her somewhat dramatic, grieved and widowed mother-in-law. She had just left everything she knew - her family, her culture, her pagan religion - to care for Naomi. Boaz said to her, *"I heard what you've done for your mother-in-law."* He admired her compassion. He could probably tell that Ruth was being whispered about and facing judgement too. Imagine him bringing Ruth home to meet his mother. That dinner table must have been lively: a Moabite, a prostitute, and two Hebrew men from the bloodline. This is the family of Jesus.

Boaz was moved by Ruth's compassion for her mother-in-law. He saw her, past her history, and was compassionate on her. Let's imitate Ruth and Boaz's compassion.

Read: Ruth 2:5-23

Reflection Questions:

- Have you ever felt like the outsider? Alone, new, misunderstood, or judged? Ruth and Boaz both can **relate** to you. Read their story as if you're living it alongside them.
- When Ruth was widowed, she probably **never expected to find love again**. She may have anticipated marrying someone in order to be protected, but she met and loved Boaz before she even knew who he was. If you think you know how your story is going to play out, spend some time journaling your expectations with the Lord. Ask him to surprise you, like he surprised Ruth.

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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Boaz was the redeemer-kinsman of Ruth, and he gave her wheat to feed her, protected her, and married her.
- Jesus is our redeemer. He gives us Eternal Bread (Eucharist) to eat, protects us, and marries us as his bride the Church.

Thursday

Prophecy: Isaiah 11:1

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, from his roots a Branch *[Natser]* will bear fruit.

fulfilled: Matthew 2:23

And [Jesus] went and lived in a town called Nazareth *[Nazer].* So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be a Nazerene.



Reflection:

Jesse is David the King's father, but aside from that fact and the prophecy about his family line, his story is not detailed in the Bible. The one place we see him is the story of David's anointing. Samuel, God's prophet, is sent to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse, to pick a king from among his sons. Jesse, the grandson of Boaz, is in the bloodline.

Jesse lines up all of his sons - seven of them - and has Samuel inspect each one. He has impressive sons: strong, burly, king-like warriors. Each of them have all the makings of a king. It seems that Samuel and Jesse are mutually surprised and disappointed when, one by one, Samuel dismisses each son. None of them are the one God is looking for. When at last, Samuel asks if there are any more sons, Jesse answers that he does have one more - David - but he's a little shepherd, a nobody in the family. Surely, Samuel didn't want to pick *him* to be king?

But that's exactly who God chooses.

Sometimes, we have many gifts and skills to offer. We think God may choose one of our fine qualities - our craftsmanship, career, public speaking, admirable children, virtues - to qualify us for some great call. Perhaps we think 'I know exactly how God is going to make me holy! It's obvious!' But often, we see in the lives of the saints, that the small thing, the insignificant thing, the thorn in the side of Paul & the Little Way of Therese & the unspoken hidden words of Joseph - these are the "David"s God chooses instead.

Read: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Reflection Questions:

- What expectations do you have for your holiness? How do you envision your life , and the good works you want to do? Write it out, and then surrender it to Jesus.
- Jesse and Samuel didn't ask God what he wanted from them - they assumed he wanted the best thing they could find. But he wanted the smallest, most pure-hearted. Ask Jesus **what he actually wants from you**.
- Can you name your **'big burly seven sons'** - things that you may be proud of and assume are the things God wants?

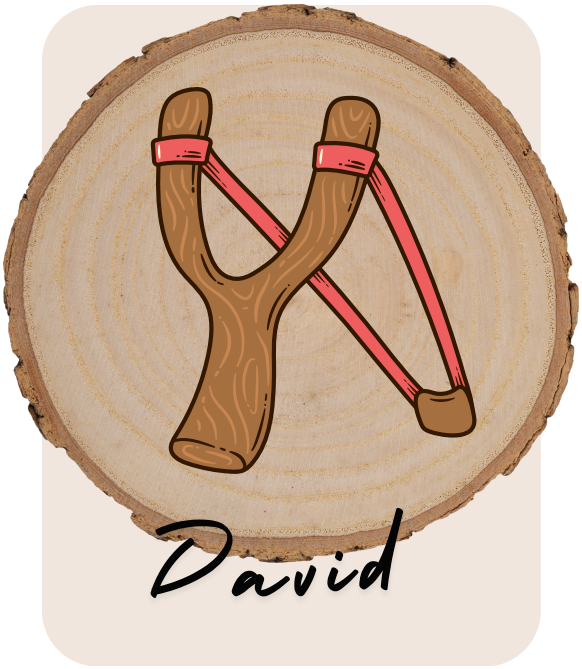
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- The prophecy of the stump of Jesse is about a great destruction happening in the line of Jesse (the tree is cut to a stump). This happens through the exile & deportation of Israel and Judah, and the oppression of Greece and Rome.
- Jesus truly emerges from the remnant stump.

friday



Prophecy: 2 Samuel 7:12-13

When your days are over, [David], and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

fulfilled: Luke 1:31-32

You will conceive and bear a son, and you are to call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendents forever. HIs kingdom will never end.

Reflection:

David is called a "man after God's own heart." This is before he is king, before he is chosen, before he defeated Goliath, before he expanded the borders of the Promised Land. When he was a humble shepherd boy in Bethlehem, he was *a man after God's own heart.* His speech to Saul about fearing Goliath and trusting God demonstrates it.

Why? The psalms can help us answer. They provide a peek into David's relationship with God; he wrote many of them. Through the highs and lows of his life, David's choice is to pray. He comes to God mournful, dramatic, afraid, and joyful. I like to imagine him penning Psalm 23 when tending his sheep, reflecting on God.

Though his life took many twists and turns, the foundation he built when he was hidden, unknown, young, and given menial tasks - that foundation mattered. That's why God chose him. And, according to 2 Chronicles 16:9, he is still searching for people after his own heart, to build them up. Let it be you, and let it be me.

Read: 1 Samuel 7:32-49

Reflection Questions:

- David got a little **wild** in his praising God in 2 Samuel 6. He was unashamed to worship the Lord, even if his wife judged him. Likewise, Mary of Bethany in John 12 anoints Jesus' feet with costly perfume, and it provokes **judgement**. Why this waste? Why this excess? Compare the two accounts , and consider the similarities between David and Mary - two **friends of God.**
- Do you **"waste"** time, resources, or energy on the Lord out of love?
- Consider spending some time with the Psalms, and even **writing your own**, in imitation to David.
- Pray with the Maverick City Song **"Move Your Heart".**

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- David is a shepherd. Jesus is the Good Shepherd.
- David is an unlikely humble king. Jesus is the same.
- David is from Bethlehem. Jesus is born there.
- David is given an everlasting covenant about his son - ultimately fulfilled in Jesus.

Saturday

Prophecy: Jeremiah 23:5

The days are coming...when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is right and just in the land.

fulfilled: Matthew 1:1

This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David...



Reflection:

The season of Advent is actually mostly focused on preparing our hearts, not for Jesus' first coming (Christmas), but for Jesus' second coming. If you notice, the daily readings and Sunday Gospels are words of warning. Prepare your hearts!

The story of Solomon, sadly, is a word of warning.

King Solomon - the highest and best king Israel had seen yet! He built the magnificent temple! He had the twelve tribes united under him! He was given the gift of supernatural wisdom by God! Wise men came from the East to ask questions of him! The Queen of Sheba came to visit him!

And yet.

Solomon fell in the way the prophet Samuel predicted he would: to his hundreds of wives, his greed in taxing the people too heavily, and his accumulation of warhorses. He built pagan shrines to the gods of his wives and concubines. Despite all God had given him, Solomon's heart turned away. And he was punished for it. The kingdom was divided, pulled from the hands of his son, as punishment for Solomon's actions.

Wisdom can't get you the whole way. Gifts from God can't get you the whole way. Doing big amazing things for God's kingdom can't get you the whole way. Do you love God? Do you continue to love him, every day? Let's not be like Solomon.

Read: 1 Kings 3:3-14, 11:1-13

Reflection Questions:

- Solomon loved God at first. (1 Kings 3:3). But chapters later, we see his first love has been **replaced.** 1 Kings 11:1 "Solomon loved many foreign women." Over decades, he slipped away from the Lord. He **faded.** He forgot his first love. It reminds me of the words in Revelation to the Church of Ephesus, "This I have against you. You have forgotten the love you had at first." Take some time today to soberly evaluate your own heart. Have you **replaced** God with anything else? **Have you lost the love you had at first?**
- Solomon's gift of wisdom was amazing and blessed many people. What gifts do **you** have to bless people? List them, then surrender them to God.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Kings come from the East to seek out the wisdom of Solomon, much like the wise men from the east at Jesus' birth.
- Solomon rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to be coronated; Jesus rides in to die.
- Solomon chooses 12 men to be his officers, and Jesus chooses 12 apostles.

Sunday



Prophecy: Psalm 72:10

May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores bring tribute to him. May the Kings of Sheba & Seba present him gifts.

fulfilled: Matthew 2:11

[The kings] saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then, they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reflection:

The story of Rehoboam and Jeroboam is defined by fear. The story of the prophet Jonah - contemporary with these men - is also about fear. Throughout Scripture, God tells the people at least 145 times to *not be afraid.*

Rehoboam is afraid of being considered weak. So, he refuses to be reasonable and merciful. Ten tribes of his kingdom are ripped from him.

Jeroboam is afraid of being forgotten. So, he takes matters into his own hands and provides golden calves - a false religion - to replace God's law. He keeps himself in control, and he suffers for it.

Jonah is afraid of preaching to an evil people, and more afraid that God will have mercy on them when Jonah himself will not. He runs away and ends up inside a whale.

Fear has bullied us far too long, and has stolen away the good invitations and plans God has for us. No more! It's time to *be not afraid.*

Read: 1 Kings 12:1-15,25-30

Reflection Questions:

- Has fear ever **prevented** you from doing what you knew was right, or what God called you to do in the past?
- **Right now,** is there any place in your life you're **operating out of fear** instead of trust in God? If so, what are you afraid of?
- Can you pray with Psalm 139: 23-24? **Bare your heart** to the Lord. Let him see any fear inside you, and let him lead you like a Good Shepherd.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Jonah the prophet refuses God's call and is in the belly of the whale for three days before he is revived & emerges!
- Jesus dies and is placed in the tomb for three days before he resurrects and emerges.

Monday

Prophecy: Isaiah 40:3

A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness,
prepare the way for the Lord
Make straight the in the desert
a highway for our God.”

fulfilled: Matthew 3:1-2

In those days, John the Baptist came,
preaching in the wilderness of Judea and
saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven
has come near.’



Reflection:

Elijah was assumed into Heaven on a fiery chariot, body and soul. This guy was a BIG DEAL PROPHET in the Old Testament. He took his apprentice Elisha and imparted to him all the gifts and charisms God had given him to work mighty signs. (Elisha ended up exceeding Elijah’s miracle count.)

Yet, 1 Kings 19 gives us a peek into Elijah’s heart. This man who - on the outside - is working miracles, raising people from the dead, going toe-to-toe with false prophets - is tired. He’s spent. He comes to God and tells him he’s done - “It is enough now, Oh Lord - take away my life!”

First, God gives him a snack and a nap. (Take notes.)

And then, God encounters him in the silence. It isn’t in the rushing wind, the blazing fire, or even the amazing ministry of Elijah. His heart is fortified in deep intimacy with God. Like Moses before him, he meets God on Mt Horeb. He talks to God. From that place of intimacy, he has the strength to carry on his mission. Like Elijah, we cannot do this on our own power. We need time and space to hear God.

Read: 1 Kings 19:4-13

Reflection Questions:

- Do you feel **discouraged**, tired, lonely, or ready to give up on the life God has called you to? Tell God about it like Elijah did.
- Can you carve out space and time to have **silence**, to reconnect with God and to hear his call for you again?
- Is there anything you're trying to do **on your own power** that you can yield to God? Let him take things off your plate, or keep them on. His grace will be sufficient - if you're letting him lead.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Elisha works many of the same miracles Jesus does: multiplying food, curing lepers, raising the dead, floating objects on water.
- John the Baptist, like Elijah, is a prophet preceding another who works greater miracles. They both are described similarly. John is a New Elijah and Jesus is a New Elisha.

Tuesday

Prophecy: Malachi 3:1

I will send a messenger, who will prepare the way before me.

fulfilled: Mark 1:4

And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.



Reflection:

Jotham was a good king in a line of mostly bad kings in Judah. He's only mentioned in one paragraph of the Bible, and there's really only one line about his life. It's this: "*And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.*"

Jotham was 25 when he took the throne. We don't know how he felt, what changes he enacted in the kingdom, his personal life, his relationship with God, his mission, his ministry, his children, his love life...we just know the one line.

In one sense, what a triumphant line to be known by in Scripture!

In another sense, what an *erasure* of his life. That's all we get??

If your life could be boiled down to one line, would it be, *"She did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" ?* We may not know much about Jotham's details, but something tells me that, in humility, he would like it like that. All that mattered about him in history was that he was righteous, and he was in the family of Jesus. May future generations say the same about you and me!

Read: 2 Kings 15:32-38

Reflection Questions:

- If you could boil down your life so far into one sentence, what would it be?
- If you took a survey of your friends, family, colleagues, neighbors, etc: how would they describe you and your priorities?
- Take an inventory of your heart. Whose attention do you care about? Can you name any people in your life that you're trying to impress? Do you care too much about what others think of you?
- There's a line in the Missionary Anthem song by YWAM that says, "*I will preach the Gospel, die, and be forgotten, as long as you get the glory.*" Sit with that line, and talk to Jesus about what comes up in your heart.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Hosea is a prophet contemporary with Jotham who is told to marry a prostitute to experience the pain of her infidelity. This infidelity, God tells him, is what God himself suffers at the hands of faithless people.
- Jesus calls himself bridegroom, and he marries The Church of sinners.

Wednesday

Prophecy: Psalm 69:21

They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

fulfilled: Matthew 27:34

There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall, but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.



Reflection:

Ahaz is a man of false piety and true self-reliance. He is the King of Judah when things go badly in the North Kingdom. He and his people are afraid for their lives and their land and their futures. Their hearts "shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind." (Isaiah 7:2) God *knows* he is afraid. He Isaiah the prophet to console him.

Isaiah gives Ahaz a word of reassurance from God. God will protect Judah, Isaiah says. Ahaz can rely on Him. He even invites Ahaz to ask God for a sign. "Let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven!" God encourages Ahaz.

But Ahaz won't.

He won't ask for a sign in faith. He won't trust God. He says, *"I will not ask. I will not put the Lord to the test."* This sounds nice. It sounds like he won't test God like the distrustful judge Gideon before him. But Ahaz isn't asking God for a sign *because he intends to solve the problem all by himself.* His fear leads to self-reliance. He ignores God's words, and he makes a deal with the devil. He becomes allies with the enemy Assyria, who later rises up to fight Judah. He is too afraid and too weak to trust, and it makes his entire kingdom suffer.

Read: Isaiah 7:1-14

Reflection Questions:

- Where do you rely on **yourself** instead of on God? Consider categories like: your health, your childrearing, your schedule, your finances, your friendships, your future, your generosity.
- Can you pick even one small thing to surrender to God and **trust his provision** ? This is a lifelong journey of releasing control of our lives and trusting God. Can you **start small** today or this week?

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

Many of the prophets of this time period, especially the four Major Prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, prophesy about the coming Messiah. While their life doesn't foreshadow Jesus as much, their words do. Notice that many of the prophecies in this booklet are from Isaiah.

Thursday

Prophecy: Zechariah 9:9

Your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey.

fulfilled: Matthew 21:7

They brought a donkey ...and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on.



Reflection:

Hezekiah suffered the pain of Assyrian invasion, thanks to his father Ahaz's self-reliance. Assyrian forces swept through Judah, destroying everything in their path. And Hezekiah, like his father before him, was afraid.

But Hezekiah chose differently than his father.

The good king went to the prophet Isaiah and asked him for help. The conversation is recorded in Isaiah 37 and in 2 Kings 19. The Lord assures Hezekiah of his faithfulness through Isaiah, and Hezekiah believes him. He intercedes for his people, and God moves miraculously to defeat his enemy.

A few paragraphs later in Isaiah, Hezekiah falls sick. Isaiah tells him that this is the end of his life. Hezekiah, afraid and sorrowful, turns to God again. He intercedes for his own life. Because of his prayer, and because of his trust, God is moved. God gives him fifteen more years of life. Hezekiah makes a full recovery.

This is the power of intercession. Ahaz would not ask the Lord, but Hezekiah would not stop asking. He because of it, he did not stop receiving.

Read: 2 Kings 19:1-7, 14-19, 20:1-11

Reflection Questions:

- Sometimes, our parents' imperfections affect us greatly, and we are **hurt.** Hezekiah could have lived in sorrow that his father was such a coward. But, he didn't. At some point, he turned and became his own man. He didn't have the example of his father to look up to, but h**e found the Lord anyways.** If you have a hurtful past with your parents, family, mentor, etc- consider Hezekiah's experience more closely. Maybe **this** is the time to bring that hurt and disappointment to God, so he can set you free to pursue him.
- Hezekiah wasn't afraid to ask God for big "unreasonable" things. Do you have anything to ask of the Lord that you haven't yet, because it seemed **too big?**

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
Scan or click this QR code for a short lesson!



This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Hezekiah cleansed the temple and restored it to its right order, similarly to Jesus' cleansing of the temple.
- Hezekiah is on his deathbed when he prays for healing and God grants him 15 more years of life. This reminds us of Jesus' miracles of healing.

friday



Prophecy: Psalm 41:9

Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against ,me.

fulfilled: John 13:21,26

Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me. ... It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish."

Reflection:

Manasseh goes down in history as an evil king, responsible for undoing the good reforms of Hezekiah, and for practicing child sacrifice. In the book of Kings, that's the end of his story. However, if you read his story told in the book of Chronicles, there's one key thing added.

Manasseh repents.

And God *forgives him.*

Chronicles reports that after being captured, Manasseh *humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. ... And he knew that the Lord was God.*

This is a 180 degree switch, a complete change of heart, a renunciation of his evil ways. This is astounding, that his heart is converted at the last hour. Perhaps the example of his father Hezekiah finally reached him, after years of rebelling against him. He spent a lifetime in sin, idolatry, and leading his people astray. Yet even he is forgivable? There's no place God's mercy can't go.

Read: 2 Chronicles 33:1-13

Reflection Questions:

- Do you have any 'Manasseh' people in your life, who are incredibly hard to forgive because they consistently offend and hurt you? Perhaps **today,** have **courage** and ask the Lord for help forgiving.
- Do **you** feel unforgivable in any area of your life - ashamed, guilty, and that you're too far gone? Even small parts of our hearts can hold onto self-blame for a long time after sin has ended. Try to uncover any **remnant Manasseh parts** in your heart, and bring them to Jesus.

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- The fictional story of Tobit is set slightly after this time period, but is worth mentioning.
- Tobias foreshadows Jesus. He is a bridegroom who saves his bride, Sarah, from affliction of demons. Sarah, in turn, foreshadows the Church. She is assaulted by sin, but is saved by her bridegroom.

Saturday

Prophecy: Isaiah 7:14

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

fulfilled: Luke 1:35

The power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.



Reflection:

Josiah, the boy king. He began to rule at 8 years old, and he started to reform the kingdom at age 16. When at last he found the book of the law (likely Deuteronomy) and he realized how disobedient his ancestors had been for generations, he tore his clothes and wept over it. He sent for a prophetess, and she told him that *yes* - Judah would suffer punishment for their infidelity. But because he, Josiah, had wept and mourned the disobedience, *he* would be spared. He would not have to see his kingdom torn apart.

Repentance is powerful. Josiah cried tears of grief *on behalf of God.* His heart broke at seeing how his people had forgotten and betrayed their Lord. He knew God should punish his people, because he knew they deserved it.

“Let my heart be broken by the things that break God’s heart.” It’s a quote from Bob Pierce. I admit that sometimes I lament over much smaller things - my own selfish preferences. King Josiah’s authentic moment of sorrow moved the heart of God. He humbled himself before the Lord, and the Lord responded. Let’s repent in kind.

Read: 2 Chronicles 34:1-28

Reflection Questions:

- The prophetess tells Josiah that God **heard him weeping**. Consider that. God is near to the broken-hearted. He sees when we mourn things. When was the last time you were grieved? Were you aware that God was so close to you?
- Josiah's reforms were unsuccessful. Within a few years of his death, the Babylonians took over Judah and his home was destroyed. But **it wasn't about the impact he made on the world** at large; to God, it was about the **disposition of his heart**. Whether or not you ever 'change the world' at large, is your heart about God, or about reform and impact?

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
Scan or click this QR code for a short lesson!



This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Jeremiah suffers much of what Jesus suffered: betrayal, persecution of the elders, condemnation to death for speaking against the Temple, rejection, etc.
- Jeremiah likens himself to the sacrificial Passover Lamb, and Jesus is the New Passover lamb.

Sunday



Prophecy: Daniel 7:13-14

In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of Heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him.

fulfilled: Matthew 2:2

The high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One?”
“I Am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of Heaven.”

Reflection:

Daniel was in the first wave of people to be deported from Judah. He was carried away from everything he knew, and he was assigned to work in the king’s court as an advisor. This king was his *enemy*. He had treated Daniel’s people mercilessly. Babylon was an evil empire.

But Daniel did not rebel. He did not try to resist, or refuse to work, or try to sabotage the king. He served with humility and integrity. He lived in an evil world, and was an upright, virtuous, faithful man in the midst of it. When the moment came for him to cross the moral line and obey an evil law, he wouldn’t do it. Thus the lion’s den. He never compromised his faith. He lived in the world, but not of it.

Jeremiah gave instructions to the people of the exile that Daniel clearly took to heart: “*Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have children…multiply, and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile.*”

Read: Daniel 1:1-16

Reflection Questions:

- Daniel started his advisory role in the king's court by asking permission to fast from their sumptuous food. He saw what the world said was *necessary* to succeed, and he **rejected** it. He chose to rely on God alone. Is there anything that you are 'buying into' from the world? Have you started to rely on worldly products, trends, lifestyle choices, or standards that **take the place of God?**
- Consider the ways that you interact with "the world" - whether in the workplace, grocery store, neighborhood, or online. Do you work for the **upbuilding** and welfare of the world, or do you hide from it?

Want more backstory on the character? Want more ways that Jesus is foreshadowed in this character's life, or a deeper explanation of the box below?
Scan or click this QR code for a short lesson!



This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Daniel prophesied about the Messiah often and accurately, from his vision about the kingdoms that would rise and fall before the Messiah, to his accurate prediction of the year the Messiah would come.
- In the fiery furnace, the fourth man in the fire that is seen with Daniel's friends is widely believed to be a pre-incarnate image of Jesus.

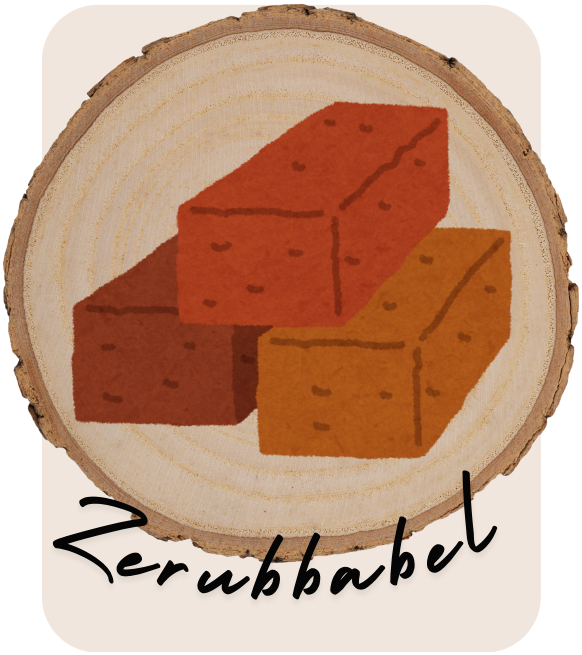
Monday

Prophecy: Jeremiah 23:3

I myself with gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries...

fulfilled: John 10:11

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.



Reflection:

When King Cyrus released the Hebrews from exile to rebuild Jerusalem, they had a *massive* task before them. Zerubbabel led with the most daunting job: rebuilding the temple, the place where God and man meet.

It was not easy. In fact, when the foundation was laid, the old men who had seen the first temple in all of its glory wept at how dull it was in comparison. The prophet Haggai was sent basically for one purpose: to encourage Zerubbabel to not give up.

"*I am with you*," God says to Zerubbabel. "*Take courage, for I am with you*," he repeats." "*My spirit abides among you; fear not*," he says a third time.

Building was long, laborious, and not satisfying. When they were done with their backbreaking labor, they weren't even proud of it. But it was all they had to offer. It was the best they could do. It was everything they had, poured out into a labor of love. And you know what? That temple was the one where Jesus walked. Zerubbabel's effort and obedience was all God needed. It was like his five loaves and two fish, each day offered up in obedience. He built a temple even if it felt like it was not good enough.

Sometimes, our lives feel like a quiet long labor that doesn't pay off. Others may be disappointed in what we have produced. God often calls his people to a hidden kind of life. But he knew what he was about when he sent Zerubbabel to do this task, and he knows what he's about in your life too. Keep building.

Read: Haggai 1-2

Reflection Questions:

- What are you building (or rebuilding) in your life right now? If you don't know, ask God for eyes to see it. Every day, **you lay bricks.** Ask God for the vision and for **encouragement** to carry on.
- Notice how Zerubbabel's first task to restore chaos is to **focus on the temple**. This should teach us: when our life is in chaos, and we've suffered a kind of exile, our first task should be to return to the church, the sacraments, and the meeting place of God and man. Evaluate your relationship with the sacraments. Is there a new step towards him that God is asking you to take **through the church?**

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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Zerubabbel is the king who rebuilds the physical temple, much like Jesus, the king who rebuilds his people by building a Church.
- Judith crushes the head of her enemy and is called "blessed among women" for doing so. This prefigures Mary crushing the serpent's head in Genesis 3:15. (Listen to audio for more.)

Tuesday

Prophecy: Ezekial 21:27

The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.

fulfilled: Matthew 2:2

We saw the star at its rising and have come to worship [the King of the Jews].



Reflection:

Judas Maccabees - the hammer - is the warrior who leads most of the Maccabean Revolt against Greece and *wins the unlikely victory* . He wins! Judea declares independence from Greece and governs themselves for 100 years. It's amazing. It's a testament to the incredible faith and courage of the warriors.

When he has realized he has won, Judas' first order of business is to cleanse the temple. The Greeks had desecrated it and converted it into a temple for Zeus. Now, the Jews rededicate it to God. They polish, they clean, they build. And then, according to Jewish tradition, they experience a miracle of oil lasting for eight days, burning lamps continuously in the rededication.

St. Paul tells us in Corinthians that *we* are temples of the Holy Spirit. We also are subject to desecration and destruction. Sin, trauma, tragedy, loss, injustice - heck, even consistent overwhelm and overstimulation and comparison - these things can hurt our hearts. Christmas is almost here. It's time to rededicate ourselves, clean up, polish off, rebuild, and fortify our hearts. We are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Read:

1 Maccabees 4:36-60

Reflection Questions:

- Notice the **work** it takes to rededicate the temple. It is not simply a prayer they say in one evening. The people spend days, weeks, and months rebuilding, fortifying, and preparing before they had a feast of rededication. Is there real work that you need to do to rebuild your heart? Is there something significant you want to do as a sign of rededication - perhaps with a lighted candle, like Judas before you?
- As we approach Christmas, consider **what kind of gift** you can give Jesus at the celebration of his birth. A freshly-rededicated heart is probably the very thing he has been longing for.

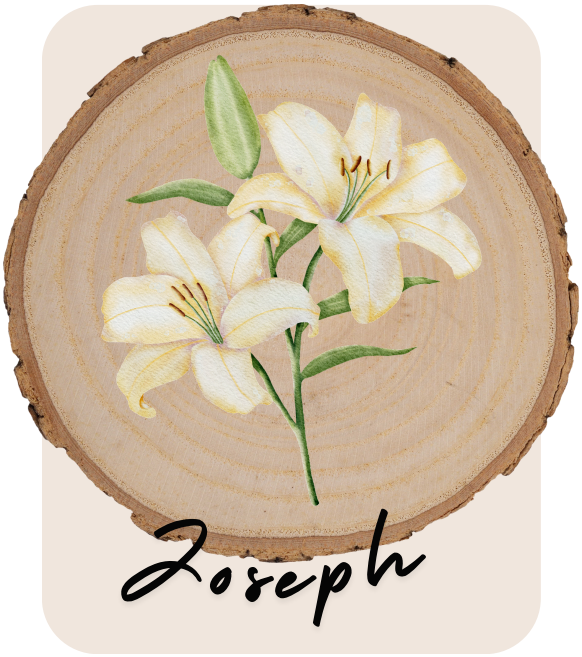
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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Judas led a revolt against a much larger enemy. His unlikely defeat of Greece prefigures Jesus' death, the unlikely defeat of evil.
- The mother in the 7 martyr brothers story prefigures Mary at the foot of Jesus' cross.

Wednesday



Prophecy: Isaiah 42:1

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.
I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations.

fulfilled: Matthew 3:17

At that moment, Heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from Heaven said, 'This is my son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased.'

Reflection:

Joseph is in the bloodline. He is a son of David. He is the rightful heir. He *should* be the rightful king of Judah. He *should* feel most poignantly the suffering that Rome has taken over Judea, and that he has been displaced.

We don't know if Joseph ever felt these feelings. But we do know that when the angel appeared to him in a dream to tell him to receive Mary into his home, the angel calls him, 'Son of David'. The angel tells him *now* is the time that Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah will be fulfilled. The angel speaks to any potential insecurities Joseph had - that he was forgotten, that the bloodline meant nothing, that he would, like his ancestors, never see the Messiah in his lifetime.

"Son of David," the angel said. He reminded Joseph *who he was*. The title Son of David implies *the promise*, the promise passed down for ages and repeated for generations: that David's son would have an eternal covenant with God and sit on the throne forever. Jesus' coming on Christmas was the *fulfillment* of that promise, and so many others. Today, do you need Jesus to remind you who you are again? Do you need to be assured of the promises he has for you again? Ask Joseph. He is sure to help.

Read: Matthew 1:18-25

Reflection Questions:

- Today is Christmas! Today, as you see the nativity scene, spend some time considering St. Joseph. He could have been plagued with **insecurities** that Christmas morning. Insecurities that he didn't find the right place for his family, that he couldn't provide, that he was a failure. Imagine how **healing** holding Jesus would have been. Take some time to imagine yourself holding Jesus, and let him see **your** insecurities as well.
- Do you feel forgotten, passed over, or that you don't even know God's promises for you anymore? This day, Christmas, is a memorial day to remind **you**: God **keeps** his **promises.** He is not finished with you yet. Ask him to make his good plans for you, his gifts, and his promises **clear** today.

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This points forward to Jesus! Check it out:

- Joseph is in the bloodline of Eve, and Jesus completes the bloodline.Despite this, Joseph is not a king; he's a poor, humble carpenter.
- The family of Judas Maccabees (the Hasmodeans) never installed the Davidic king as the ruler. They kept the throne for themselves, so Joseph was not elevated. (Ezekiel 21 prophesied that the Messiah would come once the Davidic king had been removed from the throne.)
- God spoke to both Josephs of the Bible through dreams.

Contact

Questions?

Reach out to Monica at thecatholicbibleclasswithmon@gmail.com.

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