

# Elizabeth – favoured by God Luke 1: 39-80

We've seen how Gabriel firstly visited Zechariah and then six months later visited Mary. Both received news about special babies.

It seems that Mary didn't hang around at home very long after Gabriel's visit, she headed straight to see Zechariah and Elizabeth. Maybe she needed the support of someone who knew that all this was from God.

At this stage Elizabeth is six months pregnant. She must have had loads of time to think it all over (and Zechariah could only nod and shake his head!) wondering what it all meant and how things were going to work out, and who Messiah would be and how would they know, and what was John's ministry going to be and would he be important and what would he look like and...

As soon as Mary enters John leaps in her womb and, filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth realises in that moment that Mary is the one who will give birth to Messiah and is amazed that she would come and visit her. Oh how they must have talked! Mary stayed for 3 months – she was probably there when John was born. Her faith and resolve must have been so much stronger because of her time with Elizabeth and Zechariah, and Elizabeth was able to understand so much more what John's role would be when he grew up.

Watch the story here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_1xtrrA2Ks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_1xtrrA2Ks)

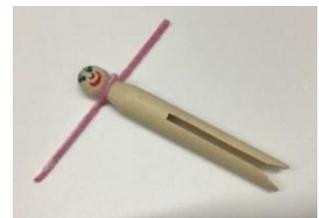
And here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sAtO9nt7Xnc>

## 1. Our twentieth decoration for the Jesse Tree

Today's decoration acknowledges the amazing miracle of Elizabeth having a baby when she was too old. Can you think of other women in the Bible who had miracle babies? \*

If you have some mother and baby little dolls hang them on the Jesse Tree.

Or make a peg doll mum and baby: Get 2 dolly pegs, make a face on each of them and add some hair (wool/thread, maybe grey?) to one.



Take a piece of material about 20cm long and 4-5cm wide. Fold it in half, make a little V in the middle of the fold where the head will go. Put it over the head and tie it round the waist with some wool or another narrow piece of material. Shape her arms. Cover her head with a smaller piece of material and either glue in place or tie it on with wool. Mum will stand on a piece of plasticine or blue tack, but to hang her fix on a ribbon and add her to your Jesse Tree – with her baby.

Take the other peg and if you have someone capable and responsible enough to use a saw ask them to saw off the legs. Wrap the wooden bit in white cloth and place in mum's arms – you may need a dab of glue. If you can't saw, use a bead for a face and stick it on some wound white cloth.

## 2. Elizabeth's song

In this first chapter of Luke both Mary and Zechariah (and then in chapter 2 the angels and Simeon) praised God with words that have been put to music many times over the centuries. Elizabeth, too, said some significant words, but no one has put them to music!

Write a poem or song about what you imagine Elizabeth was feeling, imagine her words or use the ones recorded in the Bible if you want.

Sarah – Isaac's mum (Genesis 18), Menoah's wife – Samson's mum (Judges 13), Hannah – Samuel's mum (1 Samuel 1), the widow from Shunem (2 Kings 4)

*The next part of our Jesse Tree will be on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> December*

## Joseph – Jesus' Dad

*Matthew 1: 18-25*

Joseph – yes, you know him – he's the one that goes with Mary, in the Christmas story.

So stop and think about him for a while...Mary is pregnant but he knows it's not his child! How would you feel? What would you want to do? How would you feel about Mary? Write down all those answers, and then mark out of 10 which thought or feeling is most powerful (10 is strongest).

Watch this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7aD6A0asbg>  
and then <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhzOQAI-2fA>

### 3. Our twenty-first decoration for the Jesse Tree

Joseph was a carpenter, or builder. He was used to making things. Our decoration today is simple to make but pretty useless as a tool! If you have a toy hammer, or a very light real one use that to hang on your Jesse Tree. If you haven't, what you need is a pencil and a rubber! Push the pencil into the middle of the rubber until it stays there – voila! Un'ammer!! It might be better described as a mallet.

### 4. Make a gift out of wood for someone for Christmas

Some people are very gifted craftspeople, and some work particularly well with wood. If you have such a skill use it to make something small (you haven't got time for anything big!) for someone for Christmas. You might be able to whittle or carve, you might have access to electrical tools under supervision where you can woodturn or other things, or you might be more like me and your main skill with wood is sticking lollysticks and matchsticks, or pencils together.

#### Joseph's Song

*How could it be  
This Baby in my arms  
Sleeping now so peacefully  
The Son of God the angel said  
How could it be?*

*Lord, I know He's not my own  
Not of my flesh, not of my bones  
Still Father let this Baby be  
The Son of my love  
Father show me where I fit into  
This plan of Yours*

*How can a man be father to the Son of God?  
Lord, all my life I've been a simple carpenter  
How can I raise a king?  
How can I raise a king?*

*He looks so small  
His face and hands so fair  
And when He cries the sun just seems to  
disappear  
But when He laughs  
It shines again  
How could it be?*

*Father show me where I fit into  
This plan of yours  
How can a man be father to the Son of God?  
Lord, all my life I've been a simple carpenter  
How can I raise a king?  
How can I raise a king?*

*How could it be  
This Baby in my arms  
Sleeping now so peacefully  
The Son of God the angel said  
How could it be?*

12/26/2007 [www.georgekonig.org](http://www.georgekonig.org)

# The Shepherds - couldn't keep quiet!

*Luke 2: 1-21*

We tend to think that Jesus' birth happened on a 'silent night', but in many ways Bethlehem was anything but silent. It's unlikely that Mary was quiet while giving birth – most women make quite a bit of noise when in labour; Jesus probably cried a bit; then there was that eruption of thousands (millions?) of angels praising God above the hills and finally a flock of shepherds rushing through the town trying to find a manger with a baby in it and then afterwards they *"spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told."*

They couldn't keep quiet about what God had done and neither should we!

The story is told in this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c018\\_TjhBNQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c018_TjhBNQ)

## 1. Our twenty-second decoration for the Jesse Tree

This is an easy decoration. We're making a lamb, a little fluffy lamb, similar to, but different from Abraham's ram. Get a cork (or something similar), wrap two white pipe cleaners around the end of the cork and round the bit just before it thickens – these are the legs. Put glue all over the cork and cover with soft fluffy cotton wool. Trim the cotton wool over the wide end of the cork – the lamb's face – and draw a face on it. Stick on some ears and roll up a small amount of cotton wool to make a tail. Hang the lamb on the Jesse Tree.



## 2. Perform a family nativity play

On the other page is a short play that you might like to perform as a family, even if you don't have enough people (you could have Mary and Joseph acted by one person, the shepherd and the sheep by another, and Zadok and the cow by another!).

Discuss as a family who you can share the good news of Jesus with this Christmas.

How are you going to do it?

## 3. Make a flock of sheep for Christmas tea

On the other page is a recipe for rice krispie marshmallow sheep.

## 4. Shepherds' Journey

Help the shepherds to *"find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger"* on the maze on the other page.

**Interrupted Nativity sketch** - Stephen O'Rear

**CHARACTERS**

Mary	Shepherd	Zadok, a guest at the inn
Joseph	Sheep	Cow
Baby (Jesus)		

**SCENE:** *The manger, early morning. MARY, JOSEPH, SHEPHERD and SHEEP gaze lovingly upon the BABY. Gently hum "Silent Night" or "Away in a Manger" to help set a quiet Christmas mood.*

**Zadok:** *(shouting from outside)* Bashan! Time to wake up, beautiful.

*(ZADOK enters noisily)*

**Zadok:** Oh, sorry. I didn't know anyone else was up this early.

**Joseph:** That's OK. It's been a night full of surprises.

**Shepherd:** No kidding. I was out in the field, tending my sheep, when suddenly the sky filled with...

**Zadok:** *(interrupts)* I don't mean to be rude, but I have a long journey ahead. I'm just here to pick up my cow and . . . *(horrified)* is that a baby?

**Mary:** *(nodding)* His name is Jesus.

**Zadok:** Why did you put him in the feeding trough?

**Joseph:** There was no room in the guestroom.

**Zadok:** No room in the guestroom for a newborn baby? I really ought to speak to the manager.

*(SHEEP baas lazily.)*

**Zadok:** *(to SHEPHERD)* You seem to be missing a few sheep there, shepherd.

**Shepherd:** As I was saying, I was out in the field, when...

**Zadok:** *(interrupts again)* I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but leaving your flock seems like a pretty shaky financial strategy.

**Shepherd:** *(frustrated)* Ugh, if you'd just...

**Zadok:** And speaking of missing animals, where is my cow? Bashan!

**Cow:** *(offstage, lazily)* Moo.

**Zadok:** Ah, there you are. *(exits, cooing)* Did you have a rough night with that baby hogging your feeding trough?

**Shepherd:** I don't get it. An angel appears right above our heads, and then the sky fills with thousands of other angels singing praises in the heavens ...and all he cares about is his cow.

*(SHEEP baas)*

**Shepherd:** Oh, don't you start. You know there will never be a night like that ever again. "Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord."  
Who could go back to work after hearing what the angel said?

*(ZADOK returns, along with COW)*

**Zadok:** Well, I'm about ready to take off. *Mazel tov*, congratulations on the baby, you two.

**Joseph:** We'll pray for your journey.

**Zadok:** Hey, since I'm leaving, there's room in the inn now. You should get your child indoors; he doesn't belong out here.

**Shepherd:** Yes, He does. This is exactly where He belongs.

**Zadok:** What do you mean?

**Shepherd:** The angel said, "You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger." We were supposed to find Him here. God planned every detail!

**Zadok:** OK, but why do *you* need to be here? Why not just let this new mother get some sleep?

**Shepherd:** *(uncertain)* We came to worship.

**Zadok:** Hmm. Well, come on, Bashan. We've got a long way to go.

*(COW moos as they exit)*

**Shepherd:** *(to JOSEPH AND MARY)* He still doesn't get it. How can you let him leave when he doesn't see the truth that's staring him in the face?

**Joseph:** Only God can open his eyes. He isn't ready to understand what happened.

**Shepherd:** But the angel and the sky full of a heavenly choir...

**Joseph:** . . . were there for you. And the story you tell will be retold through the ages.

**Mary:** Who knows? There may come a time when he hears your story in some distant town and thinks back to this night.

**Shepherd:** And until then?

**Joseph:** We pray, we trust and we celebrate. For the Messiah has come!

*(Hum the last two lines of "What Child Is This?" The scene goes silent as MARY, JOSEPH, SHEPHERD and SHEEP gaze at the BABY.)*

*After the shepherds had seen Him, they told everyone. They reported what the angel had said about this child. All who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Luke 2:17-18*

*This sketch originally appeared in the December 2011 issue of Focus on the Family Clubhouse Jr. magazine.*

### **Edible flock of sheep**

45g butter

300g mini marshmallows

180g rice krispies

Chocolate sticks

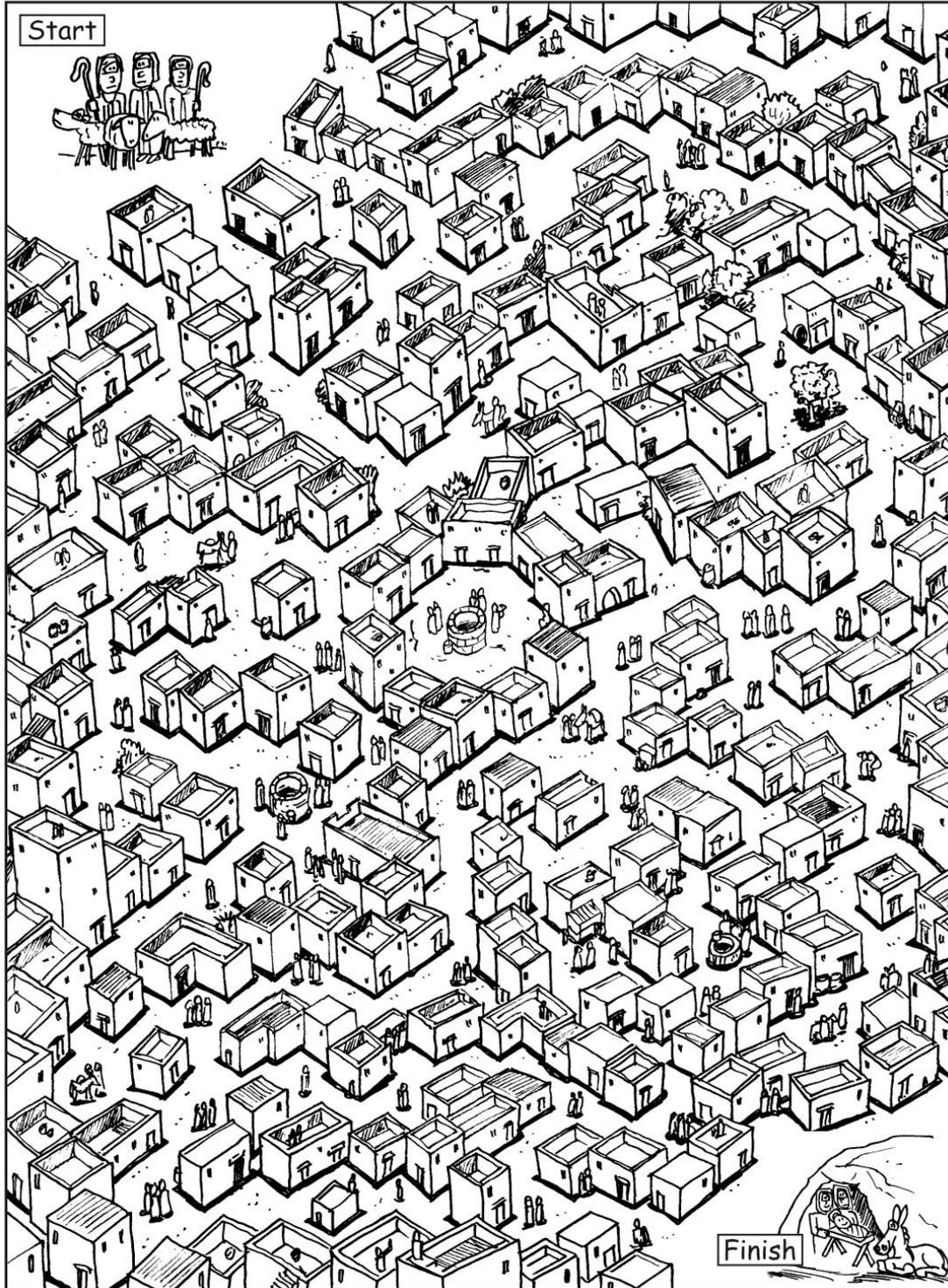
Icing in a tube, or make it yourself



1. Melt the butter in a large, heavy-based saucepan over a low heat.
2. Add the marshmallows and cook gently until they are completely melted and blended, stirring constantly.
3. Take the pan off the heat and immediately add the cereal, mixing lightly until well coated.
4. Roll the mixture into balls and add chocolate sticks for legs
5. When completely cool stand on their legs and add eyes, mouth, ears and tails.
6. Serve your flock of sheep at a meal for Christmas – that means don't eat them all!

# SHEPHERD'S JOURNEY

Help the shepherd's find their way through the town so they can see the baby Jesus.



# Simeon and Anna – forgotten waiters

*Luke 2: 22-40*

When we think of the Christmas story we tend to forget about Simeon and Anna, even though they met Jesus long before the wise men!

In Jewish tradition there were two ceremonies that took place: the first was the naming of the baby (and circumcision if it was a boy) which was done by the local synnagogue leaders and the second was a purification ceremony for the mum which took place at the Temple about 40 days after the birth.

Mary and Joseph were not expecting anything out of the ordinary when they arrived at the Temple, so they must have been surprised when not one but two people approached them knowing who their baby was. Remember they came from Nazareth!

Simeon and Anna had both been separately waiting for this moment all their lives.

Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leN-xNrkjbo>

## 5. Our twenty-third decoration for the Jesse Tree

When you're waiting for something to happen you often have a countdown – an advent calendar is one kind, an egg-timer is another. Guess which one you're going to make!

For our timer you will need four small plastic pots – see-through would be better if possible. (You can buy shot glasses fairly cheaply in the party section at Tesco!) It would also work better if the bottoms were rounded so the sand/salt can slide out, but I think they are harder to work with in other ways! You'll need some sand or some salt, some glue or sticky tape and something sharp and pointy and probably made of metal but wider than a needle – a skewer possible. Stick two of the pots bases together. Using the sharp pointy thing make a hole through both bases at the same time. This may be easier if you get an adult to heat the skewer with a flame and push it through so it melts a hole rather than cracks the pots. Make the hole Put some sand/salt in one of the other pots and stick the double pots on top of that one, so you have one completely sealed container. Then turn it over and stick the other pot to the other end so you have one completely sealed container on top of another with a hole in the middle so the sand/salt can pass through.

Hang your timer on the Jesse Tree.



## 6. Coded message

Work out the code on the other page and find out what the message is.

## 7. Wordsearch

Find the words hidden in the wordsearch grid on the other page.

### Simeon and Anna Saw Jesus Secret Code

Each number stands for a letter of the alphabet. Write the correct letter in the blank to find the coded words and phrase.

1 14 14 1	<b>Code key</b> <table border="1" style="font-size: small; border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%;"> <tr><td>A 1</td><td>H 8</td><td>O 15</td><td>V 22</td></tr> <tr><td>B 2</td><td>I 9</td><td>P 16</td><td>W 23</td></tr> <tr><td>C 3</td><td>J 10</td><td>Q 17</td><td>X 24</td></tr> <tr><td>D 4</td><td>K 11</td><td>R 18</td><td>Y 25</td></tr> <tr><td>E 5</td><td>L 12</td><td>S 19</td><td>Z 26</td></tr> <tr><td>F 6</td><td>M 13</td><td>T 20</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>G 7</td><td>N 14</td><td>U 21</td><td></td></tr> </table>	A 1	H 8	O 15	V 22	B 2	I 9	P 16	W 23	C 3	J 10	Q 17	X 24	D 4	K 11	R 18	Y 25	E 5	L 12	S 19	Z 26	F 6	M 13	T 20		G 7	N 14	U 21		
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**What did Simeon and Anna know?**

### Simeon and Anna Saw Jesus Word Search

Find the words on the list that are hidden in the puzzle. The words can be right to left, up and down, or diagonally.

J	E	R	U	S	A	L	E	M	N	I	S	M	O	D
T	I	O	N	S	E	D	E	U	G	I	A	M	V	E
L	A	I	Q	U	A	T	N	G	N	S	E	C	T	E
T	E	M	P	L	E	O	R	E	L	E	L	I	Q	N
Z	R	I	T	E	U	F	E	U	G	O	I	T	V	A
L	A	O	R	E	B	O	L	O	R	S	R	T	E	Z
S	U	M	I	N	A	N	D	R	E	T	A	Y	V	A
L	I	S	I	T	B	U	L	M	A	R	Y	C	I	R
U	N	T	A	L	Y	Q	U	E	T	U	E	R	I	E
L	O	R	E	R	S	E	C	S	E	M	D	I	T	T
N	U	L	L	A	M	C	O	S	S	E	Q	U	I	H
J	O	S	E	P	H	U	S	I	M	E	O	N	A	N
D	R	E	V	E	L	E	X	A	R	I	R	I	U	R
L	A	O	R	E	M	O	L	H	R	S	I	T	E	R
S	U	M	I	N	E	N	D	R	E	T	A	N	N	A

ANNA	GLORY	JOSEPH	MARY	SIMEON
BABY	JERUSALEM	MESSIAH	NAZARETH	TEMPLE

# The wise men

Matthew 2

This part of the Christmas story gives rise to more misconceptions than any other. We all think we know what happens, but check the actual narration in the Bible against the following, which I'm not claiming as absolute fact, but read on and see what you think...

- They probably did not visit Jesus when he was born but up to 2 years later. It's probable that they saw the phenomenon in the sky when Jesus was born and recognised that it had something to do with a king in Israel (because of their understanding of the meaning of the stars) so they set off towards Israel on a journey that took a long time – on foot and maybe camel, horse, donkey – it doesn't say! – and headed for Jerusalem where the royal palace was. When Herod decided to kill the babies it was those *"who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi"*.
- They were not kings. The word magi meant those who studied the stars as part of their religion.
- They were not necessarily all men.
- There were not necessarily three of them – it's very unlikely – although there *were* three gifts. It's probable that there was a large group, comprising the magi, their families, their servants and maybe hired people of various kinds.
- We don't know their names. They have been traditionally called Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar.
- They did not follow the star all the way from home, but only from Jerusalem.
- They did not find Jesus in a stable but in a house (in most translations) and Jesus is described as a child – probably a toddler. The implication being that Mary and Joseph had decided to stay in Bethlehem and some time had passed (see first note above).

Watch the story here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRMPCI-qgBA>

(Sorry about the poor animation (!?) – but it's the best telling of the story!)

## 8. Our twenty-fourth decoration for the Jesse Tree

You've got a choice of decorations today. You can either make a star for the Jesse Tree or a crown. Both are simple to make.

If you make a star, try to make it look different to the Star of David that you made earlier. There's a template on the other page. Decorate it well and hang it on the Jesse Tree.

A crown will remind us that the magi came seeking a king, and also of the words of the prophet Micah that *"you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel"*. Did you recognise that prophecy?

Take some card (if you've not got any sheets of card use an old cereal box) and cut it into a strip about 10cm wide. Use plastic if it's going to be outside. Make it long enough to go round your head – you might have to attach two strips together if you've got a big head! Cut along one edge of the strip to make the pattern of the crown that you want. Decorate with foil, sequins, jewels, whatever you've got to make it look rich and suitable for a king. Hang it on your Jesse Tree.

If you don't want to wear it you can make a smaller one just as a decoration.



## 9. Offering gifts

The magi brought gifts to Jesus. Tomorrow we will be exchanging gifts with those we love. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were not cheap gifts and they were given with much thought. Gold indicated a king, frankincense was used as an anointing oil and for sacrifices – indicating God, and myrrh was used to embalm the dead. All of these meanings applied to Jesus.

Have you given care and thought to the gifts you are giving this Christmas? Are they given with love? Have you been careful in their wrapping?

God carefully thought about what we needed the most when he gave us a gift. He gave us the gift of a saviour – Jesus.

## 10. Bowing and worshipping

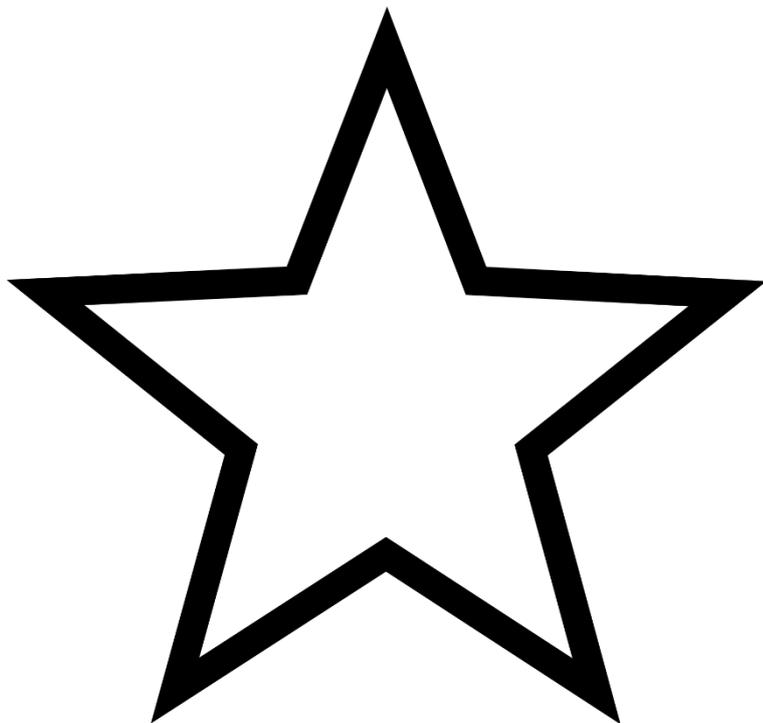
*When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

The magi bowed down and worshipped a toddler! – because they knew he was God and King and Saviour.

Find time today to bow down and worship your God and King and Saviour.

God has done great things for us – the greatest was coming in Jesus.

*The next part of our Jesse Tree will be on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December*



Jesus



John 1:1-14

# Happy Christmas!

*Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.*

This is why we celebrate Christmas.

God's promised Messiah *has* come. God *is* with us – Immanuel. The Word is dwelling among us.

This event changed the world forever and, equal with another event only 33 years later, is the greatest moment in history.

Somebody once said if you leave Christ out of Christmas you're left with M&S! Many people celebrate at this time of year but have forgotten what they are celebrating, it seems that it's stuff that is the most important.

**Don't leave Christ out of Christmas.**

**Don't leave Christ out of your life.**

*"To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"*

## 11. Our twenty-sixth (and last) decoration for the Jesse Tree

Again there's a choice for your last decoration – although I imagine that you've no time for craft today – more important things to do!

Either make a manger, using a little box (matchbox), and some shredded paper glued in. Add a tiny little doll or make a baby by rolling a piece of cloth round your thumb and sticking the loose end down and then sticking a bead on the end and drawing a face on it. Secure the baby in the manger and hang it on the Jesse Tree.



Or make a cross out of lollysticks or matchsticks or other sticks and hang it on the Jesse Tree.

Or do both!



Well done – your Jesse Tree is finished!

*Jesus is born! Hooray! The world will never be the same!*

*Happy Christmas*

*Have fun*