

## **ADVENT II**

### **The Jesse Tree, week II**

Last week we began to tell the stories of God's people, which are all interwoven with the story of Jesus' first coming, and teach us about how to live until his return. We heard the stories of creation, of Adam and Eve in the garden, and the fall as they ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and their eyes were opened. We heard the story of Noah, building an ark even when there wasn't a cloud in the sky, of the flood through which his family was preserved, and of the rainbow promise of God. We heard the story of Abraham and Sarah, of God's promise to them of a land for their descendants, the number of which would be more than the stars in the sky. This week we continue God's story.

### **Jacob**

Jacob left his parents Isaac and Rebecca and headed back to Haran to find a wife. On the way, he was sleeping and had a dream: "he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and said, 'I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring.'" When Jacob woke, he said: " 'Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!'" Once again God confirms the promises made to Abraham and to Isaac, and promises to be with Jacob too. How often do we stand in a place and fail to see God? May our eyes be open and our hearts and minds aware to God's presence in each and every moment and in each and every place we visit in our lives.

### **Joseph**

Joseph was one of Jacob's twelve sons, and his favourite. Jacob gave Joseph a colourful coat with long sleeves. Joseph was also somewhat precocious, and had two dreams in which he foresaw his family bowing down to him. Out of spite, when Joseph was sent to take his brothers a message where they were looking after their sheep, they took him, bound him, threw him in a well, and then tore his coat, dipping it in blood. They sold Joseph to traders as a slave, and told Jacob Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Joseph eventually became an advisor to Pharaoh, saving Egypt and the lands around it from famine – and his early prophetic dreams about his family bowing to him came true: his brothers and then his father journeyed to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph forgave his brothers: "Do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither ploughing nor harvest. God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors." May our prayer be that we are able to see God's hand in our circumstances, and that God works together for the good of those who trust God.

## Moses

After several hundred years in Egypt, the Israelites had become enslaved to the Egyptians. In the foundation story of the Israelite people, God sent Moses to lead the people out of slavery and into freedom in the Promised Land, the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was Moses who stood up to Pharaoh, who, with his brother Aaron spoke God's words to Pharaoh: "Let my people go!" Moses led the people through the wilderness, crossing through the Red Sea on dry ground, led by God's presence in a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. It was to Moses God gave the covenant, symbolised by the ten commandments received on Mount Sinai. When the Israelites reached the border of Canaan and then complained about the land of Canaan, Moses led them 40 years as they wandered the wilderness at God's command. And at the eve of a new generation poised to enter the land promised to their forebears, Moses charged the people: Which will you choose? To serve God, and worship God only? Or to turn away from God's ways and do your own thing? Choose life! Of Moses it was said: "Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." We would do well, for such a thing to be said of us; that we were such friends of God that we were known "face to face".