



grow. pray. study.

**December 8, 2019** *A Shoot from the Stump of Jesse*

Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:5a, 16; Isaiah 11:1-4a; Luke 1:26-33

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

**Promise to King David: “I will raise up your descendant”**

**MONDAY 12.9.19 2 Samuel 7:8-17**

The prophet Nathan delivered the covenant promise in 2 Samuel 7 to Israel’s King David on God’s behalf. Surely David, Nathan and most Israelites at first saw the promise as applying to David’s son, who became King Solomon. For roughly 400 years, Judah’s kings were descendants of David. Sadly, many of them were his physical but not his spiritual heirs. That history increasingly indicated that no human king could fully live up to God’s sweeping promise.

- We know that many empires and cultures (ancient Egypt and Rome, as well as many later European nations) ascribed divinity to their kings. But in verse 8, Nathan’s message to King David gave God the glory, not David. (Remember: “shepherd” was not an admired job in ancient Israel.) How did “I took you from the pasture” show that the promise depended on and required faithfulness to God’s covenant?
- The prophet Jeremiah ministered when Babylon’s growing power seemed ever more likely to break the line of Israelite kings. He warned that bad human choices could lead to even God not fulfilling previous promises (cf. [Jeremiah 18:7-10](#)). Are you aware of some of the foolish choices by genetically Davidic kings that led to their line breaking in 587 B.C.E.? Some Israelites feared that their exile made the promise that “Your throne will be established forever” false. Did it?

**Prayer:** Lord God, we remember David as inspired poet, musician and Israel’s greatest king. But you took him from a pasture. Remind me that wherever I started, you can use me, too, to change the world for the better. Amen.

**Advent Family Activity:** Do you have a simple prayer you say together as a family? Write a Christmas prayer together as a family, encouraging ideas from all members—young and old.

**“From the stump of Jesse” (King David’s father)**

**TUESDAY 12.10.19 Isaiah 11:1-9**

The prophet Isaiah lived in a time when many kings, Davidic or not, were leading Israel astray (cf. e.g. [Isaiah 1:1-9](#)). Yet he said a day would come when a righteous branch would spring from “the stump of Jesse,” David’s father (cf. [Ruth 4:18-22](#), [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#), [17:12](#)). Isaiah used amazing, vivid images to show how peaceful this future Davidic ruler’s kingdom would be. Imagine lions lying down with lambs, or children playing near poisonous snakes!

- “Hope depends on a vision....[Isaiah] can see the felling of Jesse’s tree—that is, the fall of David’s dynasty. This fall he can also see only in a vision, but he can also look beyond it and see a new shoot growing from the felled tree.... It’s hard to acknowledge after 2,700 years that Isaiah’s vision has been

fulfilled only in little ways...though Jesus' coming does constitute God's 'Yes' to his promises. It thus makes it the more possible to keep believing in them." What helps you to keep believing that, in God's world, the future *always* holds hope?

- Isaiah said that God's "branch" from David's line would "judge the needy with righteousness and decide with equity for those who suffer in the land." What obstacles (attitudes, resources, or other) make it hard for the needy and suffering to get equity and justice today? In what ways can you help to make the world we live in look more like the Kingdom of God for those in need?

**Prayer:** Lord God, nearly all of your prophets, like Isaiah, spoke at times of crisis and failure. Give me a spirit of prophetic courage when I could make a big or little difference to make my world more just and merciful. Amen.

\* John Goldingay, *Isaiah for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015, p. 53.

**Advent Family Activity:** Turn off the lights in the room. Light one candle. Talk about how Jesus came to be the Light of the World. Discuss how your family can be light in the darkness also.

### **A righteous branch from David's line**

#### **WEDNESDAY 12.11.19 Jeremiah 23:1-5**

By Jeremiah's day, David's kingdom was no more. The leaders had failed. The Assyrian Empire destroyed the ten northern tribes in 712 B.C.E., before Jeremiah was born. Babylon's army would soon overrun the southern kingdom, Jeremiah's home. The prophet felt compelled to speak starkly about the wrongs he saw around him. But he didn't only see the present day's flaws. Like all of the Biblical prophets, Jeremiah lived in the hopeful trust that God would send a Davidic redeemer to set all things right.

- Compare the qualities Jeremiah listed of Israel's failed "shepherds" in verses 1-2 with the actions and attitudes he said God and David's "righteous descendant" would exercise. Which set of traits do you more often see reflected in your experiences with human leaders in the financial, legal, political, educational or other realms today? When have you seen leaders do what is "just and right in the land"?
- Verses 1-2 remind us that God has always cared deeply how we use our influence (whether over one person or thousands). What do you do, in any sphere where you have influence, to be a "shepherd" who builds people up, rather than destroying and scattering them? How do you want God to help you grow so you can be the kind of shepherd God blesses?

**Prayer:** King Jesus, give me the wisdom and discernment to follow leaders who embody your principles. Shape me into that kind of leader myself in any parts of life where I have that opportunity. Amen.

**Advent Family Activity:** Create a celebration Christmas chain for your family. Cut several strips of green and red paper. Ask each family member to write or tell you something he or she can celebrate. Write one on each strip of paper and connect the strips together forming a chain. Add to this each day as you wish. Give thanks to God for your many blessings

### **Jesus will receive "the throne of David his father"**

#### **THURSDAY 12.12.19 Luke 1:26-38**

Mary was a poor teenager in Nazareth, a village so minor it did not even appear on any map of Palestine we've found from that time. As far as we know, she had no reason to expect to lead an exceptional life. So when God's messenger said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you," Luke said the words confused her. But with eyes that saw things human eyes could not, God chose her to become the mother he would trust to bear the Messiah all Israel was waiting for.

- God did not forget the promise to David. The angel who appeared to Mary told her she would bear no ordinary boy: “The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. . . .there will be no end to his kingdom.” Her son, God’s Messiah (“anointed one”) descended from David and would reign forever. How did the angel’s words cast light on why both [Matthew](#) and [Luke](#) included genealogies that went back to (and beyond) David in their story of Jesus?
- Mary knew how babies happen as much as we do. A woman who hadn’t “had sexual relations with a man” (verse 34) could NOT be pregnant. Yet Gabriel promised just that (verse 31). Mary responded simply and trustingly: “I am the Lord’s servant. Let it be with me just as you have said” (verse 38). Mary, a teenager with unanswered, unanswerable questions, modeled what it means to trust God. What helps you trust God’s loving care in confusing or scary conditions? What does it take for you to respond to God’s call as Mary did?

**Prayer:** Lord God, Mary surely couldn’t know all, joyous and painful, that would come from answering your call to her. You may not call me to anything as big as you called Mary, but give me her trusting spirit for whatever you do call me to. Amen.

**Advent Family Activity:** Spend some time simplifying your living space. Clear out some of your toys, books, clothes and other belongings. Mindfully select what your family will keep. Take gently used items to secondhand stores. Give thanks to God for what you have and help those less resourced.

### **Mary: God is doing “just as he promised”**

#### **FRIDAY 12.13.19 Luke 1:39-55**

In Mary’s culture, women were second-class citizens. She urgently needed Elizabeth’s support and joy, as they were both unexpectedly pregnant. Pastor Hamilton wrote, “I traveled to the Holy Land and retraced Mary’s steps from the Annunciation to the birth of Jesus. I was surprised to discover that Mary’s journey to Elizabeth’s home would have taken her eight to ten days.” \* As Mary sang that God lifts up the lowly, she was a living example of that. She exulted in God’s reversal of human values: “He has pulled the powerful down. . .and lifted up the lowly.” God valued her, no matter what her social status!

- Before Jesus was even born, Elizabeth was the first to call him “Lord”: “Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (verse 43) (The gospels also said women were the first witnesses proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection.) How does calling Jesus “Lord” mean giving up the right to live your life any way you please? In what ways has Jesus’ lordship changed your life, and brought a different kind of joy into it?
- Mary sensed that the eternal king she bore would turn upside-down many “realities” that had always seemed to rule the world. How willing are you this Advent season to join in Mary’s joy and commitment to God’s purpose to lift up “the lowly,” to fill “the hungry with good things”? (Click on your campus name—[Leawood](#), [West](#), [Downtown](#), [Blue Springs](#) or [Overland Park](#)—to find short or long-term ideas for doing that.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, save me from obsessing about becoming (or being) powerful and rich. Guide me to use any power or wealth I receive to advance the priorities and purposes of your kingdom. Amen.

**Advent Family Activity:** Worship God through prayer, Scripture, dancing, singing, coloring, playing instruments and breaking bread, all in honor and praise of God.

\* Adam Hamilton, *The Journey: A Season of Reflections*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011, p. 78.

## David's son, David's Lord

### SATURDAY 12.14.19 Mark 10:46-48, Matthew 22:41-45

Jesus went through Jericho, about 12 miles from Jerusalem, just before his life's last week. Blind Bartimaeus cried out a prayer: "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ("Son of David" was by then a title for the expected Messiah, "Son" meaning "descendant.") During that last week, Jesus challenged the Pharisees to recognize what it would mean if he really was the "Son of David." "Jesus is not denying that the Messiah is David's descendant, a title he has not refused ([Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31](#)), but is showing that the Messiah is not *merely* like David. If David addresses this figure as "Lord," David recognizes one greater than himself, which a mere "new David" or Davidic descendant would not be." \*

- Passover pilgrims jammed the Jericho road. The "Chamber of Commerce" tried to quiet the noisy beggar (Mark 10:48). Jesus, however focused he was on the cross a week ahead, heard the man and acted. What helps you keep bringing your needs to Jesus even without immediate answers? Scholar William Barclay showed the point of the Matthew 22 story: "Messiahship is not to be thought of in terms of Davidic conquest, but in terms of divine and sacrificial love. Here then Jesus makes his greatest claim. In him there came, not the earthly conqueror [they expected] who would repeat the military triumphs of David, but the Son of God who would demonstrate the love of God upon his Cross. There would be few that day who caught anything like all that Jesus meant; but when Jesus spoke these words, even the densest of them felt a shiver in the presence of the eternal mystery." \*\* The "Son of David" was also David's Lord. Have you made him fully Lord of your life?

**Prayer:** Son of David, Lord of David, Advent is about so much more than tinsel and store specials. Open my heart. Prepare it to welcome the eternal mystery of the God of the universe coming among us with all that saving, loving power in the form of a tiny infant in a manger. Amen.

**Advent Family Activity:** Place the name of each family member in a jar. Ask each person to draw a name from the jar. Encourage each family member to serve as a "secret servant" to the person whose name they drew. Serve one another by doing kind deeds, drawing pictures, helping with chores, encouraging with hugs or thoughtful words.

\* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 220689-220692). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

\*\* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew—Volume 2 Chapters 11–28 (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, p. 280.

**Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Heidi West and family following the death of LaVonne Ellingson (mother), 11/23/2019

Linda Sharp and family following the death of Edytha Moon (mother), 11/22/2019

Christina Venner and family following the death of Marilyn Yocum (mother), 12/1/2019

To family and friends of Barbara Mick, who died 12/3/2019

David Frankland and family following the death of Donald Lester Frankland (father), 12/1/2019