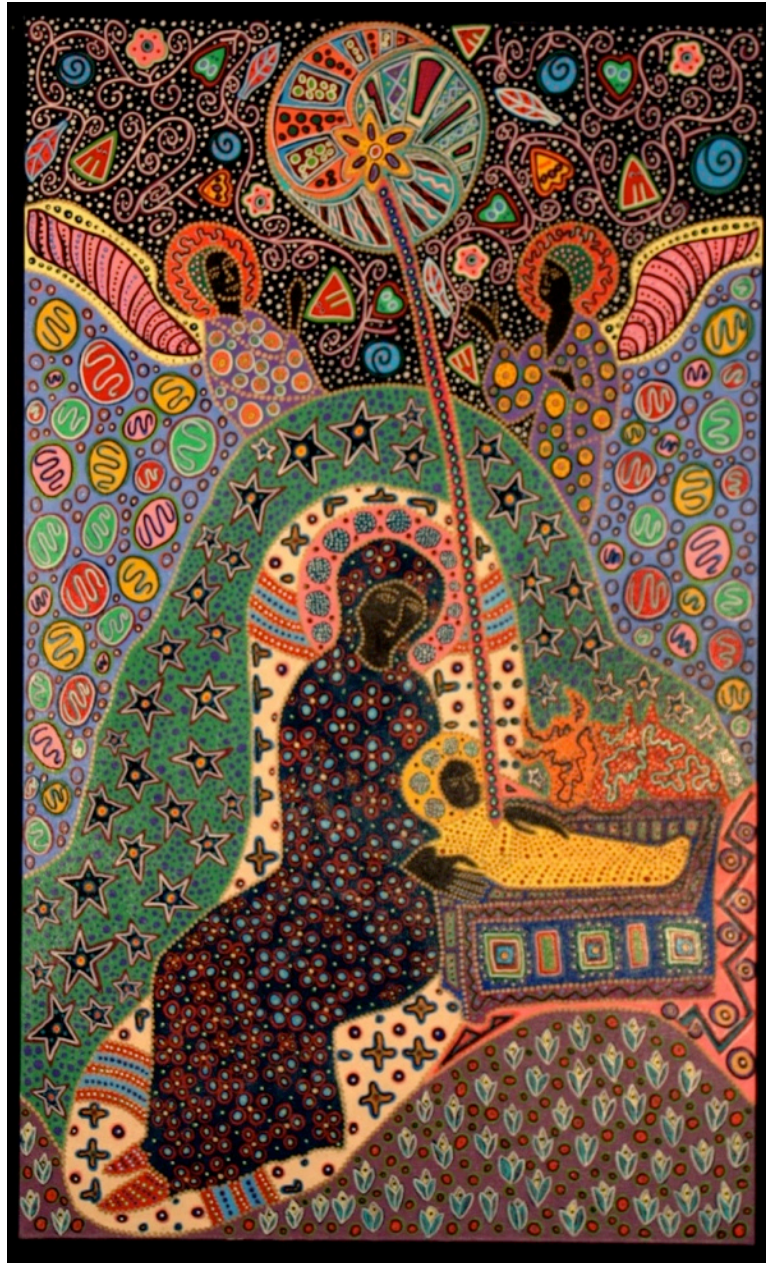


Advent Journal 2011



RiverKids

Zechariah and Elizabeth

During the time Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah. His wife was Elizabeth, who also came from the family of priests. Both of them did what was right in God's eyes. They obeyed all the Lord's commandments and rules faithfully. But they had no children. And they were both very old.

One day Zechariah was serving as a priest in God's temple. That day, he was chosen to go into the temple of the Lord. There he was supposed to burn incense. All who had gathered to worship were praying outside.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to Zechariah. When Zechariah saw him, he was amazed and terrified.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will have a child. It will be a boy, and you must name him John. He will be a joy to you. His birth will make many people very glad. He will be important in God's eyes. "He must never drink wine or other such drinks. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit from the time he is born. He will bring many of Israel's people back to God. And he will prepare the way for the Lord. He will have the same spirit and power that Elijah had.

Sunday, December 4th

Read "Zechariah and Elizabeth" with your family. Talk together about what your favorite part is and why.

He will teach parents how to love their children. He will also teach people who don't obey to be wise and do what is right. In this way, he will prepare a people who are ready for the Lord."

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is old too."

The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I serve God. I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now because you did not believe my words, you will be not be able to speak until after John is born. They will come true when the time is right."

During that time, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out. They wondered why he stayed in the temple so long. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple because he kept motioning to them. He still could not speak.

After that, his wife Elizabeth became pregnant. She stayed at home for five months. "God has done this for me," she said. "In these days, he has been kind to me. He has taken away my shame among the people."

Monday, December 5th

In the story, "Zechariah and Elizabeth", it says Zechariah was "amazed and terrified" to see the angel. I wonder why? How would you feel if an angel appears to you?

Write down the feelings.

Tuesday, December 6th

The angel's name was Gabriel. Gabriel is said to be an archangel, a chief of angels, who often serves as a messenger of God to people. I wonder what he looks like? Close your eyes and ask God to give you a picture in your head of Gabriel. Draw it on this page.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Wednesday, December 7th

When Zechariah came out of the Temple, he couldn't speak. But the people around him understood that he saw a vision because he kept motioning to them. I wonder how he motioned? Can you try motioning it yourself? Draw the motion here.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Thursday, December 8th

Having a baby probably was the biggest wish of Elizabeth's ever. She wanted a baby all along but she couldn't make it happen.

I wonder how she felt when she realized that she was pregnant with a baby? Write down the feelings that you think she felt.

Were there times when you felt some of these feelings? When? Share it with your family.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Friday, December 9th

I wonder what it feels like to want something so badly but not have it like Zechariah and Elizabeth? I wonder if there is something that you want but can't have, too? Talk to your family about it.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Saturday, December 10th

Wise people say that there is a deep longing (wanting) in us that only God can fill. Does this make sense to you? Try to quiet your mind and body. Close your eyes. See if you can feel God with you. Write down what He felt like to you.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Sunday, December 11th

Mary

Six months after Elizabeth became pregnant, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He was sent to a girl named Mary. She was engaged to a man named Joseph, who comes from the family line of King David. The angel greeted Mary and said, "Hello, you who are highly favored by God! He is with you."

Mary was very troubled because of his words. She wondered what kind of greeting this could be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary. God is very happy with you. You will become pregnant and have a son. You must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord God will make him a king like his father David of long ago. He will rule forever over his people. His kingdom will never end."

"How can this happen?" Mary asked the angel. "I am not married."

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So Jesus will be called the Son of God. Your relative Elizabeth is old. And even she is going to have a child. People thought she could not have children. But she has been pregnant for six months now. Nothing is impossible with God."

"I am God's servant," Mary answered. "May it happen to me just as you said it would." Then the angel left her.

Read the story of Mary with your family. Talk together about what your favorite part is and why.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Monday, December 12th

The archangel Gabriel appears to Mary as he did to Zechariah. Sometimes God speaks to us through angels like this. Sometimes God speaks to us through the bible or through other people. Sometimes God speaks to us directly through pictures, words or thoughts in our heads. Has God spoken to you in anyway before? When and how?

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Tuesday, December 13th

How about we ask God to speak to us today? Find a comfortable place to sit. Close your eyes. Imagine being in a quiet bubble with God and nobody else. Ask God to speak to you with words, pictures or thoughts in your head.

Write or draw what God gave you.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Wednesday, December 14th

Joseph

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that Mary was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was a godly man. He did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to break off the engagement quietly.

But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That is because he will save his people from their darkness." (Jesus means "God saves".)

Joseph woke up. He did what God told him to do through His angel. He took Mary home as his wife. When the baby was born, Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

(All of this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel."—(Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us.")

Read the story of Joseph with your family. Talk together about what your favorite part is and why.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Thursday, December 15th

Joseph must have felt hurt and upset when he found out Mary was already pregnant with someone else's child. But he still did not shame Mary and was kind to her.

What do you feel when you are upset with someone? Is it easy to still treat them kindly? Can you think of a time when you were really really angry with someone? Share with your family.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Friday, December 16th

Would it have been easy for Joseph to still marry Mary? Why not? It was certainly not what he wanted. But when God told him not to be afraid to bring Mary home as a wife, Joseph listened. How would he have felt? Write down feelings he might have had. Talk with your family about it.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Saturday, December 17th

The birth of Jesus was something unexpected to both Mary and Joseph. It was not in their plan for future. But they chose God's plan for them over their own plan for their lives. They each let God write his story instead of writing their own story.

What would you feel if your plan for your life is different from the story God is trying to write? What would you do?

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

John the Baptist

This is the beginning of the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Long ago Isaiah the prophet wrote,

"I will send my messenger ahead of you.
He will prepare your way." —(Malachi 3:1)

"A messenger is calling out in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord.
Make straight paths for him.' " —(Isaiah 40:3)

Sunday, December 18th

Read the story of John the Baptist with your family. Talk together about what your favorite part is and why.

And so John came. He baptized people in the desert. He also preached that people should be baptized and turn away from their wrongdoings. Then God would forgive them. All the people from the countryside of Judea went out to him. All the people from Jerusalem went too. When they admitted they did wrong, John baptized them in the Jordan River. John wore clothes made out of camel's hair. He had a leather belt around his waist. And he ate locusts and wild honey.

Here is what John was preaching. "After me, one will come who is more powerful than I am. I'm not good enough to bend down and untie his sandals. I baptize you with water. But he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Monday, December 19th

John the baptist was a very unusual person. Read the story again and imagine what he was like. Draw.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Tuesday, December 20th

God spoke to His people about John the Baptist long time before he was even born. Isaiah heard,

"A messenger is calling out in the desert,

'Prepare the way for the Lord.

Make straight paths for him.

Every valley will be filled in.

Every mountain and hill will be made level.

The crooked roads will become straight.

The rough ways will become smooth.

And everyone will see God's salvation.' " —(Isaiah 40:3-5)

Illustrate this passage.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Wednesday, December 21st

John the Baptist came to prepare people to meet Jesus. He told people to admit their wrongdoings and be forgiven to get ready for Jesus.

Are there any wrongdoings that you want to talk about? Talk to God and your family about it and be forgiven.

(Note for parents: When the kids confess anything, please hear them out. Afterwards, pray for them and say, "I forgive you for doing _____ in the name of Jesus. You are forgiven." Jesus promised the authority to forgive for all who follow Him. How much more authority would a parent have over their child?)

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Thursday, December 22nd

John the Baptist talks about turning away from your wrongdoings. But it is not always easy to choose the right thing to do. Have you ever had the experience of wanting to do the right thing but not able to? Write or draw about the experience. Share it with your family.

(Note to parents: Paul said, “ I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law.” The purpose of the law was not to redeem us. The purpose of the law was to open our eyes to our own sinfulness. So if your child share their struggles in keeping rules, please be encouraged that God has given them the awareness! And encourage your child to turn to Jesus.)

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Friday, December 23rd

The bible says, "John the Baptist was not the Light. He came only as a witness to the Light."

The Light is Jesus. It's not enough to do the right thing and turn away from wrongdoings. We don't receive Light that way, because we can't be perfectly good. We need to receive light from the source of Light, that is Jesus.

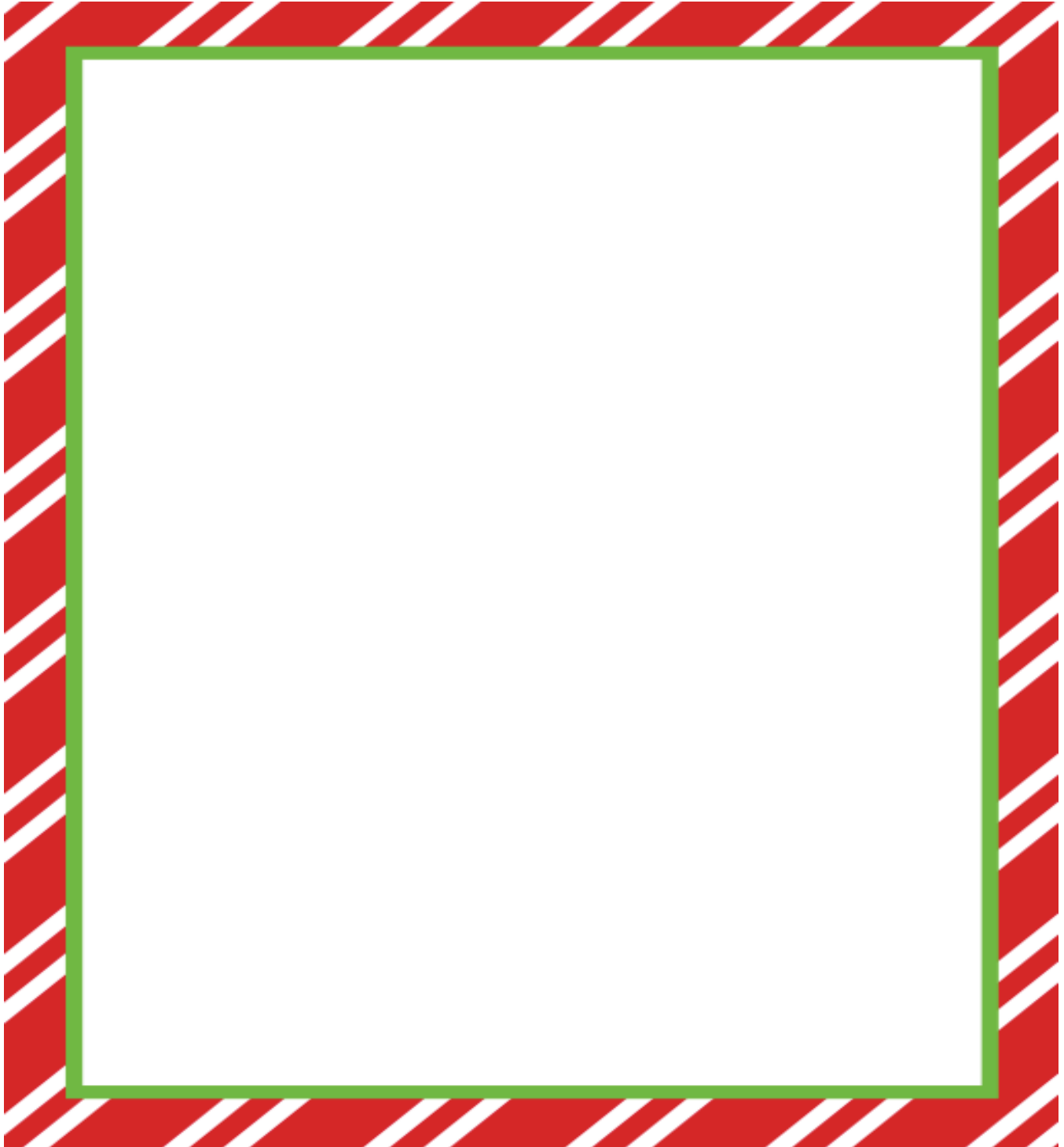
Take a moment to think about Jesus as the Light. Together with your family, ask Jesus to give you the Light.

This is a place where you write down or draw your conversations with God.

Saturday, December 24th

Tomorrow is Christmas, Jesus' birthday!

Today, write a birthday note here to Jesus. Tell Him about your feelings and thoughts about Him!



Sunday, December 25th

Jesus is Born!

In those days, Caesar Augustus made a law. It required that a list be made of everyone in the whole Roman world. Everyone went to their hometown to be listed. So Joseph went also. He went there with Mary to be listed. They went from the town of Nazareth to Bethlehem, the town of David. Joseph went there because he belonged to the family line of David.

Mary was about to have a baby. It is very hard to walk when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she could not walk another step. Then she rode on the donkey.

It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. When she couldn't ride another step, she got down and walked. She rode and she walked.

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night. There was no room for them in the inn. They had to stay in the barn with the animals.

While Joseph and Mary were there, the time came for the child to be born. She gave birth to her first baby. It was a boy. She wrapped him in large strips of cloth. Then she placed him in a manger.

The angels sang that night, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those He loves!"



Advent

Advent is the time of the color purple.

Purple is the color of kings and queens. It represents royalty, and it speaks of something serious that is about to happen. A King is coming, but this King is different. This King had no army, no great house, and no riches. This King was a baby who was born in a barn.

The Advent season is about the King who came and is still coming. This is full of mystery, and a mystery is hard to enter sometimes. Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it is there.

Advent is the time we set aside to get ready to enter the mystery. I hope that this journal will help you do that. There is a space for you to draw or write in this journal every day till Christmas. You can read about the people who were part of the story of the coming King from this journal. You can also create your own Nativity scene with the craft that is included. Every time you make a piece in the Nativity scene, think about what it was like to be part of the story. It will be great if you do it with your family, too.

I pray that this Advent season, you will get close to this mystery. I pray that you will meet this King who came to us as a baby. I pray that you will become part of His story by letting Him become your friend.

Caroline