



Advent Four - Nativity



Hello again from St Mary's church. We hope you have enjoyed coming along with us on a journey through this Advent season. Let's think about how far we have come.

When we lit our first Advent candle on our wreaths, we talked about 'getting ready' for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. For our second candle, we thought about how we can think of others at this time of year. Last week it was all about the Christingle, bringing us the light of Christ. This week...well, it's about another kind of journey. The journey made by Mary and Joseph, and the shepherds, to meet the baby Jesus. (If you're wondering about the kings, they came later!)

I'm sure you all know this story but if you want to read it for yourselves from the Bible, you can find it in Luke's gospel in the New Testament, chapter 2, verses 1-20. Or maybe you have a storybook with the Christmas story in it.

The first journey was the one that Mary and Joseph took from Nazareth where they lived, to Bethlehem, because the rulers decided everyone had to go back to where they were born to sign a register. This was a long journey of about 80 miles, which would have taken them over a week walking and riding the donkey. Phew, that's a long way!



I wonder how far you would need to travel to go back to where you were born?



If you remember the story, Bethlehem was really busy when Mary and Joseph arrived; there was no room for them in the inn, so they stayed in a stable with the animals. There, Mary had her baby and they named him Jesus. They wrapped him in cloths and put him in a manger, which is usually where the animals' food goes!

In fields nearby Bethlehem there were shepherds looking after their sheep. It was night time, and I don't know if you have been out in the countryside at night but it's really, really dark. I wonder if you can imagine how scared the shepherds must have been when all of a sudden, an angel appeared, all lit up and shining! No wonder the first thing the angel said was, 'Do not be afraid!'



The angel tells the shepherds the good news that the baby Jesus has been born, and that they need to go and see him. I wonder if you know why the shepherds went to find Jesus. After all, he wasn't family, they were busy with their sheep and it was the middle of the night! It's because of something else the angel told the shepherds – that this baby was the Messiah.



That's not a word you hear every day right now, but 2,000 years ago when Jesus was born, it was a word every Jew knew and understood. It means 'King' or 'chosen one' and all Jews were waiting for a new King that had been promised to them by God in the Old Testament stories. If this was him, then the shepherds wanted to take a look! So they went on a journey from their fields to the stable, where they found Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, lying in the manger.

I daresay it would have been all over Twitter if the first Christmas happened now, but back then, the shepherds had to go and tell their story to anyone who would listen, and word spread.

So, I wonder what this story has to do with me or you? We have all been on our own journey through Advent, getting ready, thinking about others, and sharing the light of Christ. And now we've been with Mary and Joseph and the shepherds on their journeys, all to see the baby Jesus on that first Christmas.

It's all about the good news that the angel told the shepherds, about who the baby Jesus is. Can you remember what the angel called Jesus? That's it, the Messiah, the chosen one. The good news for me and you is that it tells us in the Bible that God chooses each of us to do something special for him, to help others. I wonder if you know what your 'something special' is? Do you have the brightest smile, the funniest jokes, the kindest heart?

As you think of Christmas, and Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, I'd like you to remember how very special you are to God. Have a Happy Christmas!

Advent Activity

Make your own nativity scene! There are so many ways to do this, here are a few ideas:



Advent Prayer Here is a prayer you can say when you light the fourth candle on your Advent wreath, which stands for joy:

Lord Jesus, light of the world
Bless each one of us
As we wait with joy
For the coming of Jesus at Christmas. Amen.



Outdoor Nativity Service

There will be an outdoor service telling the Christmas story at the west door of St Mary's church (at the top of the drive) on Sunday 20th December at 10.30am. You are invited to come dressed as a character from the story, which will be told by the church's Open the Book teams. We will sing carols, and audience participation is part of the fun! Covid guidance will be followed, with plenty of hand sanitiser and social distancing. Children will please remain standing with their parents. Everyone is welcome!

