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What stories about Christmas do you like to hear? What stories about Christmas do you like to tell? Do your favorite Christmas stories tell about baby Jesus in the manger, with animals all around him? Do they show us Mary and Joseph traveling to the tiny town of Bethlehem? Do they tell about a sky filled with angels and a field filled with sheep?

Most of our favorite Christmas stories come to us from the Gospel of Luke. There are four books in the Bible that tell us stories about the life of Jesus. These books are called "Gospels" and we often call them by the names of four writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. All of the gospels tell us about Jesus, but the Gospel of Luke has the Christmas stories we love to hear and tell, year after year.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us about Saint Joseph—but not very much about Jesus' Mother Mary. The Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of John tell us about Jesus and John the Baptist all grown up—but not Jesus and John as babies.

For those stories, we need Saint Luke! We know Luke listened to many stories about Jesus and his family. He listened to the stories of Jesus' own people. He listened to stories told by the people of Israel a thousand years before Jesus was born. He listened to stories told about Jesus when Jesus walked the earth.

Then Luke told these stories to others, and we still read what he and his friends wrote about Jesus in his Gospel. From Luke, we hear the story of Jesus' mother, and listen to

the story of John the Baptist's birth. We can hear one angel's promise to Mary, and the song of many angels welcoming Jesus' birth.

Thanks to Luke, we have stories, songs, and prayers that teach us all the way through Advent how to welcome the great day of Christmas! Come and listen. In this activity book, you'll find games, secret messages and puzzles that help you listen closely to stories that Luke heard so well. Come and hear the stories of Saint Luke. Come and hear the Gospel of Christmas!

Here's an Advent game that comes to us from Catholics from Austria. Make a bed for baby Jesus soft—with secret Advent kindness:



Bonus Advent Game: A Christmas Bed for Baby Jesus

You start with an empty basket, that could hold a tiny baby Jesus. But the basket is hard! It needs to be filled with straw or wool!

Next to the basket place a bowl piled with straw or 10-inch lengths of thick, soft yarn.

Each day in Advent, if you do a secret good deed or say a secret Advent prayer, place a straw or yarn in the basket. If you do two good deeds, you can put two straws or yarns in the basket. If you say three secret prayers, you can put three straws or yarns in the basket!

You can make up your own secret good deeds or private prayers, but we'll give you ideas throughout the season of Advent, too.

The game is: how soft can you make this bed for baby Jesus before Christmas is here?



and to announce to you this good news.

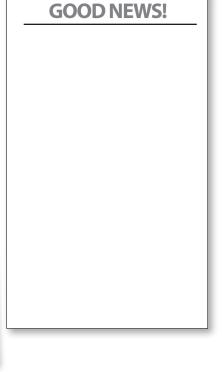
—Luke 1:19

Good news! The stories that Luke heard and wrote down are in a book of the Bible called the "Gospel of Luke." The word gospel isn't a word we hear every day! What does it mean?

The word **gospel** means "good news!" The stories that we have from Luke are Good News for all the world.

Tell your own good news in the newspapers below. In one newspaper, write or draw about something good that happened to YOU this week. In the other newspaper, write or draw about the One who brings good news to all: JESUS.

GOOD NEWS!



Put a piece of straw in the basket for each story you write or draw in the blank newspapers.



Joseph was a just man.

Luke tells us that Jesus was thought to be Joseph's son, but that Jesus was God's son. Joseph did care for baby Jesus. Luke tells us that Joseph even had to search for Jesus when he ran away at 12 years old!

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph was a carpenter. A carpenter works with wood. Matthew also says that Joseph was a "just" man.

What does it mean to be just? It means to want what God wants. God wants all people to have enough food. God wants all people who are sick or sad to have someone who cares for them. God wants people to know peace and joy. God wants all of us to be like Joseph.

In the puzzle below, list ways that you and your family could be just, as Joseph was just. How can you and your family do what God wants? Find an idea that starts with each letter of Joseph's name. (We've filled in one idea to help you get started.)

J	
0	Offer to help someone rake their leaves
S	
Ε	
P	
Н	



In that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot.

—Jeremiah 33:15

Luke wrote that
Jesus was that son!
What did the people
of God think that the
son of David would
do? Look for the 11
words hidden in this
picture of young
King David. Then put
them in order to find
out what King Jesus
would do. *Hint:*Jeremiah 33:15.

Jesus, son of King David.

Some of the stories Luke listened to happened long before Jesus was born. Luke wrote that Jesus was from God's own people. Luke named some of these people to tell us what the long-ago family of Jesus was like. Luke thought the family of Jesus showed us what Jesus was like, too!

King David lived a thousand years before Jesus was born. God's people loved King David. They told stories about how he cared for his father's sheep. They told stories about how he sang songs and played the harp. They told stories about how he was a brave and joyful king. All of God's people hoped that some day, a son of David would come back to care for God's people.



He

Answer: He shall do what is right and just in the land.



Jesus, Son of Abraham.

Luke listened to even older stories than the story of King David. Abraham may have lived a thousand years before the time of King David—two thousand years before Jesus was born!

God's people called themselves Abraham's children. They told stories about how Father Abraham once lived in a faraway land, with people who did not know God. They told stories about how Abraham listened more closely to God than anyone ever had. They told stories about Abraham leaving his faraway land to go to a new land that God showed him.

God made promises to Abraham. God promised Abraham a new land to live in. Even more, God promised Abraham that he would have as many children as there were stars in the sky. This promise came true. Our Jewish brothers and sisters were the first children of Abraham, and many more people of faith claim Abraham as their father, too.

The most important child of Abraham was the Son of God, Jesus. Just like Abraham, Jesus listened closely to God. Jesus walked long and far, wherever God told him to go. Jesus believed in God's promises.

To find one of the promises that God made to Abraham, circle every other letter in each block of words on the path on the next page (each block reads left to right). We've circled the first few letters for you, to give you a clue! This promise came true when Jesus was born. (Clue: Genesis 12:3)

All	 	 	

Answer: All the families of the earth will find blessing in you.





The man gave his wife the name "Eve," because she was the mother of all the living.

—Genesis 3:20

Help your family remember these stories with this Advent Family Scavenger Hunt! Each family member tries to find an item on the list. Can each of you find all the items?

You and your family can put a straw in the basket for each scavenger hunt item found.

Jesus, Son of Adam and Eve.

Luke listened to the oldest stories of all. Nobody knows when God's people first began to tell the story of Adam. Luke called Adam the Son of God—just what he called Jesus, too.

God's people told stories about God walking in a garden with Adam and Eve, his wife. God's people told stories of Adam and Eve living at peace with all the wild animals of the earth. God's people told a sad story, too. Adam & Eve did wrong, and left God's garden.

But Luke also heard the happy end of that story. God promised Adam and Eve: some day a child who will come who will make all things right. Joseph, David, Abraham, Adam: These old stories tell us much about what God's Son Jesus is like.





Get ready! In Advent, during the years when we read most of our stories from the Gospel of Luke, we hear Luke share messages from God. On the second Sunday of Advent in those years, the message is: Prepare the way of the Lord! Get ready for God!

How does your family get ready for Christmas? Do you get ready for family to visit or do you get ready to travel? Do you get ready to send Christmas cards or do you get ready to read the cards that come to your house?

We make lists to help us remember what we have to do for a big day like Christmas. We might put foods to cook or presents to make on our Christmas lists.

Ask your family to help you make a different kind of Christmas list!
On the list, ask your family to think of five ways you all can get ready for Jesus at Christmas.



You and your family can put a straw in the basket for each item on your list.

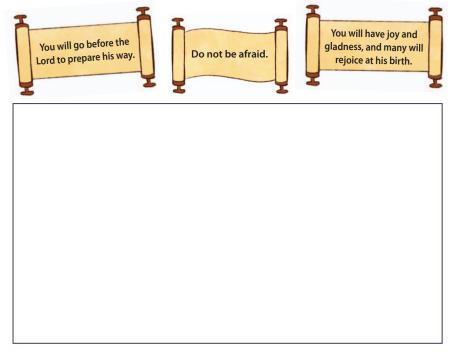


God gets ready. Yesterday you and your family thought about ways to get ready for Jesus. God helped the world get ready for Jesus!

Next, we'll hear Luke's stories about messages that God sent to Mary, mother of baby Jesus. God used an angel to send messages. That's what the word angel means: a messenger!

Ask your family to play a game of Paper Messages. We'll give you three messages that God sent to God's people. Choose one message and draw a picture of it to show to your family. Then ask your family to write a message that goes with your picture!

Did your family "hear" your message from God?





Mary says yes! The most important message that God ever gave to God's people is in the story from Luke 1. Find Luke 1:26-38 in a Bible. Read the story together with your parent.

God wanted Mary to be the mother of Jesus. God sent an angel to Mary to tell her this good news. The angel waited for Mary to answer.

The Good News that Luke tells us is that Mary says YES!

In the cartoon below, we see the angel with Mary. In your own words, write what the angel says to Mary in one cartoon bubble. In your own words, write what Mary says to the angel in the second bubble.



Can you think of a way YOU can say yes to God today? If you do what you think of, put 10 straws in the basket.



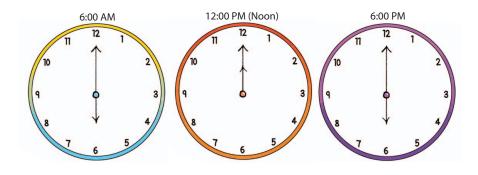
Saying yes morning, noon, and night. Ask a parent or grandparent if they know the prayer called the Angelus. You can read the entire prayer inside the back cover. This prayer honors Mary's yes to God by remembering the words of scripture. Many Catholics say this prayer three times a day.

The traditional times to pray the Angelus are six in the morning, noon, and six in the evening.

The words we remember are:

- The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary; and she conceived of the Holy Spirit. (Say the Hail Mary prayer.)
- 2. Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word. (Say the Hail Mary prayer.)
- 3. And the Word was made flesh; and dwelt among us. (Say the Hail Mary prayer.)

Draw the following pictures on the clocks shown below: In the first clock face, draw a picture of the angel speaking to Mary. In the second clock face, draw a picture of Mary saying yes to the angel. In the third clock face, write "the Word made flesh"—that's a fancy name for Jesus!





Nothing is impossible.

Can you imagine what Mary must have felt when she heard the message from the angel? The angel was telling her, "You will be the mother of God's own son!" Imagine the angel talking to you. What do you feel? What do you say?

The angel tells Mary not to be afraid. The angel tells Mary that God loves her and chooses her. The angel tells Mary nothing is impossible for God—and then proves it!

Mary has a cousin Elizabeth who is much older, too old to have a baby. But the angel tells Mary that Elizabeth is going to have a

baby, too. Elizabeth is old enough to be a grandmother, but she will have a baby boy!

To find out how Mary answered the angel, unscramble each word on the angels below. Then put them in order to read Mary's words! *Hint*: Luke 1:38.



Answer: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.



Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.

—Traditional, adapted from Luke 1:28 Mary and Elizabeth. Luke tells us that Mary travels over hills to see her cousin Elizabeth. Luke tells us that Elizabeth is filled with joy at Mary's voice. Elizabeth says that even the baby in her womb jumped for joy to hear Mary's voice.

Then Elizabeth says words that are part of every Hail Mary we pray today: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

We use the Hail Mary in the Angelus. We use the Hail Mary in the rosary, too. Ask a grownup to show you how to pray a decade of the rosary.

Can you fill in the missing words from the Hail Mary below? Look at the pictures for clues!





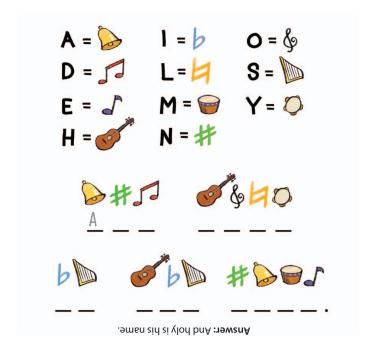
—Luke 1:46

Mary's Song. Luke listened to stories, and he listened to songs, too. One of the most beautiful songs in Luke is the song for Mary. With a grownup, find Luke 1:46-55 and read it aloud.

Mary's song tells us that God loves the poor, and cares for the hungry and lowly. On December 12, we remember how Mary showed herself to a poor man named Juan Diego hundreds of years ago.

Mary told him that God loved him, and that she loved him, too. He could have sung the same words as Mary: "The Mighty One has done great things for me!"

Solve this code to read the next verse in Mary's song.





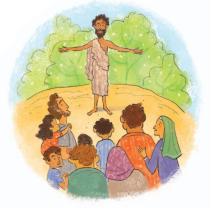
Luke listens to the prophets.

We have heard Luke's stories about God's messages, especially God's great message to blessed Mary. Now we hear Luke's stories about the prophets. Some of the prophets lived hundreds of years before Jesus. Jesus said that the greatest prophet lived at the same time as Jesus. To find out his name, solve the number code below!

Can you figure out the other letters below and solve the puzzle? *Hint:* Luke 3:10

The number code works like this: 1=a, b=2, c=3... and so on for each letter of the alphabet.

1=a	8=h	15=o	22=v
2=b	9=i	16=p	23=w
3=c	10=j	17=q	24=x
4=d	11=k	18=r	25=y
5=e	12=l	19=s	26=z
6=f	13=m	20=t	
7=g	14=n	21=u	



The			_															
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Puswer: The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?"



Who is John the Baptist? Later we'll read about John the Baptist as a baby. Today he's all grown up! Luke tells us that he lived in the wilderness. Most of all, John the Baptist listened to the word of God. That's what prophets do! The prophets listen to what God has to say. Then the prophets reveal God's word to God's people.

Even though it's winter, make a wilderness tent in honor of John the Baptist. Arrange 4 chairs in a circle, and drape them with a big sheet. Invite a friend or family member into the tent. Bring a flashlight and read together the story of John's preaching in Luke 3:1-3.





Luke listens to Isaiah. Luke

listened to the stories about prophets who lived long ago, too. One of the greatest prophets was named Isaiah. Isaiah told God's people to "prepare the way of the Lord." Luke said that's what John the Baptist did: prepare the way.

In the puzzle below, we've put words from Isaiah that Luke uses to talk about John the Baptist. But in some places, there are extra words. Try reading this story—can you figure out which words belong? Circle the right word in each spot, because the wrong words don't tell any story at all. *Hint*: Luke 3:4-5



Answer: way, paths, valley, mountain, straight, rough



They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain.

—Isaiah 11:9

Can you find each of these six animals hidden in the picture?

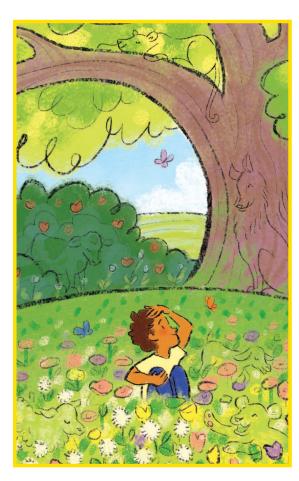
wolf
lamb
leopard
goat
calf

Feed your pet, if you have one.
Then put into the basket a straw for each hidden animal you found.

Isaiah and the wild animals.

Many of the stories we love in Advent and Christmas come from the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah told God's people that when God's chosen One came, even the wild beasts would be at peace. Isaiah wrote:

The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. (Isaiah 11:6)



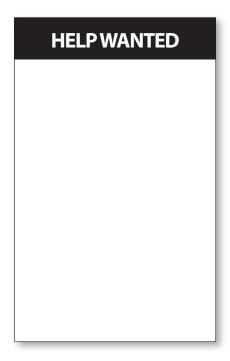


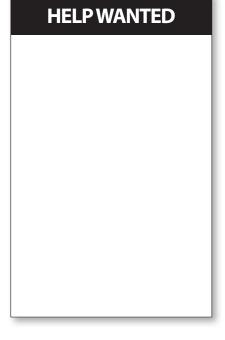
Jesus reads Isaiah. We know that Jesus read Isaiah, too. Luke shows Jesus reading aloud to God's people. Jesus reads words that Isaiah wrote hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Listen to Jesus read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

The words are almost like a "help wanted" ad—God's ad for the One who would save God's people.

Can you and your family write a "help wanted" ad for Jesus? What did God want Jesus to do? How about a second ad for your family? What does God want your family to do?







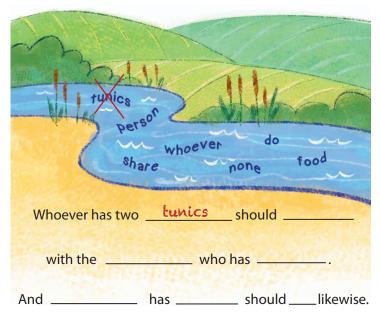
What is it that we should do?

—Luke 3:14

What is it that we should do? John

teaches us how to prepare. John the Baptist went to the river to teach. Many of God's people came to him. They asked how to get ready for the God's chosen One. How would you answer that question?

You can find out how John answered it by reading the sentence below—once you've rescued the words that are floating away on the river!



Hint: Luke 3:11

Answer: Whoever has two tunics should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise.

Share food with those who need it. Ask your family to help you collect food for the parish food bank.

Put 1 straw in the basket for each item.



Advent versus Christmas. The days of Advent are getting shorter, because it's almost Christmas! Advent is when we get ready for Jesus to come. We "prepare the way." Christmas is when we celebrate the coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem.

Look at the ideas below. Can you draw lines to show which one belongs to Advent? Which one belongs to Christmas?





Baby John. Remember John the Baptist? Luke also tells us how he was born. An angel comes to an old man named Zechariah to tell him that he and his wife Elizabeth will have a baby. But Zechariah says, "We're too old!" The angel tells him that now he won't even be able to talk until the baby is born!

Ask your family to play a game called Silent Zechariah. Each person writes down the name of a Christmas character on a card: think of Mary, Jesus, Joseph, an angel, or even an animal from the manger. Mix up the cards. Take a card and act out the character. You can't use any words! Your family has to guess who you're acting out.



Put a straw in the basket for each character your family guesses correctly.



Immediately his mouth was opened.

—Luke 1:64

Song of Zechariah. When John was born, his father Zechariah could speak again—and even sing! He sang a beautiful song to honor his own son, and God's chosen One, too. You can read the words of his song in *Luke 1:68-79*. The Church sings this song every morning in the Liturgy of the Hours.

The song ends by saying that God's chosen One will "guide our feet into the path of peace." What are ways we can make peace, the way God wants? Write or draw your ideas on the feet below!

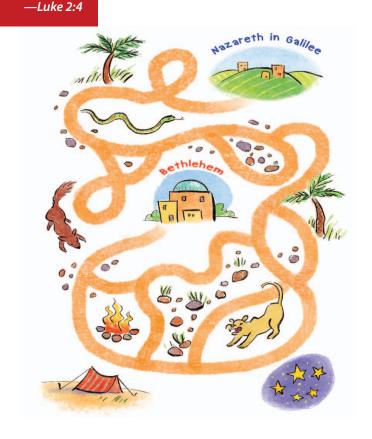


Put 1 straw in the basket for each way to make peace.



Journey to Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary lived in Galilee, far to the north of Bethlehem. Luke tells us that they had to travel to Bethlehem, about a hundred miles away. It was almost time for Mary to have her baby.

Can you help Joseph & Mary find their way from Nazareth to Bethlehem?



Are you traveling to see others? Are you getting ready for people to visit you? Put 1 straw in the basket for each way you are getting ready today.



"And the friendly beasts around him stood: Jesus our brother, kind and good."

—The Friendly Beasts

With your family, travel from room to room in your own home. Ask your family: how could we welcome Jesus or Christmas in this room? For example, maybe you could sing a Christmas carol in one room.

Maybe you could put a nativity set in another. Maybe you could stop to pray in another.

No room at the inn. Luke tells us that when Joseph and Mary reach Bethlehem, there is no room even at the inn (an "inn" is what we would call a "hotel" today). But Bethlehem had other spaces. There were many small caves where animals were kept. Someone must have let Joseph and Mary stay with the animals.

In Mexico and in parts of the United States, people remember this part of the story with a game called Las Posadas. The word posada means "inn." People play the parts of Mary and Joseph. They travel from house to house. When they are invited in, there is a party to welcome them!





She gave birth to her firstborn son.
—Luke 2:7

Is your basket bed filled with straw for baby Jesus? If not, put in 5 straws for each animal sound you can make! **In the manger.** Jesus was born in a manger. That's the name for a box from which animals eat their food.

You can read the story here, but you'll have to find the missing letters to finish the story in the animals gathered in the manger! Each missing letter goes in more than one word. It might even be used twice in the same word.





Good news of great joy. That's what the angel says about the birth of Jesus. It's GOOD news of GREAT joy! God loves God's people. God sends prophets to tell God's people God's word. God sends the chosen One to bring good news to all.

To whom did the angel tell this good news? Connect the dots in the picture below. Then read the story of what happened next in Luke 2:8-16.

And Merry Christmas! God loves you and your family. God's word is for you! God's chosen One is for you! The GOOD news of GREAT joy—it's for you.



THE ANGELUS

The Angel of the LORD declared to Mary: And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Behold the handmaid of the LORD:
Be it done unto me according to Thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

And the Word was made Flesh: And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the LORD is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us Pray,

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O LORD, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. *Amen*.



WHAT CHILD IS THIS?

What Child is this who, laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through,
The cross be borne for me, for you;
Hail, hail the Word made flesh,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh, Come peasant, king to own Him; The King of kings salvation brings, Let loving hearts enthrone Him. Raise, raise a song on high, The virgin sings her lullaby; Joy, joy for Christ is born, The Babe, the Son of Mary.

