Prophet Shares Picture of Time When
All Creatures Will Know God's Peace

PALESTINE, 5th Century BCE—Crowds gathered in the square earlier today to hear a prophet named Isaiah who is proclaiming a message from God.

He has spoken out before, to tell the people what they must do to return to the ways of God. He has reminded them again and again to offer food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted. He has called them to worship the Lord on the Sabbath rather than pursuing their own interests.

The prophet has said, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to release the prisoners.”

Isaiah’s consistent theme has been, “The people must repent and return to the Lord.” He warns of the dangers and destruction that will come if they do not.

Change in Message
According to one person who heard Isaiah speaking today, he has made a distinct change in his message:

“This morning, Isaiah spoke of ‘new heavens and a new earth.’ He told us to be glad and rejoice in the new creation. Jerusalem will once again be a city of joy, and its people a delight. He said there will be no more weeping, and our babies will not die so soon after they are born.

“Isaiah declared that the people shall build houses and live in them; they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit; they shall enjoy the work of their hands.”

Another member of the crowd remembered more of what the prophet was offering to the people in the way of hope for the future. This listener reported:

“Isaiah drew an incredible picture with the words he spoke to us. He said, ‘The wolf and the lamb shall feed together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox. But the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.’

“Can you just imagine creatures that are enemies from the beginning being able to rest next to each other without fear? It is the hope of our people that we will once more know peace in Jerusalem.”

A commentator who has been following the work of the prophet for many years noted, “This last quote about the wolf and the lamb is a slight variation of a statement made by an earlier prophet also called Isaiah. In that reference it was clear that the

Continued on page 2
Visible Signs Remind Us that Advent Is Here and a New Church Year Begins

The first Sunday of Advent begins the Church Year. We can observe several changes on this significant day. Most obvious is the color of the hangings in the church and the stoles worn by the clergy. They are now purple, the traditional color—or Sarum blue, sometimes used to distinguish Advent from Lent. Blue is associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Another visible sign in many churches is the Advent wreath. It may be hung from the ceiling, mounted on a stand, or placed on a table. The wreath is created from evergreens and holds four or five candles. The four outer candles may be all purple, or three purple and one rose-colored, or (in some churches) all white.

If a rose-colored candle is used, it is lighted on the Third Sunday of Advent. If a fifth candle is added to the Advent wreath, it is placed in the center and lighted at the Christmas service. It is called the Christ candle.

If the church has been accustomed to singing the Gloria in Excelsis at the beginning of the Eucharist, participants may notice its absence during Advent. The “Gloria” is not sung or said during the four Sundays of this season.

Other music will focus on the season of Advent. Christmas music is saved for the Festival Eucharist and Caroling at Christmas.

On the First Sunday of Advent, the whole Church changes to a different Lectionary year. (See the article on the Lectionary below.)

Prophet Shares, Continued from page 1

The prophet was indicating this miraculous event would occur with the coming of the Messiah. It is possible that this prophet of our time is also predicting the coming of the King, the Messiah, the anointed one.

Scripture Readings For Worship Listed In the Lectionaries of the Prayer Book

The Lectionary is a list of Scripture passages that are read at worship throughout the Church Year. The Book of Common Prayer (pages 888-1001) contains two sets of lectionaries—one for Sundays and one for the Daily Office.

The Sunday Lectionary is divided into three sections—Year A, Year B, Year C. The Gospel readings for Year A are mainly from the Gospel of Matthew; for Year B, from Mark; and for Year C, from Luke.

The lessons from the Old Testament have been chosen to support the Gospel reading. The Epistles are usually selections from Paul’s letters and are read consecutively, except during Advent and Lent.

To find out which Lectionary year the Church begins at Advent, divide the present year by three. If it comes out even, you begin Year A on the first Sunday of Advent. If there is a remainder of 1, Year B begins. A remainder of 2 says Year C begins.

Which Lectionary (A, B, or C) is the one used for Advent this year? Next year?

Nearly the Whole Bible

The Daily Office Lectionary is meant to be read every day. It is divided into two years instead of three. It also begins with the first Sunday of Advent. You can discover which is the correct year by noting whether the year is even or odd. Year One begins in Advent of an even year; Year Two begins in Advent during a year that ends in an odd number.

If you read the passages selected in the Daily Office Lectionary each day for both years, you will have read almost all of the Bible.
## The Lectionary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year A</th>
<th>Year B</th>
<th>Year C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Sunday of Advent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Second Sunday of Advent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Third Sunday of Advent</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 2:1-5</td>
<td>Isaiah 11:1-10</td>
<td>Isaiah 35:1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans 13:8-14</td>
<td>Romans 15:4-13</td>
<td>James 5:7-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 24:37-44</td>
<td>Matthew 3:1-12</td>
<td>Matthew 11:2-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fourth Sunday of Advent</strong></td>
<td><strong>Isaiah 65:17-25</strong></td>
<td><strong>Micah 5:2-4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah 35:1-10</td>
<td>1 Thessalonians 5:16-28</td>
<td>Romans 16:25-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romans 1:1-7</td>
<td>John 1:6-8, 19-28</td>
<td>Romans 16:25-27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## MEMORY CHALLENGE

The following stories are parables told by Jesus. Some of them appear in only one Gospel, some in both Matthew and Luke, and some in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Memorize where to find each one.

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**Hidden Treasure** — Matthew, ch. 13
**Pearl of Great Price** — Matthew, ch. 13
**Unforgiving Servant** — Matthew, ch. 18
**Laborers in the Vineyard** — Matthew, ch. 20
**Two Sons** — Matthew, ch. 21
**Talents** — Matthew, ch. 25

### Parables of Jesus — Matthew and Luke
**House on the Rock** — Matthew, ch. 7; Luke, ch. 6
**Yeast** — Matthew, ch. 13; Luke, ch. 13
**Lost Sheep** — Matthew, ch. 18; Luke, ch. 15

### Parables of Jesus — Matthew, Mark, and Luke
**Sower** — Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8
**Mustard Seed** — Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13
Across:
1. A prophet who told of a new heaven and a new earth.
2. A word that means “anointed one.”
3. The selection of Scripture readings for Years A, B, C.
4. A round sphere.
5. This city was “home” for the Hebrew people.
6. Isaiah called this holy.
7. This creature will have dust for food.
8. A person who spoke for God.
9. A wild animal similar to a dog.

Down:
10. The opposite of war.
11. The first season of the Church year.
12. Thought of as being above the earth.
13. A baby sheep.
15. God wants the people to be this.
17. The result of a question.
18. A farm animal.

Unit II:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:
Session 1: Isaiah 7:14; 35:1; 65:17
Session 2: Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:27
Session 3: Matthew 1:17; Mark 1:7, 8
Session 4: Luke 2:7, 14
Session 5: Matthew 2:2, 15b; Luke 2:52
Session 6: Mark 4:2a, 8
Session 7: Matthew 20:1, 16
Session 8: Matthew 7:28; 13:44, 45-46
Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

Session 1
“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.”—Isaiah 7:14 (NRSV)

“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; . . .” —Isaiah 35:1 (NRSV)

“For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.”—Isaiah 65:17 (NRSV)
PALESTINE, 28 CE—Reports are flooding in about John, son of the priest Zechariah. He has been seen near the River Jordan, where he preaches repentance to the people who gather there.

John baptizes individuals in the ritual cleansing of sins usually performed in the temple. He seems sure that the Messiah is coming soon and that the Jews must prepare by repenting of their sins, turning their hearts to God, and being baptized.

John is a large man who dresses in camel's hair and leather. Reportedly, his diet is only locusts and wild honey. He preaches with a strong voice and a forceful message. Many have been baptized and follow him as his disciples.

The latest report of John's work in the Jordan Valley comes from several members of the crowd. According to one eyewitness, John lashed out at the crowd in anger, condemning them for seeking to flee the wrath of God. After this violent speech, the crowd asked, "What should we do?"

A farmer and his family received this answer, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

Several tax collectors who went out to be baptized also asked John, "Teacher, what should we do?"

"We thought he would tell us to leave our jobs," they reported, "but he told us only not to collect more money than is due. We also overheard some soldiers ask him a similar question. He told the soldiers, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'"

When asked about the Messiah, John stated, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Unusual Birth Story

John is the son of Zechariah, the priest.
Purple is the color of penitence, which means turning to God to ask forgiveness for something we have done wrong.

Advent is a time of holy preparation. The season has been called a “little Lent” because it invites us to reexamine our lives, just as we do in the forty days before Easter. In Advent, we pray that Jesus Christ may once again be born in our hearts at Christmas.

The color purple may be used for the altar frontal and other church hangings, as well as for the candles in the Advent wreath.

Purple is the color of penitence, which means turning to God to ask forgiveness for something we have done wrong. Even when we try our best to do things the right way, we sometimes do things that we are sorry for later—or we leave some important things undone.

Advent is a time to think about the question, Is this what God would want me to do?

Many people spend this season of preparing for Christmas by reading passages from the Bible, or reflecting on inspirational writings. Families sometimes have an Advent wreath at home and spend time with devotions and prayers as the candles are lighted each week. Other families plan activities to help persons who are poor or in need—such as gathering toys for homeless children or collecting food for a needy family.

Consider what you or your family might do during this season of Advent that will help you to turn toward God and prepare again for the coming of the Christ Child.

**PRAYERS FOR ADVENT**

Almighty and most merciful God, kindle within us the fire of love, that by its cleansing flame we may be purged of all our sins and made worthy to worship you in spirit and in truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 111*

Let not our souls be busy inns that have no room for thee and thine, but quiet homes of prayer and praise, where thou mayest find fit company, where the needful cares of life are wisely ordered and put away, and wide, sweet spaces kept for thee, where holy thoughts pass up and down, and fervent longings watch and wait thy coming.

—Author Unknown
and Elizabeth. A strange story of his birth as a miracle is circulating among his followers. As the story is told, Elizabeth was quite beyond childbearing age when John was conceived. Even stranger yet is the fact that his father, Zechariah, could not speak for the entire nine months of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. He regained his voice when asked what the boy’s name would be. The child was called John (which means God is gracious), even though no one else in the family had ever been named John.

Zechariah did predict that his son would be a prophet of the Most High and would go before the Lord to prepare the way. His words reminded people of Isaiah’s message: “A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”

**MEMORY CHALLENGE**

The following stories are parables told by Jesus. Some of them appear in only one Gospel, some in both Matthew and Luke, and some in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Memorize where to find each one.

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- Great Banquet — Luke, ch. 14
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- Prodigal — Luke, ch. 15
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- House on the Rock — Matthew, ch. 7; Luke, ch. 6
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### Parables of Jesus — Matthew, Mark, and Luke
- Sower — Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8
- Mustard Seed — Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13

**Answers:**
- wilderness
- John
- Baptist
- Zechariah
- Elizabeth
- locusts
- honey
- sandals
- Jordan
- REPENT
- COME NEAR
John the Baptist

NEERISSDLW
NOJH
TAPIISBT
ECHAHIAZ
BILTHEEZA
MEALC
TOSSCUL
ONEHY
LANDSAS
DOARJN

Unscramble the words above, then rearrange the BOLD RED letters to find out what John the Baptist said.

"FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN HAS"

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:
Session 1: Isaiah 7:14; 35:1; 65:17
Session 2: Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:27
Session 3: Matthew 1:17; Mark 1:7, 8
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Session 6: Mark 4:2a, 8
Session 7: Matthew 20:1, 16
Session 8: Matthew 7:28; 13:44, 45-46
Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 2

“A voice cries out: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.’”—Isaiah 40:3 (NRSV)

“John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.”—Mark 1:4 (NRSV)

“This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’”—Luke 7:27 (NRSV)
The family tree of Jesus, in Matthew, ch. 1, includes some colorful and interesting people.

We know very little about Jesus' immediate family, Joseph and Mary. Joseph was a carpenter, as was his father Jacob. He was well-known and respected in the community as a man of strength and courage who obeyed God and cared for his family.

Mary was a young girl who lived in Nazareth with her parents, Joachim and Anna. She was visited by the angel Gabriel who announced she would give birth to Jesus.

Kings David and Solomon. Going back farther, we discover that Jesus is descended from a long line of kings, including Solomon and his parents, Bathsheba and King David. King David is considered the greatest king of all Israel, and many hope that Jesus will follow in this ancestor's footsteps. This seems unlikely since David's descendants lost their fortunes because of the exile in Babylon.

King David, as the history books report, was anointed king by Samuel, the prophet, while he was still a young shepherd tending flocks. He is the one who defeated the giant, Goliath, in a battle with the Philistines.

King David's father was Jesse, a prosperous farmer in Bethlehem, who had nine sons. David was the youngest.

Once David attained the throne, he did many great things for the people. He united the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, making Jerusalem the center of a great empire. He also recovered the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obed-edom the Hittite. In a great procession, with much joy and celebration, King David brought the Ark of God to Jerusalem. His son Solomon later built a glorious temple to honor God and the Ark.

Ruth. David's grandfather (father of Jesse) was Obed, the son of Ruth and Boaz. As their story is told, Ruth was a
Words from Isaiah Inspire the Tradition Of the Jesse Tree As an Advent Symbol

Christians can enjoy their own Jesse Trees at home, perhaps adding members of their families to the tree.

The tradition of the Jesse Tree comes from Isaiah 11:1: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” During the Middle Ages, the tree became the focus for tapestries and stained glass windows. It was also used to decorate the base of ornate candlesticks.

The use of the Jesse Tree as a symbol in Advent was begun in more recent times. Jesse Trees are now created in churches, classrooms, and homes, as Christians trace the family tree of Jesus Christ.

A Jesse Tree can be made from a bare branch of a tree, pieces of felt on a background, or from other items. When the tree has been created, decorations are added to symbolize the Holy Family (Jesus, Mary, and Joseph) and the ancestors of Jesus—usually including Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Samuel, David, and the prophets Elijah, Elisha, and Isaiah. Additional people from the Bible may be added.

Symbols for each ancestor can be purchased, created, or drawn, and added to the Jesse Tree each day of Advent. Or they can be added all at once during a special time in the liturgy of the Church or in a church class.

Christians can enjoy their own Jesse Trees at home, perhaps adding members of their families to the tree.

As each symbol is placed on the tree, a simple retelling of the story of that person could be shared. At the conclusion, a prayer such as the following may be said:

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature; Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (The Book of Common Prayer, page 288.)

**Gospel of Matthew, Continued from page 1**

A young widow who came to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, Naomi. Naomi and her husband and two sons had traveled to the country of Moab during a famine. There the two sons met and married Moabite women. Ruth was one of those women. Later, when Naomi’s husband and two sons died, Naomi chose to return to Bethlehem and Ruth went with her. Shortly afterwards, Ruth married Boaz, a wealthy landowner and relative of Naomi.

Abraham. Even farther back in time, Jesus is said to be descended from Abraham, the patriarch of the Hebrew people, whose son Isaac married Rebecca. They became the parents of twin boys, Esau and Jacob. Jacob left home after receiving his father’s blessing and went to the house of Laban his uncle. There he married both daughters of Laban, Leah and Rachael. Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter.
Many families observe Christmas traditions in their homes—something that is done exactly the same way each year. Sometimes it is a special food a parent makes on Christmas morning, perhaps from a recipe handed down by grandparents and great-grandparents for generations. Sometimes a special Christmas activity is shared by just one family.

Whatever the customs may be in your home, it is important that they are recognized and valued as ways of helping us to remember Jesus’ birth.

Talk with your family about holiday customs. Find out how everyone feels about these special things. Ask if there are ways everyone can help to make Christmas a more joyous celebration of the birth of Jesus.

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**MEMORY CHALLENGE**

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- Mustard Seed — *Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13*

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**Answers:**
1-C
2-E
3-I
4-A
5-D
6-H
7-G
8-J
9-F
10-B
WHO AM I?

Directions: Match the names on the left with the clues on the right.

1. JESUS
2. MESSIAH
3. DAVID
4. ABRAHAM
5. ISAAC
6. JACOB
7. JUDAH
8. JOSEPH
9. MARY
10. MATTHEW

A. God promised me a son in my old age.
B. I began my Gospel with a list of Jesus’ ancestors.
C. The angel Gabriel announced my birth.
D. Rebecca and I had twin sons.
E. This name means “anointed one.”
F. I traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem on a donkey.
G. I was one of the twelve sons of Jacob.
H. God changed my name to Israel.
I. I was the second king of Israel.
J. I was a carpenter in Nazareth.

Unit II:
LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:
Session 1: Isaiah 7:14; 35:1; 65:17
Session 2: Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:27
Session 3: Matthew 1:17; Mark 1:7, 8
Session 4: Luke 2:7, 14
Session 5: Matthew 2:2, 15b; Luke 2:52
Session 6: Mark 4:2a, 8
Session 7: Matthew 20:1, 16
Session 8: Matthew 7:28; 13:44, 45-46
Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 3

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David to the deportation to Babylon, fourteen generations; and from the deportation to Babylon to the Messiah, fourteen generations.”
—Matthew 1:17 (NRSV)

“(John) proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.’”
—Mark 1:7 (NRSV)

“I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”
—Mark 1:8 (NRSV)
BETHLEHEM, around 6 BCE—This town has been a noisy place lately as dozens of travelers pour into the city. They are arriving here by foot, by donkey, and on horses. Their reason for coming is an order issued by the Roman government.

The resources of the town are stretched to the limit by all these visitors,” a Bethlehem official said today. “We just cannot provide for any more people. The wells are going dry. The food supply is just about exhausted. We can’t feed the people, let alone the animals. I hope the Romans get on with it and leave soon.”

No Rooms at Inns
A check on the various inns, early today, showed the extent of the influx of visitors. Roman officers in charge of the census have taken the best places for themselves. The soldiers remain on the outskirts of the town in camps. The tents appear warm and secure. Even those houses large enough to take in visitors are crowded beyond capacity.

Meanwhile, ordinary people are having difficulty finding lodging, or even a place to set up a tent and build a fire for a cook pot. Not one room was available for any latecomers.

One reporter, who has been stationed at the entrance gate interviewing travelers as they enter the city, had this to say: “The people coming through these gates today are tired and hungry from their journeys. They are overwhelmed by the number of people entering the city and are anxious about finding a place to sleep.

“Just before the gates closed for the night, a young couple entered. The woman, who is pregnant, was riding on a donkey. The man, Joseph, spoke with me briefly:

Continued on page 3
Stories of Jesus’ Birth Are Found In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke

Only the Gospels of Matthew and Luke tell of the birth of Jesus. Most versions of the Christmas Story combine these two accounts into one story. It is interesting to look at each Gospel and see which elements are the same and which are different.

From Matthew we learn that Mary is the mother of Jesus, that she is engaged to Joseph, and that she is with child from the Holy Spirit.

We also learn that Joseph has considered ending their engagement because of her pregnancy. Just as he makes the final decision, an angel comes to him in a dream.

The angel tells Joseph that the child is of the Holy Spirit and will be named Jesus. After Joseph awakens from the dream, he and Mary are married.

Also according to Matthew, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the time of King Herod. Herod was the king whom the Wise Men sought, to find out about the child who was born King of the Jews. Herod sent them to Bethlehem, the place predicted by the prophets.

The Wise Men found Mary and Jesus in a house and gave the baby their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

After the visit of the Wise Men, Joseph had another dream that told him to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to protect the Child from King Herod. They returned from Egypt after Herod’s death.

Facts:
- Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
- Mary and Joseph are his parents.
- The Wise Men visit and bring gifts.
- The family flees to Egypt.

Longer Account

A longer story of Jesus’ birth is found in the Gospel of Luke. In this version, Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel in Nazareth where she lived. The angel told her that even though she was not married she would have a baby and call him Jesus. Shortly after the angel’s visit, Mary traveled to the place where her cousin Elizabeth lived and stayed there for three months.

About the time Mary’s baby was due to be born, the Roman governor called for a census. All people were to register in the towns of their ancestors. For Joseph, this meant Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David.

While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, the baby was born. Mary wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Then Luke tells us about the shepherds and the angels who shared the good news of Jesus’ birth.

According to Jewish custom, Jesus was circumcised and given his name when he was eight days old. Also according to custom, forty days after the birth, Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice for Mary’s purification. At the temple they met Simeon and Anna, both of whom recognized the Savior. When they had done everything required by law, they returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew up.

Facts:
- Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
- Mary and Joseph are his parents.
- The shepherds come to visit them in a stable.
- Jesus is named after eight days.
- The family goes to the temple in Jerusalem and returns to Nazareth.
St. Francis Inspired Christmas Creches

St. Francis of Assisi struggled to find a way for the villagers of Greccio to understand the real meaning of Christmas. Suddenly he had an inspiration.

Francis searched the hillside until he found the perfect place. When everything was ready, he led the villagers to this very special woodland clearing. As the clouds parted and the moon and stars shone down, the villagers cried out in surprise at what they saw. In a nearby cave, carved from rock, stood a manger filled with straw. On one side was a strong ox, and on the other a small gray donkey.

Standing in front of the manger, Francis read the Holy Scripture from Luke. For the people gathered in the cold night air, the story came alive in a brand new way.

Since that time, the Christmas creche (Nativity scene) has been a part of the Christmas celebration. Many people follow the example of St. Francis and stage live dramatizations, while others arrange carved or ceramic figures around a miniature stable. Either way, this gift from St. Francis has enriched the Christmas story for families around the world.

Every Inn,
Continued from page 1

'We have come from Nazareth. The journey has been a difficult one. My wife, Mary, is near her time. I hope we can find a comfortable place for her to rest now that we have arrived in Bethlehem.' As the gates closed behind them, they joined others searching for lodging.'

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Prodigal — Luke, ch. 15

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Chalice Year-Intermediate, Episcopal Children’s Curriculum
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II-4 Page 3
Directions: Identify the ten words in the group above that are used in the story of Jesus' birth (Luke, ch. 2). Connect these ten words in alphabetical order to form a Christmas symbol.

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:
Session 1: Isaiah 7:14; 35:1; 65:17
Session 2: Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:27
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Session 5: Matthew 2:2, 15b; Luke 2:52
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Session 7: Matthew 20:1, 16
Session 8: Matthew 7:28; 13:44, 45-46
Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

Session 4

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."
—Luke 2:7 (NRSV)

"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"—Luke 2:14 (NRSV)
BETHLEHEM, around 4 BCE—Shortly after midnight, two figures were seen fleeing this town. One was on foot while the other rode a donkey and seemed to be carrying something. They headed in the direction of the desert. This was an unusual event, as travelers usually wait until daybreak to leave on such a journey.

This morning, it was discovered that Joseph, the carpenter from Nazareth, and his wife Mary, who not long ago gave birth to the couple’s firstborn son, have left the house they were occupying.

Hasty Visitors Observed

Believing the couple’s departure must be connected to last night’s sighting, we sent an investigative reporter to discover the circumstances involved. The following story offers an explanation:

Earlier this week a caravan of obviously wealthy kings arrived in Bethlehem. They asked to see the child whose star they had followed. The child they sought turned out to be the son of Mary and Joseph. It was discovered that, after visiting the child and his parents, the kings presented the family with several expensive gifts.

Just as quickly as they arrived, they departed. But instead of turning around and going back the way they came, they headed in an entirely different direction.

One of the servants who watered their camels said, “I think they left on a different road because of some warning. I overheard them talking about a dream one of them had that was connected to King Herod.”

It seems that Joseph also had a dream. This was reported by a servant girl who was helping Mary whenever she could. She told us, “I was sleeping nearby when I heard Joseph get up and call to Mary. He told her he had been warned about a danger to the child. He said they must hurry and leave Bethlehem. Mary asked where they would go. I heard him whisper Egypt.

“Mary called me and I went to help her get ready for the journey. I begged them to wait until morning, but Joseph said there was no time to waste. They left around midnight.”

We asked the officials in the area if King Herod had sent any messengers to Bethlehem recently that might have caused this hasty departure of both the kings and the young family. Although we learned nothing, we will continue to monitor the situation.
Church Recalls Three New Testament Stories in Epiphany Celebrations

The word “epiphany” means “manifestation, or appearing.”

As early as the second century, the season of the Epiphany was celebrated on January 6. The word “epiphany” means “manifestation, or appearing.”

Originally the feast focused on three significant events in the life of Jesus:

1. **The visit of the Wise Men.** This story represents the revealing of Jesus' birth to Gentiles or non-Jews.

2. **The Baptism of Jesus.** When Jesus was baptized by John in the River Jordan, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. The voice of God declared, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” This confirmed that Jesus was the long-expected Messiah.

3. **Jesus' first miracle at a wedding in Cana.** Here Jesus changed water into wine.

These three events present Jesus as “God in human flesh,” who had come to deliver a message of hope for all people. Jesus was a divine presence with great power.

The three stories are still present in the Orthodox Church’s celebration of the feast of Epiphany. In that tradition, Epiphany is the major feast day, more significant than Christmas.

In the western world, the celebration of Christmas has been dominant. More recent Church calendars have restored the earlier tradition by centering the First Sunday after Epiphany around The Baptism of our Lord. The story of the miracle of the wedding at Cana is read once every three years on the Second Sunday of Epiphany.

The Last Sunday after Epiphany always presents the Transfiguration as the glorious manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God. In this story, Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a mountain to pray. While there, Jesus’ face and clothing became shining with a dazzling light. Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus.
Herod Ordered Murder of Children

As a result of King Herod's fears and jealousy, many innocent children were murdered. When the Wise Men visited Herod in Jerusalem, they told him that they were seeking the child who was to be the King of the Jews. Herod, who was constantly in fear of losing his throne, felt threatened by this news. He asked the Wise Men to return and tell him where the child was. The men, warned in a dream, did not return to Herod's palace. When he discovered that they had deceived him, his anger became vicious. He sent his soldiers to Bethlehem and ordered them to kill all male children under two years of age.

This ruthless and horrible murder of innocent children fulfilled one of the prophecies of Jeremiah who said, “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”

The Church remembers these children on December 28 at the Feast of the Holy Innocents. The collect for that day asks for God's mercy on all innocent victims.

The Church remembers these children on December 28 at the Feast of the Holy Innocents.

Memory Challenge

The following stories are parables told by Jesus. Some of them appear in only one Gospel, some in both Matthew and Luke, and some in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Memorize where to find each one.

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Sower—
Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8
Mustard Seed—Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13

Answer:
“Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”
Matthew 2:11b
Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

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Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

SECRET CODE

FULFILLMENT

Directions: Begin with the first letter, T, and circle every third letter in the puzzle below. Then write the circled letters in the spaces provided. You will discover a message from the Gospel of Matthew.

TROHTTESANWIONBPOPENINTTIGKNREGFDTRRRHMEEOINEINRTTSESRCMERYALKSOPURTRTHENNCWEHTTTESTSHHTNESHITAAHLREUDYPOTHTFZLFSDEBNROPEPTTDMMHREIDDDMONGTTIGFSOTTSSRPOMEFUTTGOPOLDLRRDTHFRTRSAAATHNINKTITIRENHECKIELLNRESTTEIOAZSNADDTMMOUYTRGFRTH

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 5

"... 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'"—Matthew 2:2 (NRSV)

"This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'"—Matthew 2:15b (NRSV)

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor."—Luke 2:52 (NRSV)
Jesus Tells Parable of Soils As Crowds Gather by Sea of Galilee to Hear Him

PALESTINE, around 25 CE—Crowds gathered by the Sea of Galilee yesterday to listen as Jesus of Nazareth taught about the kingdom of God.

The people arrived in such numbers that a boat was brought to the shore. Jesus entered the boat, which was then rowed a short way out. From that vantage point, Jesus spoke to the people who waited expectantly on the land. For such large numbers, the crowd seemed unusually quiet. They listened intently as Jesus spoke to them in parables.

Jesus said: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorchèd; and since it had no root, it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty and sixty and a hundredfold." And he said, "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"

Reactions Vary

Several of those who were present shared their thoughts concerning this parable. One woman said, "His voice was so compelling. I could have listened to him all day. This is the second time I have been able to hear his message. Today it was clear to me. We must pay attention to God's law and live our lives according to the Word.”

Continued on page 2
Jesus Tels, Continued from page 1

A farmer commented on the parable in this way: "To yield thirty, sixty, or a hundredfold from one sowing would be a miracle. The ground is not that fertile. In a good year, the farmers around here can hope for only fivefold."

The farmer explained that "fivefold" means the yield will be five bushels of wheat for every bushel of seed. "Jesus must be talking about God's kingdom where such miracles are possible," he said.

Jesus and his followers—twelve individuals who now travel with him constantly—left shortly after he finished speaking. It is rumored that they retreat to lonely places where he teaches them to be his disciples and carry on his work.

The more fertile fields were the lower flatlands where grain was grown. Vineyards and olive orchards were on the hillsides, and vegetable gardens and grazing lands were elsewhere.

Farming Was Not Easy in Palestine

Farming the land was difficult for the average person in Palestine during the time of Jesus. Farmers were dependent on the land for their very lives. Often they had crops spread out over large areas, along with their neighbors.

The more fertile fields were the lower flatlands where grain was grown. Vineyards and olive orchards were on the hillsides, and vegetable gardens and grazing lands were elsewhere.

The land consisted of shallow soil on top of limestone bedrock. In order to plant seed, a farmer prepared the field by plowing it once lengthwise to loosen the soil. He would then sow the seed by broadcasting it.

The sower would walk the length of the field with a bag full of seeds that he would throw out by hand. If he was particularly skilled, the seed would be well distributed across the plowed land. The farmer had to work quickly to finish the seeding and plow the field in the opposite direction, for the birds would eat the seeds. The sun could scorch seeds rapidly.

Most people of Jesus' time were familiar with the labor of the farmer and the difficulties of growing crops even if they themselves were not farmers. The farm lands were not far from the villages, and animals were kept in the houses of the people. Jesus' parable of the sower would have immediate meaning for them.

Parables Have Two Levels of Meaning

Jesus taught in parables, stories that connected with people's lives and drew them into the moment. The stories were vivid and simple. Frequently, he would begin, "The kingdom of God is like ..."

A parable has two levels of meaning, one simple and straightforward, and another more complex. For example, we can read the story of the Good Samaritan and appreciate its beauty as a story of one individual helping another. If, however, we think about the story as representing the kingdom (rule) of God, we can develop many different explanations for the actions of the characters.

Sometimes the parables could be immediately understood by Jesus' listeners. At other times, even the disciples asked for explanations, as in the Parable of the Sower, where Jesus explains that the seed is the Word of God. The soils are compared to the different types of individuals who may hear the word and respond to it in varied ways.

Whether those who heard or read Jesus' parables initially understand them or not, one element rings true. The stories are told so well, in so few words, that they strike a chord in listeners and remain in their memories until another event or story brings them back to mind.
One Sunday in church school,” wrote Jeffery, “our class discussed the parable of the Good Samaritan. I thought it was an okay story, but I didn’t see what it had to do with me. I wouldn’t ever be on some deserted road in Israel. And I probably wouldn’t ever see anybody that got beaten up or robbed except on television. So I just figured I’d forget about it.

“Then one day, I was hanging around the playground after school, when some kids from another school came to play soccer. They were kind of a team, not on a league or anything. They were using our field to meet up with another group of kids, but only one kid from the other group showed up. The others forgot, I guess.

“Anyway, I don’t know why but these guys started to call this other kid names. They kind of surrounded him.

“I tried to see what was going on, but I didn’t want to get too close. All of a sudden, the ‘team’ ran off. I was going to go home when I looked and saw a boy on the ground. My first thought was to go home and forget about it. Next, I thought I should get help, but everyone had gone home.

“Then I remembered! It was just like the Good Samaritan story. I was the one who was there. I could help. It wasn’t just a story from a long time ago.”

MEMORY CHALLENGE

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Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8
Mustard Seed—Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13

Answers:
sower, path, birds, fell, sprang, roots, sun, soil, grain, listen
Write the correct words next to their clues. Then put the numbered letters in the blanks below. You will complete one of Jesus’ sayings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clue</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A _____ went out to sow.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some seeds fell on a ____.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The _____ came and ate them up.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other seeds _____ on rocky ground.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They _____ up quickly.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But they had no ____.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The _____ rose and scorched them.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeds that fell on good _____.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brought forth ____.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let anyone with ears _____.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now complete this verse:

“I will open my mouth to speak

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10.”

---

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

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- Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review
Parable of the Vineyard Workers

PRESTINE, 1st century CE—Laborers working in the vineyard of a wealthy landowner filed a lawsuit yesterday, claiming that an injustice was done. We spoke with both the laborers and the landowner.

Throughout the day the landowner sent more people to work in the vineyards. Some came at nine o’clock, some at noon, others at three o’clock, and a few more at five o’clock to finish out the day.

When evening came, the manager began to pay us for our work. Those hired last were paid first and received a whole day’s pay. Those of us who worked all day thought, “This employer is very generous and grateful for hard work. He will surely give us two days’ pay.”

“But when our turn came, we received only one day’s pay! This is certainly unfair treatment so we have filed this suit against the landowner.”

Landowner Explains

We reached the landowner, and he agreed to explain his position. He told us:

“I was glad to employ all those who needed work. I did hire laborers several times during the day, each time agreeing with them on what their pay would be. Each worked according to our agreement.

“When the time came to pay the workers, I instructed my manager to pay each one a day’s wage as we had agreed. I also instructed him to begin with the last hired and proceed to the first.

“I told one of the workers who grumbled about the amount of pay they received, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you
not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you.’

“You see, according to the law, once I have agreed with a person regarding the day’s pay, that is the contract that must be fulfilled. I am allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me. These men are just envious, because I was generous to their less fortunate co-workers.”

Most Grapes from Vineyards Are Made Into Wine and Stored in Goat Skins

A landowner who had a vineyard was considered fortunate, even though he may not have been as wealthy as the landowner in Jesus’ parable. Most farmers, along with their families, cared for their vineyards themselves.

The work with grapes began just as the last of the grain had been gathered in late May or early June. First, the vines had to be pruned. Dead or less productive branches were cut from the vines with a sharp knife and burned. The second step was to prop the fruit-bearing branches on sharp sticks. Finally, the soil around the vines was loosened and kept free of thorns and weeds.

Once all this was finished, the farmer would build a shelter near the edge of the vineyard. He and his family would move in to watch over the ripening clusters of grapes. This also provided a cooler home for the family during the warm summer months.

The grapes were pressed by several people standing in the vat and stamping on the ripe fruit. It was a messy but joy-filled activity. The people sang and shouted as they tramped upon the grapes. The juice was left in the lower vat for the beginning stages of fermentation (the process needed for turning the grape juice into wine). After an appropriate period of time, the wine was placed in other vats or new wineskins where it continued to ferment. The bags that held the wine had to be made from new goat skins. Old bags would have dried out and not expanded with the gases created by the new wine.
Individuals who worked for a daily wage were always paid at the end of each day, according to Jewish law. A poorer farmer might pay a day laborer with a portion of the crops that were harvested on a given day. Other landowners who had larger vineyards or farms might pay in money. This was particularly true after coins of established value were introduced by the Romans.

One common coin was a denarius, a day’s pay for the typical laborer of Jesus’ time. It was just enough to exist on, and would not make a person rich.

Most people in Palestine during the period bartered for food, clothing, or other goods they could not produce themselves. Payment was in other goods of equal value. People expected to bargain with one another. In fact, both sellers and buyers enjoyed this and found it exciting.

**MEMORY CHALLENGE**

The following stories are parables told by Jesus. Some of them appear in only one Gospel, some in both Matthew and Luke, and some in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Memorize where to find each one.

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- Sower — *Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8*
- Mustard Seed — *Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13*

**The Pharisee and the Tax Collector — Luke, ch. 18**
"For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. When he went out about 9 o'clock, he saw others standing around; and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. When he went out again about noon and about 5 o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you here idle all day?' They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' When 12 came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. And when they received it, they were against the landowner, saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the heat.' But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous? So the last will be first, and the first will be last.'" 

Directions: Using the words below, fill in the blanks in the story. Check your answers by reading Matthew 20:1-16 in your Bible.

HEAVEN, LABORERS, VINEYARD, USUAL, WAGE
RIGHT, THREE, EVENING, DAILY, NINE
CRUMBLED, EQUAL, BURDEN, SCORCHING, WRONG
IDLE, LAST, FIRST, GENEROUS, HIRED
STANDING, ENVIOUS, MARKETPLACE

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

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Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 7

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.” —Matthew 20:1 (NRSV)

“So the last will be first, and the first will be last.” —Matthew 20:16 (NRSV)
PALESTINE, 1st century CE—A local merchant has just returned from a journey he began some months ago. He has traveled throughout the region in search of an extremely valuable pearl. When we contacted him this week, we asked about the search. Here is his report:

"I am a pearl merchant. I trade with fishermen who discover pearls in the oysters they catch in their nets. I also get the gems from visitors who have obtained them in other parts of the world.

"I have been in this business since I was a young boy. My father and my grandfather were pearl merchants also. I have learned a great deal from them and from the other merchants I have met in my travels.

"Last year, a Syrian came to my shop and told me of a beautiful, large, unusual pearl he had seen. I questioned him about it, and from what he said, I believed it to be the most valuable pearl ever.

"I sold all of the pearls I had at that time. I also sold my shop and all my other possessions except what I needed for the journey. I went to the place where the Syrian had last seen the pearl. After some investigation, I learned that it had been sold to a wealthy merchant from Tyre. I made plans to go there as soon as I could.

Goal Finally Reached

"After many trips, and false clues, I finally found the pearl in a silk trader's shop. I bargained with the silk trader and purchased the pearl. It took all the money I had.

"It has taken so long for me to return..."
"You, truly, do not understand! The value of this pearl is beyond any price I could get in the marketplace ...."
Natural pearls—the kind that were valued in Jesus’ time—come from an oyster in which a piece of sand or other matter has lodged inside. This foreign object irritates the oyster, much as it would irritate a human mouth.

The oyster, unable to get rid of the substance, coats it with a secretion of calcium carbonate, added layer by layer. The result is a round, smooth, hard pearl.

It takes many years for a pearl to become large enough to be useful or have value as a gem. Finding a pearl in an oyster is not easy. Divers may catch tens of thousands of oysters and find only twenty or so pearls. Out of those twenty, only three may be of any value.

Pearls that are seen in jewelry stores today are “cultured” rather than natural. This process was first begun in the 12th century but did not become practical until the early 1900s.

Cultured pearls are made by collecting and breeding a certain kind of oyster. Once they are adult oysters, a small piece of shell, cut from a fresh-water mussel, is inserted inside the oyster. The oyster then secretes the calcium carbonate to cover the core, which is larger than a grain of sand or other natural irritant. Thus the time needed to produce a pearl is shortened.

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**Parables of Jesus — Luke**
- Good Samaritan— *Luke, ch. 10*
- Friend at Midnight— *Luke, ch. 11*
- Great Banquet— *Luke, ch. 14*
- Lost Coin— *Luke, ch. 15*
- Prodigal— *Luke, ch. 15*
- The Pharisee and the Tax Collector— *Luke, ch. 18*

**Parables of Jesus — Matthew and Luke**
- House on the Rock— *Matthew, ch. 7; Luke, ch. 6*
- Yeast— *Matthew, ch. 13; Luke, ch. 13*
- Lost Sheep— *Matthew, ch. 18; Luke, ch. 15*

**Parables of Jesus — Matthew, Mark, and Luke**
- Sower— *Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 8*
- Mustard Seed— *Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13*

**Answer:**
“. . . store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
SECRET MESSAGE

Using the code below, invite the students to discover the secret message.

A=1  B=2  C=3  D=4  E=5  F=6  G=7  H=8  I=9  J=10  K=11  L=12
M=13  N=14  O=15  P=16  Q=17  R=18  S=19  T=20  U=21  V=22
W=23  X=24  Y=25  Z=26

"... 19 20 15 18 5 21 16 6 15 18 25 15 21 18 19 5 12 22 5 19
20 18 5 1 19 21 18 5 19 9 14 8 5 1 22 5 14, ... .
6 15 18 23 8 5 18 5 25 15 21 18 20 18 5 1 19 21 18 5 9 19,
20 8 5 18 5 25 15 21 18 8 5 1 18 20 23 9 12 12
2 5 1 12 18 15."  Matthew 6:20-21

Matthew 6:20-21

"... __________  _____  ______
_________  ___________  ___________  ______
__________________  ___________  ______
__________________  ___________  ______
__________________  ___________  ______
__________________  ___________  ______"
that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

"He also taught us some hard lessons. We must be reconciled with our brothers and sisters before we bring our gifts to the altar. He certainly has left me with many thoughts to ponder."

Instruction on Prayer

A traveler from beyond the Jordan, who came upon the gathering unexpectedly, gave us his impressions:

"I was traveling from the Jordan Valley and saw this river of people walking along the road. When I asked them where they were going, they said they hoped to hear the teaching of a rabbi, Jesus of Nazareth. I had heard of this man, so I joined them."

"When we reached the place where he was, I heard someone ask him to teach them how to pray. I remember his exact words, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.'"

Final Story Recalled

A family from Syria remembered the story Jesus told at the end:

"He told us that if we do the things he taught us, we will be like the wise man
Stone Foundations Essential for Houses

In the Palestine of New Testament times, most people's houses were made of sun-dried brick. If they were not carefully built on a foundation of stones, they would simply dissolve into the soil with the absorption of water from the ground.

The parched land was also subject to floods. The very dry land could not absorb the downpour of water when the heavy rains came. That caused the wadis (creeks and streams) to overflow their banks quickly. The raging torrents would destroy all in their path.

People who lived under these conditions would easily understand the story Jesus told at the end of his Sermon on the Mount. Surely a person who built a house without a foundation, either dug into the limestone bedrock or set upon stone, would be asking for trouble. The house would be sure to fall.

THE BEATITUDES

Next to the Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes are probably the best remembered teachings from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Beatitude is a Latin word meaning "blessed."

Following are the Beatitudes found in Matthew 5:3-11:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...
who built a house upon a rock. His words will help us to build a strong foundation of faith for our lives that will not be washed away by rain and floods.

"Then he said that the people who only listen—and fail to live by what he told them—will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. When the rains and the floods came, the house was destroyed.

"We are returning home to Syria. We will remember and share all we heard from Jesus these last few days. His words will be written on our hearts."

How firm a foundation,
ye saints of the Lord,
is laid for your faith
in his excellent word!
—The Hymnal 1982, 636

**MEMORY CHALLENGE**

**Parables of Jesus — Matthew**
- Hidden Treasure—Matthew, ch. 13
- Pearl of Great Price—Matthew, ch. 13
- Unforgiving Servant—Matthew, ch. 18
- Laborers in the Vineyard—Matthew, ch. 20
- Two Sons—Matthew, ch. 21
- Talents—Matthew, ch. 25

**Parables of Jesus — Luke**
- Good Samaritan—Luke, ch. 10
- Friend at Midnight—Luke, ch. 11
- Great Banquet—Luke, ch. 14
- Lost Coin—Luke, ch. 15
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- Mustard Seed—Matthew, ch. 13; Mark, ch. 4; Luke, ch. 13

The stories shown on the left are parables told by Jesus. Some of them appear in only one Gospel, some in both Matthew and Luke, and some in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Memorize where to find each one.

Note: New Testament scholars differ on the total number of Jesus' parables, but most list more than thirty. This memory challenge concentrates on a selection of very familiar ones.
WORD SEARCH

Key Names and Words

Directions: Important words from Unit II are hidden in the puzzle at left. They may be written forward or backward, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally. Circle each word as you find it.

REJOICE WILDERNESS
GENEALOGY DELIGHT
GLORY MESSIAH
CREATION HERALD
BETHLEHEM COMFORT
GENTLY DAVID
HEROD DREAM
NAZARETH EGYPT
JOSEPH MARY
SOWER FRUIT
SOIL
PEARL
VINEYARD
GENEROUS
TREASURE
ADVENT
PREPARATION
REGISTRATION
HUNDREDFOLD
FOUNDATION

Unit II: LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Verses for the Unit:
Session 1: Isaiah 7:14; 35:1; 65:17
Session 2: Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 7:27
Session 3: Matthew 1:17; Mark 1:7, 8
Session 4: Luke 2:7, 14
Session 5: Matthew 2:2, 15b; Luke 2:52
Session 6: Mark 4:2a, 8
Session 7: Matthew 20:1, 16
Session 8: Matthew 7:28; 13:44, 45-46
Session 9: Matthew 7:24 and Review

LEARNING SCRIPTURE

Session 9

"Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock."—Matthew 7:24 (NRSV)