

Sermon Notes

**St Mark's Anglican Church
South Hurstville**

**Advent Sunday
2 December 2007**

**Preacher
The Reverend Chris Albany
Rector**

Readings: Isaiah 2. 1-5; Psalm 122; Romans 13. 9-14; Matthew 24, 36-44

Jesse Tree

Waiting and loving go together – we wait for things/people that matter – for good or ill. If they didn't matter we would have no sense of waiting - of anticipation we would be indifferent. We wait for the things/ people we love or fear. And if we love then it is inevitable that we will have times of waiting – above all for love to be received and recognised and hopefully reciprocated. The greatest tragedy is for love not to be known and experienced for what it is, but to pass unrecognised. Advent is a time when often the focus is on waiting and preparation. – waiting for the celebration of the coming of God into our midst at first Christmas. Waiting for God's coming again. But it is also a time of God's waiting, on us and our response to God's love shown in the event we call the Incarnation.

Important not to be so focused on the past and future coming of Christ that we miss God's continual coming in the present moment in the NOW of our lives. The Franciscan insight of Fr Albert Haase ofm is that the first Christmas is not to be seen as the beginning of God's way of righting wrongs and cancelling debts, but rather as the culmination of a love story, which began, with the dawn of creation. A love story which is revealed in the people and events of scripture. This advent I want to invite you to use the Jesse tree as a way of remembering and entering into that story. A way to help you recognise not only the ways God has come in the past for the people of the scripture story, but also has been and continues to be present and active in your life and relationships. You may ask "What's a Jesse tree" Why a Jesse tree? Jesse the father of David, King of Israel, stands in a long line of those who looked for, prepared for and waited expectantly for the coming of the promised Messiah, God's sent one, our Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Advent is that time when we also wait expectantly for the joy of Christ to be born anew in our lives.

So I have prepared this Jesse Tree booklet. For each day in Advent a Biblical character has been chosen and there is an attempt to stress some particular element of their "waiting" which is still a relevant part of our "waiting" today. For each a verse of scripture has been chosen along with a representative symbol, some thoughts to ponder and a prayer to collect those thoughts together. I hope that this 'journey' from Adam and Eve, to Christ, will also bring a greater relevance to some of the Old Testament. You are encouraged to read the selected verses in their context. It is therefore valuable to actually look up the reading in your Bible each day. There are suggestions for setting up your own Jesse tree, and adding a new symbol each day – a sheet with the symbols for the next week will be available each Sunday. A Jesse tree is something different it can provide a talking point for family members, friends and casual visitors and so provide an opportunity to talk about the journey of God's love through history.

I hope that using this material you will find yourself not only retracing the love story of God with God's people but also find that it helps you see the ways God has been and is active in your own life and relationships. In so doing may it help you grow in your appreciation of that which is at the heart of this world and is the very core of Christmas – the God who in Christ reveals Godself to be infinite, never-ending, all-embracing love and who ever awaits our response of love to Love.