

Discovery Time at Home for Advent 2, November 22, 2020

Introduction

Explain how we are in the lead up to Christmas called Advent. As a way to celebrate Advent, we are going to think about the story of Jesus' birth and all the people (plus others) who are part of it.

This Week's Story:

We begin by remembering the story. If your children are older, see if they can tell it to you. If they are younger, you can read the following version:

A long time ago, the Roman Emperor sent an order to all the people in countries that were under Roman rule. The order said that they must list their names in a register. So everyone went to their home towns to be registered.

So Joseph left Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to go to Bethlehem in Judea. This town was known as the town of David. Joseph went there because David was his ancestor. He took Mary with him. They were going to get married. And she was pregnant. While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to have the baby. Because there were no rooms left in the inn, she wrapped the baby with cloths and laid him in a box where animals are fed (we sometimes call this a manger).

That night, some shepherds were in the fields nearby watching their sheep. An angel stood before them. God's glory shone around them, and they became very frightened. The angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, because I am bringing you good news that will bring joy to everyone. Today a saviour was born in Bethlehem. This is how you will know him: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a feeding box." Then a very large group of angels joined the first angel. They all were praising God, saying:

"Give glory to God in heaven, and on earth let there be peace."

When the angels left the shepherds and went back to heaven, they said to each other, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see what has happened."

So the shepherds went quickly and found Mary and Joseph. And they saw the baby lying in a feeding box. Then they told what the angels had said about this child. Everyone was amazed when they heard what the shepherds said to them.

Explain that the characters in the story you want to focus on today are the animals. In the story of Jesus' birth, we hear how shepherds were watching their sheep. They wouldn't have left them in the fields so it must have been quite the sight for them to show up with a big flock. The baby Jesus was placed in the manger, a feed box for animals. Chances are that there were animals in the place where

he was born. Because Mary was pregnant, they likely brought along some kind of animal help for the long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

Here is a link to a great story about the animals. <https://youtu.be/UmhHOypgy7c>

The fact that all of these animals are part of the story remind us how the love Jesus came to bring into the world was not just for humans but for all of the world. We believe that through Jesus, people experienced the presence of God. God loves all of creation. We experience God not just in each other but also in animals, plants, the whole world around us.

We should do what we can to care for the earth and the creatures that share this planet with us.

This Week's Activity (and through the rest of the winter)

Helping Wildlife through the Winter

The winter months are cold. There isn't as much food for animals to eat as is in the summer and fall. Because of this many animals sleep through the winter. Where depends on the animal but some may want to sleep in your back yard. You can help them find a good place. Other animals, mostly birds, don't sleep during the winter. Many migrate but the ones that stay behind need help with food and water. The following activities are ways you can help wildlife this winter.

1. Preparing some places to sleep:

- a. Did you know that you should not take away all of the fallen leaves from your yard? Leaving some behind is helpful for animals like toads. They sleep under the leaves until the spring. If there are some leaves around your house, rake them into small piles to give toads and other animals a place to sleep.
- b. Did you know that insects also need places to sleep? A good place for them is under a pile a rocks or bricks. You can stack a few in the corners of your yard or near your house. A log left in the garden is also a good place for insects to sleep.

2. Helping birds get through the winter:

- a. Birds need shelter out of the wind. If you don't have a hedge or shrubs, why not make a brush pile in a corner of your yard. Birds will shelter there all year long. Begin by laying down some logs as a foundation. Then pile large branches loosely on top of this layer. Continue building the pile in successive layers. Make sure to leave open pockets between layers. Gather up find fallen branches that you find after a storm and keep adding to your pile.
- b. Birds also need water. If you don't have birdbath already, now is a good time to put one out. Fill a shallow bowl with water and place about 2 or 3 feet above the ground. Just remember to keep breaking the ice or add a rubber ball. The wind will catch it and this helps keep the water from freezing (until it gets really cold).
- c. Birds need food. Why not make them a bird feeder from an empty toilet paper roll, some seed balls you can hang in a mesh bag or some seed pine cones?

1. Toilet Paper Bird Feeder

You need: Peanut Butter (or vegetable lard), popsicle sticks, bird seed, toilet paper rolls, twine

1. Using a popsicle stick, cover outside of toilet paper roll with peanut butter or lard.
2. Roll the peanut butter covered toilet paper roll in the bird seed until covered.
3. Thread a piece of twine through the toilet paper roll and knot.
4. Hang where birds can enjoy.



Seed balls:



Making seed balls is easy.

All you need is solid vegetable lard, plus bird seed mix, at a ratio of 1:2. Use a fat that is solid when unrefrigerated to avoid it melting and making a mess.

1. Mix one part vegetable lard to two parts seed in a saucepan and gently heat until fat melts.
2. Use an ice cream scoop, or mould with your hands, into balls.
3. Space apart in a plastic container or on a tray and place in the freezer to set firm.
4. Once the fat balls are solid, put in a mesh bag.
5. Hang in the garden.



Seeded pinecones:



1. Tie a length of ribbon or twine around the top of pinecones.
2. Roll them in melted fat, then roll in seeds.
3. Place in the fridge to set.
4. Hang the pinecones from a tree.