

Second Sunday of Advent, December 10, 2023

## Scripture Reading: Mark 1:1-8

***Don't equate the presence of God with a good mood or a pleasant temperament.  
God is near whether you are happy or not. —Max Lucado***

One day long ago, a Black Monk, so-called because of the color of his Benedictine habit, rode an ox into town. He stopped near the town square of a small village in Tuscany, and seemed to be looking around, as though he had lost his bearings.

The town drunk, still a few hours from total sobriety, saw him and staggered up to the monk on the ox.

“What are you looking for?” he asked.

“I’m looking for an ox,” the Benedictine said.

The man stepped back and began to bellow. “He’s looking for an ox.”

Soon the baker and the butcher appeared and asked the same question, and got the same answer.

A crowd gathered and the murmuring increased. Finally, the drunk explained to the monk his confusion: “This is ridiculous. You are a man riding on an ox and yet you are looking for an ox.” He paused. “Did you hear me? You are looking for an ox? *You are sitting on an ox!!*”

The monk answered, “So it is with you looking for God.”

Advent is a reminder that God is with us. Right here. Right now. God got down to earth in a special way in Christ. His presence remains.

This is important to remember, because sometimes we have trouble sensing the presence of God. Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, once observed: “God, Who is everywhere, never leaves us. Yet He seems sometimes to be present, sometimes to be absent. If we do not know Him well, we do not realize that He may be more present to us when He is absent than when He is present.”

Are you feeling a bit low and discouraged as Christmas nears? Be of good cheer. As C. S. Lewis said in this book, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*: “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito. And the incognito is not always hard to penetrate.”

You can’t get more incognito than arriving in the world as a baby! Immanuel! God with us!

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I remember that you are always closer than I think or realize.  
Amen.*

*Blessings,  
Lisa & Pastor Ben Motz*

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS**

- Sunday:** Psalms 142-145
- Monday:** Psalms 146-147
- Tuesday:** Psalms 148-150
- Wednesday:** Revelation 13-15
- Thursday:** Revelation 16-18
- Friday:** Proverbs 8-11
- Saturday:** Proverbs 12-14

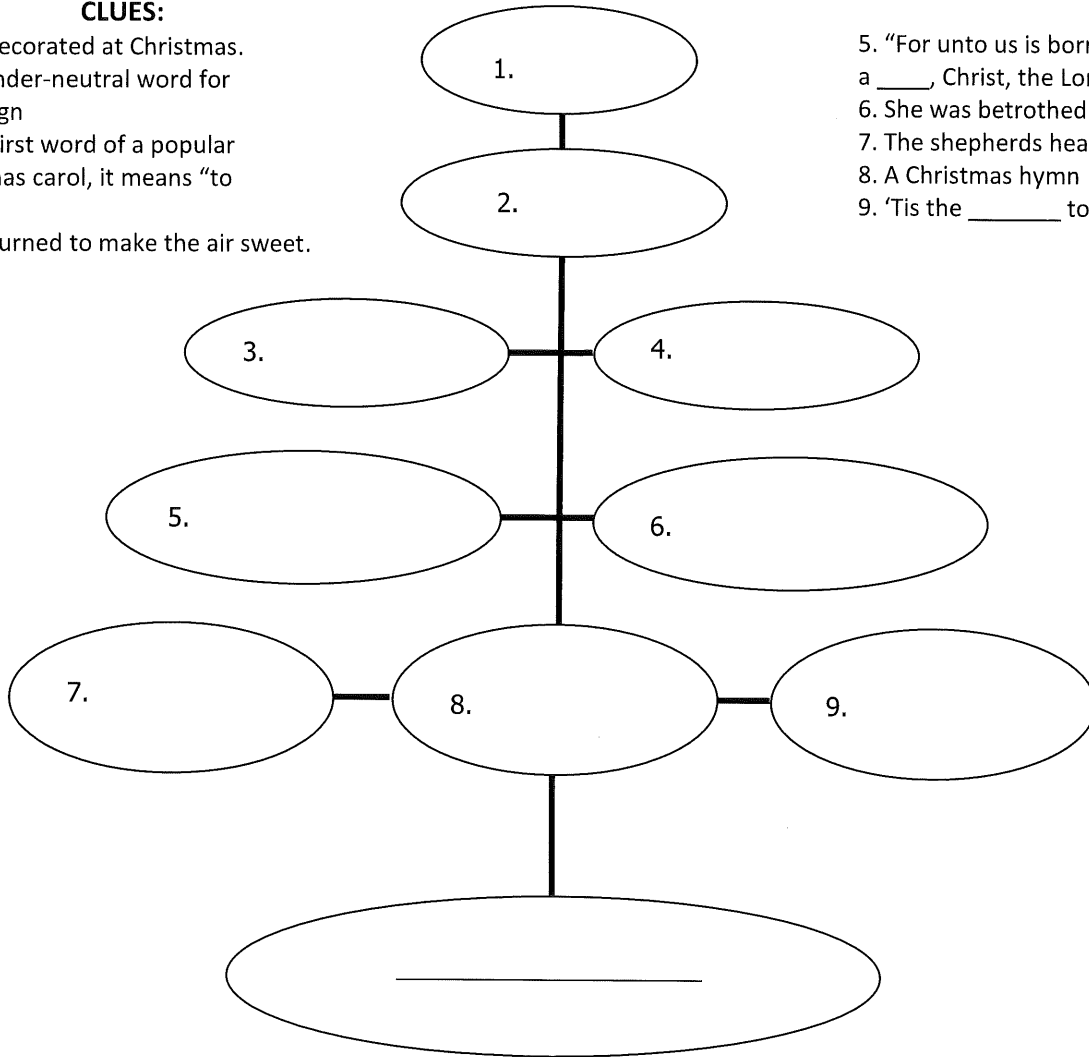
**O CHRISTMAS TREE, O CHRISTMAS TREE!**

**DIRECTIONS:**  
 Read the clues and write the correct answers in the corresponding circles. In the white space on this page, write the **FIRST LETTER** of each correct answer and unscramble these letters to form a word pertaining to this season of the year. Write your answer on the line at the bottom of the tree.

**CLUES:**

1. It's decorated at Christmas.
2. A gender-neutral word for sovereign
3. The first word of a popular Christmas carol, it means "to listen."
4. It's burned to make the air sweet.

5. "For unto us is born this day, a \_\_\_\_\_, Christ, the Lord."
6. She was betrothed to Joseph.
7. The shepherds heard them sing.
8. A Christmas hymn
9. 'Tis the \_\_\_\_\_ to be jolly!



**Answers:**  
 1. tree  
 2. ruler  
 3. hark  
 4. incense  
 5. Savior  
 6. Mary  
 7. angels  
 8. carol  
 9. season  
**Unscrambled word:** CHRISTMAS

