

November 30<sup>th</sup>

Romans 15:4-13

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This passage talks about the steadfast endurance of God. The end of the passage refers to the *root of Jesse*. I love The Message translation of these verses taken from Isaiah:

There's the root of our ancestor Jesse,  
breaking through the earth and growing tree tall,  
Tall enough for everyone everywhere to see and take hope!

Oh! May the God of green hope fill you up with joy, fill you up with peace, so that your believing lives, filled with the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit, will brim over with hope!

When I was young, choosing our family Christmas tree was often a family outing to a tree farm. When we moved to the Sierra Foothills of California, I remember choosing a tree from our 130 acres of woods.

One year, my parents were combing the property looking for a tree. They went in separate directions and came back with the same thought: a manzanita tree would make a perfect Christmas tree with its smooth red bark and spacious green branches. Indeed, it was beautiful with all the lights and generous places to hang ornaments.

It's appropriate that we bring trees into our homes at Christmas time. Trees, especially evergreens, have been a meaningful part of our lives throughout history. They've symbolized everything from eternal life to protection from evil. Throughout the Bible the symbol of a tree is used as a symbol for the longed for Messiah, among other things. These days we have a wood spiral in our house that we use over and over for our holiday tree.

God is described as steadfast, like a strong tree would be, providing green hope, joy, peace. May the steadfast endurance of God be present in your home in this advent and Christmas season.

O God, remind us to honor the trees that provide shelter for so many creatures, including us. Remind us how dependent we are on trees for clean air, shade, and food. Amen.

Action: What have your traditions been around Christmas trees? How have they changed through the years? How can you honor the sacredness of trees in this season?

