

Palm Sunday
Ps. 118:1–2, 19–29
Mark 11:1–11 or
John 12:12–16

Passion Sunday
Isa. 50:4–9a
Ps. 31:9–16
Phil. 2:5–11
Mark 14:1–15:47 or
Mark 15:1–39

Holy Week

Goal for the Session

Children will experience the story of Holy Week and find ways to retell the story.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 11:1–11; 15:1–39

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” James D. Ernest

Mark’s “many” (11:8) are not simply blessing Jesus in the name of the Lord, nor are they baldly calling Jesus himself Lord; they are blessing him as “the one who comes in the name of the Lord,” which leaves his identity ambiguous. Their blessing of the coming kingdom of David suggests that Jesus is being greeted as heir to David’s throne. Passersby at the crucifixion reiterate the idea that Jesus would replace the temple (15:29), along with the titles Messiah and king of Israel (15:32). These participants in his execution speak the truth, but they understand it no more than those who hailed him on his entry to Jerusalem.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Margaret A. Farley

The shadow of Good Friday transforms the light of Palm Sunday, for only with them both together do we learn that dignity is sustained with integrity; that the forces of false judgment and suspicion, servile fear and violence, are indeed to be named for what they are and to be resisted, even unto death. But they are not to be resisted by adopting the patterns of evil they represent. Through the death of Jesus, all death is overwhelmed; through the humiliations of Jesus, all humiliation can be transformed.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael Battle

Palm Sunday shows us how often we misinterpret God’s love, as well as our love for God. The true measure of our love must comprise the capacity to extend ourselves in real acts of compassion toward the afflicted, forcing us to come out of ourselves. So Jesus gets on a jackass and parades among palms toward Jerusalem. This act requires the greatest love. Jesus entering Jerusalem, riding humbly on a donkey, is the miracle of God’s complete attention. In Jesus, the world recognizes how different its kind of love is from God’s kind of love, and in this recognition—in Jesus—we are transformed from fighting God tooth and nail into creatures who actually love God.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

Jesus hardly appears to be a king at all, and many of the references to him as king are spoken in mockery. But they are profoundly true; they contain a deep, hidden meaning, which is the character of irony. Here the king is the one who eschews domination and violence—and suffers the horrible consequences of that commitment. And here is a kingdom of peace, which, unlike the *Pax Romana* (Peace of Rome), is not coerced and enforced by military power and occupation. Jesus comes to define King or Messiah, rather than traditional understandings of these titles identifying him. This radical reversal is central to the development of Jesus’ identity in the passion narrative.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

**Mark 11:1–11;
15:1–39**

Focus on Your Teaching

While the stories of Jesus' life in the days before the crucifixion may seem "common knowledge" to you, many of your learners may be hearing them for the first time. Some learners may not have participated in worship on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday, and not know these important parts of the church's faith story. Others may recall only parts of the story. Children add layers of understanding each time they hear one of these important pieces of their faith story.

Holy God, open my eyes and heart to the amazing story of your Son this Holy Week. Inspire me to proclaim the good news of your love to my learners. In Christ's name. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Colors of Lent booklets (from March 7)
- small table or large box
- purple cloth
- Color Pack 1, 8, 9, 28
- scissors
- hole punch, yarn
- branch, bucket, soil or newsprint, marker, tape
- Bible
- Resource Sheet 1
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheets 2 and 3, crayons, scissors, glue sticks, small envelopes, stapler
- option 2: 12" x 18" white paper; green, brown finger paint; foam paintbrushes; newspapers; paint shirts
- option 3: sticks, dental floss

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, cut out the eggs from Color Pack 8 and 9; punch holes as indicated and tie a yarn loop to each one. Find a branch about 2' long with several side branches; anchor it in a bucket of soil. (If a branch is not available, plan to tape eggs to a branch drawn on newsprint.) Make a worship table by covering a small table or large box with a purple cloth and placing Color Pack 1 on it. If you are using option 2 in Responding, recruit additional adults or older youth to help. If you are using option 3, break sticks so each child has two fairly straight sticks, one 5" and one 3". If time will be short or your learners are younger, follow activity instructions to begin tying a cross for each child.

As the children arrive, greet them individually and ask what their families are doing to prepare for Easter.

Gather with learners around the worship table and give each child a Colors of Lent booklet. Say that this is the final Sunday in the season of Lent—next Sunday will be Easter. Invite the children to turn to each color as you do and repeat each statement after you:

(Purple) *Remember that Jesus is our king!*

(Green) *Remember how people waved leafy branches / to welcome Jesus.*

(Brown) *Remember how Jesus died on a cross.*

(Yellow) *Remember that God raised Jesus / from death on Easter / and gives us new life too.*

(White) *Remember that in Jesus' name, / God forgives our sins.*

Thank you, God, for loving us. Amen.

Sing "You Shall Love the Lord Your God" (Color Pack 28; track 22 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Save the booklets to use next session.

**You Shall Love the Lord
Your God**

You shall love the Lord your
God, alleluia!
You shall love the Lord your
God, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul
and mind, alleluia!
With all your heart and soul
and mind, alleluia!

Comment on how some families love to tell stories about older family members or those who lived long ago. Tell a story your family loves to repeat, perhaps about one of your parents or grandparents. Invite learners to recall any stories that their families love to tell over and over. Exclaim how wonderful it is to know these family stories.

Say: “This is Holy Week. It is a time when our church family gets together and tells stories about Jesus, who started our church family long ago.”

EXPLORING

Give each child an egg cut from Color Pack 8 and 9. (If your group is large, form pairs and give each pair one egg.) Bring out the bucket with the branch. Explain that as you tell the Bible story, you will let each one know when to show the group his or her egg and then hang it on the branch. Option: If you do not have a branch, draw a branch on newsprint and have learners tape the eggs to it.

Open your Bible to Mark 11 and say this is where today’s Bible story is found. Tell the story by reading Resource Sheet 1 (Story Script).

After the story, ask the children to gather around the branch. Invite each one to point to an egg and tell what he or she remembers about that part of the story. Discuss:

- ✿ Which part of this story do you like best?
- ✿ What is frightening about this story?

Point to the egg with the picture of the tomb. Ask:

- ✿ How do you think Jesus’ followers felt when they saw this?

Reassure learners that this is not the end of the story. Next Sunday, on Easter, they will hear about the amazing thing that God did next. These stories of Holy Week are important because they lead to the story of Easter, and we can tell them to others.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Holy Week Road** Learners will prepare a Holy Week activity to tell the story to their families. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Holy Week Road) and Resource Sheet 3 (Holy Week Road Cards). Invite learners to follow the pictures on the road shown on Resource Sheet 2 and recall the stories they tell. Have them cut out the rectangles on Resource Sheet 3 and practice laying them in the correct place on Resource Sheet 2. As time allows, invite learners to color Resource Sheet 2. Distribute envelopes. Have learners put their rectangles in the envelope and seal it. Have them cut out the note to families on Resource Sheet 3 and glue it to the front of the envelope. Staple a corner of the envelope to a corner of Resource Sheet 2. Encourage learners to do this activity with their families during Holy Week.

EASY
PREP



For a quicker and less messy activity, provide brown and green tempera paint and have learners use foam paintbrushes to dab the paint on their papers to make branches and leaves.



If you do not have sticks, use dowels, craft sticks, or pencils.

2. **Leafy Branches** Learners will celebrate with the crowd as they make leafy branches. Have additional adults or older youth standing by to help learners wash their arms and hands after they paint. Cover the work area with newspapers and give each child a paint shirt to wear. Roll up their sleeves. First, use a foam paintbrush to paint the outside of each child's right arm from the wrist to the elbow with brown finger paint. Have the child press his or her arm on white construction paper to make a branch. Next, use a foam paintbrush to paint each child's right hand with green finger paint. Have each child press his or her hand along the branch to make leaves. Clean paint off arms and hands. When the paintings are dry, invite learners to wave their branches as they march around your room or church hallways in a Palm Sunday parade, shouting, "Hooray for Jesus!"

3. **Stick Crosses** Children will make crosses to help them tell the stories of Holy Week. Give each child two sticks, about 5" long and 3" long. Give each about 3' of dental floss. Have them lay the sticks to make a cross. Help them as needed to tie one end of the floss around the cross point. Demonstrate how to wrap the floss around the sticks, alternating sides to form an X. Help as needed. End by tying a knot in the back. As the children are working, invite them to tell parts of the Holy Week story that include a cross. Encourage them to tell these stories at home.

CLOSING

Gather with learners around the worship table. Place the branch with the story eggs on it. Invite learners to tell which parts of the story they want to tell their families.

Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each line:

Be with us, Lord, through Lenten days.

Be with us, Lord, in work and play.

Be with us, Lord, through day and night.

Be with us, Lord, 'til Easter shines bright. Amen.

Say to each learner: "God loves you, (*name*)."

March 28, 2021
Holy Week

Grades K–2
Resource Sheet 1

Story Script

Directions: As you tell the Bible story, pause where indicated for the child with that egg (cut from Color Pack 8 and 9) to show the picture to the group and hang it on the branch.

Script

Jesus and his disciples were walking to Jerusalem. Jesus told two disciples to go to a nearby village and borrow a donkey. Jesus said that if anyone asked why, they should say, “The Lord needs it and will soon bring it back” (Mark 11:3, CEV). (Egg #1)

When the disciples returned with the donkey, they placed their cloaks on its back. Jesus climbed on the donkey and rode into the city of Jerusalem. (Egg #2)

Suddenly, it was like a parade! Many people came to see Jesus. They were singing and shouting: “Hooray! God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Mark 11:9, CEV). The people put leafy branches on the ground to pave the way for Jesus, their king. (Egg #3)

During the next few days, Jesus taught many people about God’s love. One night Jesus and the disciples ate a dinner to celebrate the Jewish holiday called Passover. During the meal, Jesus taught the disciples a new way to use bread and wine. Christians call this communion. (Egg #4)

After dinner, Jesus and the disciples went to a garden to pray. Some leaders did not approve of Jesus’ teachings, and they sent soldiers to arrest him. Jesus was put on trial before the leaders, including a man named Pilate. (Egg #5) Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Each Passover, Pilate would let one prisoner go free; the people got to choose which prisoner to let go. He asked the crowd if it wanted Jesus to go free. But the leaders had told the people to ask for someone else. So the crowd shouted, “Crucify him! Put him to death on a cross!” And Pilate told the soldiers to take Jesus away.

The soldiers made fun of Jesus. They put a purple robe on him. They made a crown of thorns and put it on Jesus’ head. (Egg #6)

They made Jesus carry a heavy cross to the place where he would die. When Jesus got too tired to go on, they made a man named Simon carry the cross. (Egg #7)

The soldier put Jesus on the cross. After a few hours, it grew very dark. Jesus prayed to God and then he died. A soldier standing there said, “This man really was the Son of God!” (Mark 15:39, CEV). Jesus’ body was placed in a tomb and a large rock was rolled in front of the door. (Egg #8)

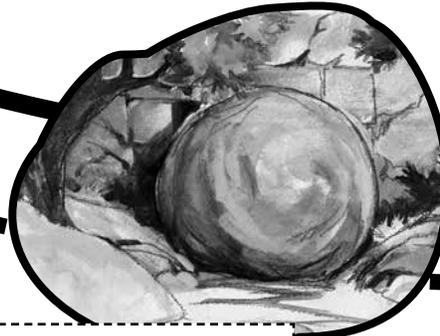
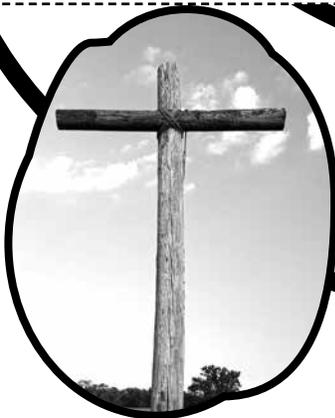


March 28, 2021
Holy Week

Grades K-2
Resource Sheet 2

Holy Week Road

Jesus Enters
Jerusalem



Easter
Morning

Holy Week Road Cards



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Mark 11:7–10: People cheer as Jesus comes into Jerusalem. | 2. Mark 14:22–25: Jesus eats the Last Supper with his disciples. |
| 3. Mark 15:1–5: Jesus is arrested and is questioned by the leaders. | 4. Mark 15:16–18: The soldiers put a crown of thorns on Jesus' head. |
| 5. Mark 15:33–39: Jesus is hung on a cross, and he dies. | 6. Mark 15:46–47: Jesus' body is placed in a tomb. A large rock is rolled in front of the door. |



Note to Families:

In Sunday school today, your child learned about some of the events in Jesus' final days before the crucifixion. To help your child prepare to celebrate the joy of Easter, take a moment each day this week to read the Bible verses given on the strips in this envelope. Begin with Strip 1 on Monday. Have your child glue or tape the strip next to the matching picture on the sheet.