

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

Honoring King Jesus

Goal for the Session

Tweens will dig into the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and express what it means to honor Jesus as king.

■ 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

Tweens are ready to begin exploring more challenging interpretations of some Bible stories. As they mature in faith, they will appreciate more deeply how Scripture addresses life's complexities. Bible characters, like people tweens know, are rarely all good or all bad. The Bible's stories, like tweens' own life experiences, frequently defy being reduced to easy lessons in morality. Mark's account of Palm Sunday offers learners an opportunity to evaluate the challenging dimensions of an event in Jesus' life that they may have perceived in a different way when they were younger.

God, send your Spirit to help me grow in my appreciation of Scripture and in my devotion to Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- purple cloth
- red cloth
- Christ candle, matches
- Color Pack 1, 8, 9
- scissors
- illustrated children's Bibles or Bible storybooks
- Bibles
- copies of Resource Sheet 1
- pencils
- hymn: "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty"

For Responding

- option 1: Color Pack 10; copies of Resource Sheet 2; *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*; CD player
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 1, supplies listed there
- option 3: copies of Resource Sheet 2, pencils

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, spread a red cloth in the center of your meeting space and cover it with a purple cloth. Place the Christ candle and Color Pack 1 on it. If your classroom Bibles are not all the same version, make a copy of Psalm 118:19–24 from one version for each learner. Gather several children's Bibles or storybooks and place bookmarks at the pages with illustrations of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday). Make a copy of Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) for each learner and cut apart the sections. Bring the hymn "Ride On, Ride On in Majesty" (words by Henry Milman, 1820) from your church's hymn book or from: www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/r/i/d/rideride.htm. If you are using option 2 in Responding, gather the materials listed in the "Pax Cakes" section of Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources).

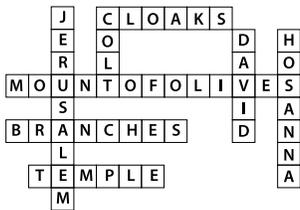
Greet learners as they arrive. Gather around the Christ candle. Form two groups to speak the words on Color Pack 1 as a volunteer lights the candle.

Group 1: Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.

Group 2: Whoever follows Jesus has the light of life.

Tell learners today is the sixth and final Sunday in Lent. Today the church remembers how Jesus began his last visit to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested, tried, and crucified. Distribute Bibles or copies of Psalm 118:19–24. Form two groups to read aloud the psalm, alternating verses between groups. Extinguish the candle.

Residents of first-century, occupied Jerusalem would have experienced Roman soldiers seizing their property, including animals. In a seemingly like manner, Jesus “commandeers” the colt and calls himself “Lord” for the first and only time in Mark. But Jesus promises to give the colt back, for he is a different kind of Lord.



EXPLORING

Set out Color Pack 8 and the children’s Bibles and storybooks. Invite learners to look at the picture and at the pages you marked in the books. Invite them to tell what they remember about this story and to recall ways they have celebrated Palm Sunday at church.

Distribute Bibles and ask tweens to turn to Mark 11:1–11. Ask volunteers to read the story, taking the parts of Jesus (vv. 2–3), some bystanders (v. 5), and a narrator. Have all learners shout together the crowd’s words in verses 9–10. Discuss the story:

- ✿ How well does Color Pack 9 match Mark’s description of the Palm Sunday parade? (For example: Mark doesn’t mention the people’s ages or genders; whether everyone was smiling; whether anyone waved branches; whether a dog was present.)
- ✿ Why do you think the artist illustrated the story in this way?

Distribute copies of “Palm Sunday Puzzle” from Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) and pencils. Invite learners to work individually or in pairs to find answers to the clues and then to place each word in the puzzle. After a few moments, review the answers. Ask:

- ✿ What do these connections between the story in Mark 11:1–11 and these Old Testament passages suggest about the meaning behind Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem? (Jesus is being welcomed as a king.)
- ✿ Do you think Jesus was encouraging the people to view him as their king? Why or why not?
- ✿ How do you think the Roman authorities who controlled Jerusalem reacted to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem?

Read aloud the following from the "Now What?" on page 1:

Jesus hardly appears to be a king at all . . . here is a kingdom of peace, which . . . is not coerced and enforced by military power and occupation.

Have learners turn to Mark 10:42–45 and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Discuss how Jesus defines greatness and power. Ask:

- ✿ How is this understanding of power different from the ways of the world?

Tell learners that on the church calendar, today is given two names: Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. The word *passion* refers to Jesus’ suffering and death. Have learners turn to Mark 15:16–20. Read the verses aloud as learners follow along, pausing at verse 18 to have all learners join you in reading the soldiers’ words. Comment that many people cheered Jesus as king on Palm Sunday and many called for his crucifixion on Good Friday. Ask:

- ✿ What can we do during Holy Week to honor Jesus as our king? (For example: pray, worship, invite others to Easter worship, serve those in need, read story of Easter to younger child.)

If your church has special Holy Week activities and worship services scheduled, tell learners about these things and encourage them to attend with their families.

EASY
PREP

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Icon Prayer** Invite learners to praise Jesus as their king by praying with an icon. Display Color Pack 10. Explain that this is a modern example of the ancient art of iconography. Christian icons are not realistic pictures, but “windows” into spiritual realities. Distribute copies of “Icon Prayers” from Resource Sheet 2 (Responding Resources). Read the suggestions together. Set “Music for Meditation” (track 23 on *Singing the Feast, 2020–2021*) to repeat play and invite learners to spend some time in prayer. Afterward, discuss: How else can you honor Jesus as king?
- 2. Pax Cakes** Learners will learn about a Palm Sunday custom from England. Distribute copies of “Pax Cakes” from Resource Sheet 1 (Session Resources) and work with learners to make the cakes. Explain that some congregations in England distribute these treats on Palm Sunday. Sometimes the cakes are stamped with the symbol of Jesus, the Lamb of God. (See symbol on the resource sheet.) As Christians share the cakes, they speak of the peace of Christ. (*Pax* means “peace” in Latin). Say a prayer of thanks and enjoy eating the cakes together. Wrap leftovers in plastic wrap for learners to take home.
- 3. Holy Week Calendar** Challenge learners to honor Jesus as king on each day of Holy Week. Distribute copies of “Holy Week Calendar” from Resource Sheet 2 (Responding Resources) and pencils. Have learners write one specific thing they can do each day to show respect for Jesus as king. Gather the finished calendars, then give each learner a calendar that is not his or her own. Encourage tweens to do the actions on the calendar they receive.

CLOSING

Gather learners around the Christ candle. Explain that purple is a traditional Lenten color because it represents Jesus’ royalty. Ask volunteers to lift up the candle and Color Pack 1. Remove the purple cloth to reveal the red one. Explain that red is a traditional color for Passion Sunday because it reminds us of Jesus’ blood, shed at his crucifixion as a sacrifice for many (Mark 14:24). Place the Christ candle on the red cloth and light it.

Read aloud the words to the first two stanzas of “Ride On, Ride On in Majesty.” Ask:

- ✠ How does this hymn tell us that Jesus is a different kind of king?
- ✠ What does it mean to call Jesus your king?

Pray aloud:

*God of great faithfulness, thank you for sending Jesus to us to be our king.
By your Spirit, strengthen us to continue our journey of faith, trusting
that you journey with us in your Son, Jesus. Amen.*

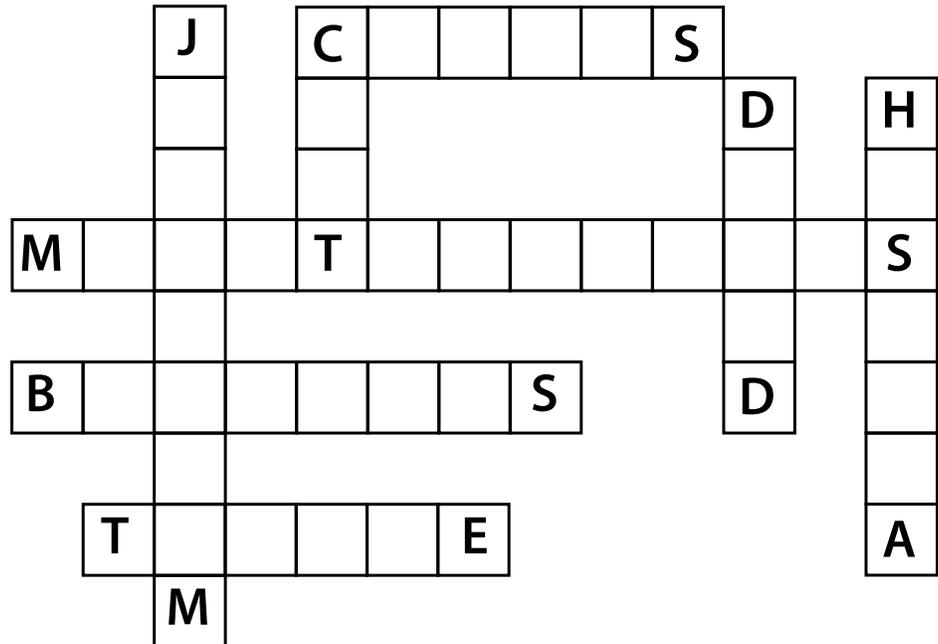
Say good-bye to learners by name. Tell them that you will pray for them this week and ask them to pray for you.

Session Resources

Palm Sunday Puzzle

Clues:

- God will stand here to establish divine rule. (Zechariah 14:3–4).
- The ruler of God’s people will ride this. (Zechariah 9:9)
- People spread these before King Jehu. (2 Kings 9:13)
- This Hebrew word means “save us!”
- God’s people sang the words of Psalm 118:25–27 as they marched to this building.
- God’s people bound these to the altar. (Psalm 118:27)
- God promised that this king’s descendants would always rule God’s people. (2 Samuel 7:12–13)
- Capital of ancient Israel (2 Samuel 5:6–7).



Pax Cakes

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 egg | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup white sugar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 cup buttermilk | <input type="checkbox"/> ½ teaspoon cinnamon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 tablespoons cooking oil | <input type="checkbox"/> paper lunch bag |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ cup whole wheat flour | <input type="checkbox"/> nonstick cooking spray |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ cup wheat germ | <input type="checkbox"/> electric griddle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ¼ cup white flour | <input type="checkbox"/> mixing bowl |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 tablespoon sugar | <input type="checkbox"/> mixing spoon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 teaspoon baking powder | <input type="checkbox"/> measuring cups, spoons |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ teaspoon baking soda | <input type="checkbox"/> spatula |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ½ teaspoon salt | <input type="checkbox"/> plastic wrap |

1. Spray the electric griddle with nonstick cooking spray. Begin heating it to a medium-high setting. (When drops of water immediately evaporate on contact, it’s hot enough.)
2. Beat egg in a mixing bowl. Add all other ingredients and mix until fairly smooth.
3. Pour batter onto heated griddle in small dollops, about 1½" in diameter.
4. Turn when cakes start to bubble and bottoms are brown. Cook until both sides are lightly browned and the cakes are cooked all the way through.
5. Place 1 cup white sugar and ½ teaspoon cinnamon in paper lunch bag. Shake warm cakes in the mixture and then place on a plate.
6. Makes about 55 small cakes.

Responding Resources



Icon Prayers

Icons are created to give viewers an opportunity to become aware of the Spirit leading them in contemplation and in conversation with God. There are many ways to do this. The following ideas may help you get started:

- Sit in a comfortable position and look at the icon. Allow your vision to move slowly over the picture.
- Where are the eyes of the figure in the icon looking? Is the Spirit leading you to look at something or someone in a new way?
- What are the hands of the figure in the icon doing? How might the Spirit be cradling, healing, or blessing you through the hands in the image?
- What do you want to say to the figure in the icon?
- Don't be afraid to sit for a while, gazing quietly at the icon even when you are not consciously praying—the Spirit leads in prayer that goes beyond words (see Romans 8:26).

Holy Week Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday