

Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1–10

Characters: Tour Guide (you); 3 Readers; Bus Driver; 2 Tax Collectors; Zacchaeus; Tourists (everyone else)

Costumes: Nametags for Tour Guide, Bus Driver, Zacchaeus, and Tax Collectors (CD); safety pins or yarn, scissors, and a paper punch

Props: Judea, Jerusalem, Jericho Signs (CD); play money; chairs; chalk or masking tape (optional); highlighters

You will reuse signs in many skits. See chart in “Using NT4 Signs” (CD).

Prepare: Print Leader Notes, Script, and Review Questions for yourself. Highlight your parts.

Print 7 more Scripts for the 3 Readers, the Bus Driver, Zacchaeus, and the 2 Tax Collectors. Highlight Scripts or have students do it during preparation time.

Print the signs and nametags. Cut nametags apart. Use safety pins to attach nametags to kids’ clothing. Or punch one or two holes in the top of each nametag, run a length of yarn through each hole, and tie the yarn ends together.

Set chairs up in rows with an aisle in the middle to simulate a bus. Add a few more chairs than the number of participants you expect. (As an option, outline a bus shape with masking tape or chalk on the floor.) Set a chair for the Bus Driver in the front; leave space for the Tour Guide (you) to stand by the driver. Define a space for the bus door in the front.

Set chairs for 3 Readers around the bus or nearby where students can hear them but they do not impede action.

Hang the Jerusalem Sign near the side of your bus with the door. Hang the Jericho Sign on the other side of the bus. Hang the Judea Sign higher and between the other two.

Put the play money in your own pocket or somewhere in your space.

Leader Notes

This drama activity lets all children participate; it is not a performance. Include preparation time as part of the activity so that everyone sees and hears the plans. Encourage children to relax and enjoy participating.

As Leader, you introduce the skit and direct the activity. Help students know where to move or what to do, as needed. Use the Review Questions after the skit to help students understand the Scripture.

If time allows, repeat the activity with students playing the same or different parts. Students often relax and enjoy doing the activity again. Children, especially those with language-processing delays, learn a lot from repetition.

Recruit 3 Readers. Give them Scripts to read through. Give them highlighters to mark their parts if you did not do it. Show them where to sit.

Recruit volunteers to act out the parts of the Bus Driver, 2 Tax Collectors, and Zacchaeus. Give Scripts to these people to read through. Hand out highlighters to mark their parts if you did not do it. Hand out nametags.

Ask the Bus Driver to take his or her seat on the bus. Ask the 2 Tax Collectors and Zacchaeus to sit near the Jericho Sign.

Ask everyone else to act as Tourists. Do not have them sit in the bus yet. If you must wait for actors to mark scripts, talk with Tourists about places they have visited or would like to visit. Discuss travel options and experiences with tour buses. Talk about how this kind of trip might be different than a flight or family road trip.

When ready, make sure everyone is in their place, and then begin your tour.

Script

Jesus and Zacchaeus; Luke 19:1–10

TOUR GUIDE: *(Standing by the bus door, to TOURISTS)* **Welcome to Jerusalem and Too-Amazing-to-See-It-All Tours! I'm your tour guide, (say your name). Today, we travel to the city of Jericho. All aboard!**

(Pantomime opening the door and ask TOURISTS to find seats. As they ENTER, give each TOURIST a piece of play money. Continue when ALL are seated.)

Today, we travel to the city of Jericho, home of the remarkably famous and wealthy tax collector Zacchaeus. You know Zacchaeus, don't you, Driver?

BUS DRIVER: Of course! Everyone in this part of the world knows Zacchaeus! He was quite a notorious character before his change of heart, but now most people think he's great and want to call him friend.

TOUR GUIDE: Wow, that sounds like a guy we need to meet.

BUS DRIVER: We might see him. You never know!

TOUR GUIDE: Friends, I want to teach you a little rhyme about Zacchaeus, but first let me tell you about a funny word in it: *wee*, which means tiny or short. Zacchaeus was a short fella, as this rhyme says.

So, let's learn the rhyme. Repeat these words after me. Ready?

Zacchaeus was a wee little man, / a wee little man was he. / He climbed up in a sycamore tree, / for the Lord he wanted to see.

BUS DRIVER: Well, let's get moving! Ready, everyone? Hang on to your hats! It's a bumpy, downhill ride from Jerusalem to Jericho.

TOUR GUIDE simulates riding on a bumpy road downhill and encourages TOURISTS to join in.

TOUR GUIDE: This road makes a steep drop. Jericho has the lowest elevation of any city in the world, more than 800 feet below sea level! Jerusalem is about 2,400 feet above sea level, so we drop about 3,200 feet in a little over fifteen miles!

BUS DRIVER: It takes people about eight hours to walk the fifteen miles from Jericho to Jerusalem. Most people can walk fifteen miles in 4–5 hours, but this trip takes longer because it's all uphill.

TOUR GUIDE: Yes, but it takes only about thirty minutes to run the other way downhill! Now that sounds like fun! Wouldn't it be fun if Israel got snow and you could ski or sled down that monster hill?

BUS DRIVER: Ah, yes, but it seldom gets cold enough here to snow. We usually get rain in the winter.

TOUR GUIDE: If you look out your window, you'll see that it's hot and dry in Israel, as usual. Blessedly, it cools off at night.

BUS DRIVER: We're getting close to the city wall.

TOUR GUIDE: Okay, thanks! Jericho is an oasis in the middle of this dry land. It's the oldest walled city in the world. Does anyone know why people began building walls around their cities? *Let students speculate. Walls gave protection from enemies and predators. Remind students that God helped Joshua and the people of Israel to knock down Jericho's walls simply by marching around them and shouting. This miracle happened when they came into the Promised Land after leaving Egypt.*

Remains of that early wall are being excavated today. Archaeologists found evidence of a collapsed wall, just like the Bible said!

BUS DRIVER: We're almost at the checkpoint.

TOUR GUIDE: Don't be alarmed, but we have a checkpoint ahead. Sometimes, Roman soldiers are here, but usually we just see tax collectors who collect a tax when you pass through Jericho.

BUS DRIVER: Yes, they always get their taxes! *(Pantomime stopping the bus and opening the door.)*

TAX COLLECTOR 1: Good day! How many passengers are on this bus?

BUS DRIVER offers the correct number; 2 TAX COLLECTORS ENTER bus and walk down the aisle, collecting a tax from every TOURIST.

TOUR GUIDE: Excuse me, Tax Collector, but have you seen Zacchaeus today?

TAX COLLECTOR 2: No, I haven't, but we know him well. Do you want us to tell you about Zacchaeus?

TOUR GUIDE: Yes, that would be great!

TAX COLLECTOR 2: Zacchaeus was a stingy man,
You'd never see him smile.

He stole tax money from his friends
So he could live in style.

TAX COLLECTOR 1: But then he heard the prophet Jesus
Would pass through his town.
He said, "I've got to see Him, that's for sure,
But I'm just too low down."

TOUR GUIDE: Hmmm, interesting. We know a little about Zacchaeus too.
Friends, let's tell them our rhyme.
Repeat these words after me. Ready?
Zacchaeus was a wee little man, / a wee little man was he. / He
climbed up in a sycamore tree, / for the Lord he wanted to see.

TAX COLLECTOR 1: You're right about that! See that tree out there? (*Point out window.*) That's the tree!

TAX COLLECTOR 2: "Go climb a tree," the people told him.
That's just what he did.
He grabbed that sycamore so tight
And up the trunk he slid.

BUS DRIVER: Zacchaeus climbed the tree because he was too short to see
Jesus over the heads of the people in the crowd. Zacchaeus really was
a wee little man!

TOUR GUIDE: (*To TAX COLLECTORS*) Can you tell us more?

TAX COLLECTOR 2: Sure! Listen!
"Oh, this will never work," Z thought,
As leaves began to sway.
But just when he had lost all hope.
He heard Lord Jesus say:

TAX COLLECTOR 1: "Get down from that tree, Zacchaeus,
Today you get a brand new start.
Get down from that tree, Zacchaeus,
My gift to you: a loving heart.
You're born again, My Father calls you,

**There's no need to frown.
For in My Father's kingdom,
No one's ever too low down."**

TOUR GUIDE: What happened next?

TAX COLLECTOR 2: Zacchaeus was so shocked by what

**He heard, he nearly fell.
His heart was changed, a smile appeared,
His neighbors all could tell.**

TAX COLLECTOR 1: This was a whole new man, so free

**From selfishness and greed,
That he would put his neighbors first,
Concerned about their need.**

TAX COLLECTOR 2: (*Wistfully*) I wish you could hear about it from Zacchaeus himself!

BUS DRIVER: I think you're going to get your wish! Isn't that Zacchaeus coming right now?

TAX COLLECTOR 1: Yes, it is! Hey, Zacchaeus, come over here! (*ZACCHAEUS enters bus.*)

ZACCHAEUS: Hello, everyone! What's going on?

TOUR GUIDE: It's our Too-Amazing-to-See-It-All Tour, Zacchaeus! So glad to meet you (*shakes ZACCHAEUS'S hand*). Please tell us what happened after Jesus called you out of that sycamore tree!

ZACCHAEUS: Sure! Here's what happened.

**I said, "Let's have a great big party
At my house; the treat's on me!"
With that I took a flying leap
Down from that lofty tree.
And arm in arm with Jesus, I
Said, "I will fix this mess.
I'll pay back four times what I took,
With interest, no less!"**

**So Jesus went, quite glad to see
This person God had saved (*point at self*).
The people all rejoiced, even
The cooks and cleaners raved!**

BUS DRIVER: Boy, Jesus must be an amazing guy to change your heart like that!

ZACCHAEUS: Yes, He is!

**Jesus is the Savior, you know.
The one God promised long ago!
The life of Jesus, giv'n on Calvary, is meant for all,
For God loves you and me, no matter how short or how tall.**

TOUR GUIDE: Well, thanks, Zacchaeus! Thanks for telling us about Jesus. Friends, we need to move on and let Zacchaeus go. Let's say our rhyme for him as he leaves. (*ZACCHAEUS EXITS.*) Repeat the words after me:

**Zacchaeus was a wee little man, / a wee little man was he. / He
climbed up in a sycamore tree, / for the Lord he wanted to see.**

Rhyming verses adapted from the song "Go, Climb a Tree" by John Folkening. Copyright © 2004 CPH.

Review Questions

Understand the Bible account and make life applications

Jesus and Zacchaeus; Luke 19:1–10

Ask questions to check children's understanding of the skit and Bible account.

What town was Zacchaeus from? Jericho

How did Zacchaeus use his job as a tax collector for his own benefit? He greedily overcharged taxes and stole from people.

Why did Zacchaeus climb the sycamore tree? So that he could see Jesus; he couldn't see because of the large crowd.

What did Zacchaeus do when Jesus showed kindness to him? He took Jesus home for dinner. After experiencing Jesus' grace, Zacchaeus said he would pay back four times what he had stolen from people.

Zacchaeus's actions showed the work of God in his heart. What shows that God works in our hearts too? Faith is a gift of God that changes our hearts. We confess His Word. We repent, confess our sins, and receive forgiveness in Jesus' name. We apologize and forgive others, knowing we are sinners too. We thank God for His gift of faith. When we do the good works God prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10), when we serve others in Jesus' name, when we show love, act kindly, and care for others, we show God's work in our hearts.

Where do we hear God's love and grace in this event? Jesus showed mercy to Zacchaeus, a sinner and someone others hated. Jesus shows love and mercy to each of us, even though our sin separated us from Him (Romans 5:8). He lived without sin but died on the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world. He rose from the dead, victorious over sin, death, and the devil. Those who believe in Jesus receive the benefits of His victory: forgiveness of sins, new life, eternal life in heaven, power to fight temptation and the devil, and more.

The Triumphal Entry

Mark 11:1–10; Luke 19:28–40

Characters: Leader (you, as Narrator); Jesus; 12 Apostles (only 2 have speaking parts); Donkey Owner; Donkey (or substitute, see below); 1 or more Pharisees; Disciples of Jesus (everyone else)

Costumes: Nametags for Jesus, 12 Apostles, Donkey Owner, Disciples, and Pharisees (CD); safety pins (optional); and/or Jesus costume and identifiers for Apostles, Disciples, and Pharisees, such as sashes, belts, neckties, bandanas, or color-coded crepe-paper streamers

Keep nametags and costumes for other skits. See “Using NT4 Nametags” (CD).

Props: Jerusalem and Judea Signs (CD, reuse); Bethany, Mount of Olives, and Bethphage Signs (CD); cut out paper palm branches (pattern on page 7 or CD) or get real palm branches; 2 chairs; cord or rope to tie up donkey; masking tape; masking tape; highlighters

You will reuse signs in many skits. See chart in “Using NT4 Signs” (CD).

Get a 3-wheel scooter, wagon, or office chair with wheels to use as a Donkey in case no one wants to play this part or if you do not want a student to do it. Attach a rope or cord to the “donkey” so it can be tied up.

Prepare: Print Leader Notes, Script, and Review Questions for yourself. Highlight your parts.

Print 5 more Scripts for Jesus, 2 Apostles, Donkey Owner, and Pharisee(s). Highlight Scripts or have students do it during preparation time.

Print nametags, making sure to print enough “Disciples” and “Pharisees” to give every child a role. Cut nametags apart. Because you will use many of them often, consider affixing them to poster board and covering them with contact paper, or laminating them for durability. Use safety pins to attach nametags to kids’ clothing; or punch two holes in the top of each nametag, run a length of yarn through the holes, and tie the yarn ends together.

Reuse or print the Jerusalem and Judea Signs. Print 3 new Signs.

Make paper palms using the pattern (CD); or get real palms. You need green construction paper and scissors.

Hang up signs in four different locations from one side of your space to the other in order: Bethany, Bethphage, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. Set 2 chairs under

the Bethphage Sign. Hang the Judea Sign higher than the others to show it is a region. Lay your palm branches along both sides of the “road” from Bethphage to the Mount of Olives and Jerusalem for students to pick up.

Leader Notes

This drama activity lets all children participate; it is not a performance. Include preparation time as part of the activity so that everyone sees and hears the plans. Encourage children to relax and enjoy participating.

As Leader, you introduce the skit and direct the activity. Help students know where to move or what to do, as needed. Use the Review Questions after the skit to help students understand the Scripture.

If time allows, repeat the activity with students playing the same or different parts. Students often relax and enjoy doing the activity again. Children, especially those with language-processing delays, learn a lot from repetition.

Recruit students to play the speaking parts: Jesus, 2 Apostles, Donkey Owner, and Pharisee(s). Give each person a Script and a highlighters to mark parts if you did not do it. Hand out nametags and/or costumes.

Ask if anyone would like to act out the part of the Donkey. If no one volunteers or you decided not to use a person, tell students that you will use the scooter, wagon, or chair with wheels as a donkey.

Ask everyone else to act out the parts of the other 10 Apostles and Disciples. Hand out nametags.

Seat the Pharisees near the Jerusalem Sign.

Ask Jesus, Apostles, and Disciples to sit near the Bethany Sign. Ask the Donkey Owner and Donkey (or prop) to sit near the Bethphage Sign. Tie up the donkey to a chair.

Tell Apostles and Disciples to listen carefully so they know what to do. Tell them they will repeat phrases after you during the skit. When they hear you say “And Jesus’ disciples said . . .” they should repeat the next words you say. You might also point at them so they know when to repeat.

In this skit, students repeat excited words of praise. When you say these words to repeat, use different inflections, louder or softer volume, and other voice variations. Normally, students repeat the phrases in the same way you speak. Ask them to try again if they don’t respond with the expected enthusiasm.

Script

The Triumphal Entry; Mark 11:1–10, Luke 19:28–40

LEADER: Jesus and His followers left Jericho where they had met Zacchaeus and continued on to Jerusalem. Jesus had chosen twelve followers as Apostles, ones sent out with the good news. (*Ask APOSTLES to raise their hands.*) Other people who followed Him were called disciples. (*Ask DISCIPLES to raise their hands.*)

When the group drew near to the Mount of Olives and the cities of Bethany and Bethphage, Jesus called two disciples and gave them directions. (*Beckon for JESUS and 2 APOSTLES to stand.*)

JESUS: (*To 2 APOSTLES*) Go into the village in front of you. You will see a colt no one has ever ridden tied up. Untie it and bring it here.

APOSTLE 1: But Jesus . . .

JESUS: (*Hold up hand and continue talking*) If anyone asks why you are untying the colt, say this: "The Lord has need of it."

LEADER: So the disciples did as Jesus said and went into the village of Bethphage.

DONKEY OWNER pretends not to see APOSTLES until time to say his or her line.

APOSTLE 2: Hey, there's a donkey colt tied up.

APOSTLE 1: Yeah, just like Jesus said.

APOSTLE 2: Well, go untie it.

APOSTLE 1: You go untie it.

APOSTLE 2: Seriously, without asking first?

APOSTLE 1: You heard what Jesus said. It'll be okay.

APOSTLE 2: Then you untie it.

APOSTLE 1: Okay then, I will. (*Untie DONKEY and start to lead it away.*)

DONKEY OWNER: (*Notice APOSTLES*) Hey, what are you doing with my little donkey?

APOSTLE 2: The Lord has need of it.

DONKEY OWNER: You mean the Lord Jesus?

APOSTLE 1: Yes.

DONKEY OWNER: Okay, but no one has ever ridden this colt. He's very young.

APOSTLE 1: We know, but Jesus said to get the colt and to tell you . . .

APOSTLE 2: The Lord has need of it.

DONKEY OWNER: Well, if Jesus needs it, you may take it. And tell Jesus hello for me.

APOSTLES 1 AND 2: We will!

APOSTLES 1 and 2 return to JESUS with the DONKEY. APOSTLES 1 and 2 pretend to take off their cloaks (jackets) and put them on the DONKEY; then help JESUS sit on (in) it.

LEADER: Jesus rode the donkey up the Mount of Olives as the apostles and the large group of disciples walked in front of and behind Him. *(Help APOSTLES lead JESUS on the DONKEY around the room, but do not go toward Jerusalem yet. As they move, help them do the next activities.)*

And as they traveled, the people took off their cloaks and put them on the ground for Jesus and the donkey to walk on. *(Prompt DISCIPLES and APOSTLES to pantomime laying down coats.)*

They cut branches from nearby palm trees and raised them in praise to God too. *(Prompt DISCIPLES and APOSTLES to pick up and wave palms.)*

And the whole multitude rejoiced and praised God with loud voices for all the mighty works they had seen Jesus do.

(Ask DISCIPLES and APOSTLES to repeat the next phrases and help them move towards Jerusalem.)

And Jesus' followers said . . . *(prompt DISCIPLES and APOSTLES to repeat your words:)* **Hosanna! / Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! / Hosanna! /**

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! / Hosanna! / Blessed is the coming kingdom / of our father David! / Hosanna!

(Repeat until the GROUP nears the Jerusalem Sign. Stop repeating, quiet the GROUP and continue.)

But some Pharisees in the crowd spoke to Jesus.

PHARISEES: *(Stand, interrupt)* **Teacher, rebuke Your disciples!**

JESUS: I tell you, if they were silent, the very stones would cry out!

LEADER: And Jesus' disciples said . . . *(prompt DISCIPLES to repeat your words:)*
**Hosanna in the highest! / Blessed is the King who comes in the name
of the Lord! / Hosanna! /**

**Peace in heaven and glory in the highest! / Hosanna! / Hosanna! /
Hosanna!**

Review Questions

Understand the Bible account and make life applications

The Triumphal Entry; Mark 11:1–10, Luke 19:28–40

Ask these questions to help students understand the skit.

Where did Jesus get the donkey He rode into Jerusalem? He told two disciples where to go and get a donkey. They followed His directions and brought it back for Him to ride into the city.

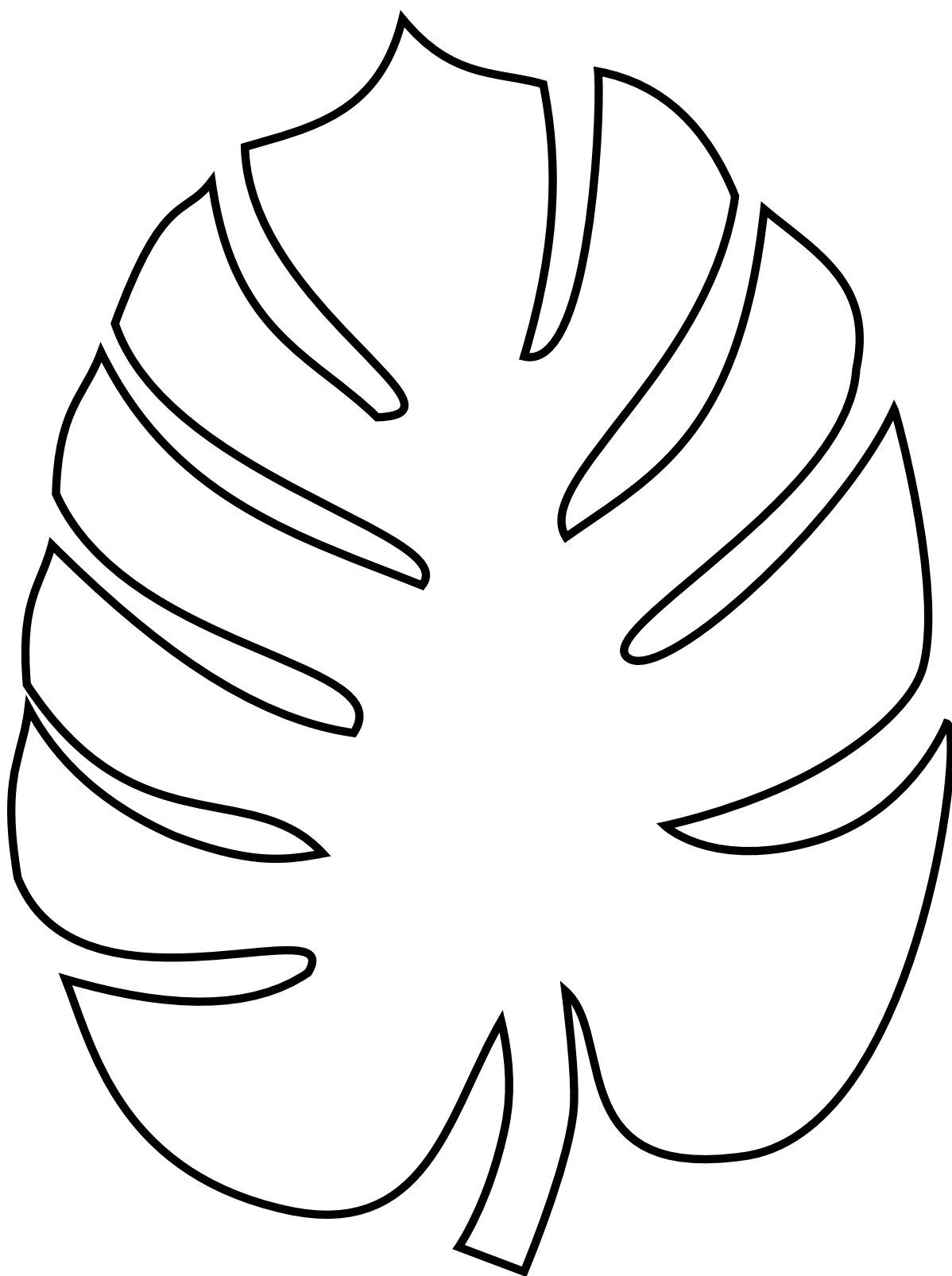
Why do you think Jesus rode a donkey into the city? Help students know that these actions fulfilled a prophecy about the Messiah that God promised to send His people in the Old Testament. Jesus did this to 1) show the people that He is the Messiah; 2) fulfill God's prophetic word; 3) and celebrate coming into Jerusalem to fulfill the mission God sent Him to do, to die on the cross and rise from the dead to pay for the sins of the world.

Who were the people who welcomed Jesus into the city and praised God for Jesus' amazing works? Disciples, followers of Christ

By calling Jesus "King," saying He brought the kingdom of David, and saying He came in the name of the Lord, who were Jesus' disciples saying He was? The Messiah God promised to send, our Savior and Lord

Why did the Pharisees get upset? They did not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. They rejected Him and had started plotting to kill Him after He raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:45–57).

Where do we hear God's love and grace in this story? With great joy, Jesus showed the people of Jerusalem that their Savior (Messiah) had come to rescue them. A few days later, in great love for us, Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. In these actions, Jesus opened the kingdom of God to all who believe in Him. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus provides forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who believe in Him. By faith, we receive these gifts delivered to us through God's Word and Sacraments.



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