



TEACHER GUIDE

The first Palm Sunday must have been an amazing day. Many of the Jews believed that the Messiah would be a human ruler who would overthrow the Romans and give them back Jerusalem. As Jesus rode in on a donkey—a detail that had been recorded by the prophet Zechariah—people spread palm leaves in his path. They shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” For many standing there, this was the best day of their lives. The Messiah was here!

But the excitement of Palm Sunday soon faded. The religious leaders continued to look for a way to take Jesus down for what they considered to be blasphemy. On Thursday of that week, Jesus shared a special Passover meal with his disciples. How fitting that the meal celebrated God’s deliverance of the Jews through the blood of a perfect lamb. Jesus was the Lamb of God who would free people from the punishment of sin once and for all.

That night, Jesus was arrested while he prayed in the garden. He was subjected to an unjust trial and sentenced to be crucified—the most brutal form of Roman execution. Though his death was excruciating, Jesus gave his life willingly, so that humanity could be restored to God and be part of his Kingdom.

PLAY the first video on the lesson webpage (intro to this week’s lesson by Courtney), if you haven’t done so already.

Then...

SETTING THE STAGE

Before watching the lesson video, ask your children to think about the best day of their whole life. Provide them with paper and art supplies to draw a picture of that day. If they need prompting, you could suggest they draw a picture of a special birthday or holiday, or going to a fun place, such as the zoo or to visit relatives. When pictures are completed, ask them to share about their best day ever.

INTRODUCTION & VIDEO

Introduce the video, saying something like:

Today we’re going to talk about a day that was the BEST DAY EVER for many people. I’ll give you a hint: It has to do with Jesus. Remember last week we heard about the miracles Jesus did and the stories Jesus told about the Kingdom of God. Today we’re going to hear about the week leading up to Easter Sunday. Let’s watch as some friends tell us the story!

PLAY the second video on the lesson webpage (Buck Denver lesson).

Follow video by saying something like this:

Jesus had fulfilled the most important part of his mission on earth. He had paid the ultimate price—his life—for our sin. People would no longer have to offer animal sacrifices like they had since the time of Abraham and Moses. Jesus had paid the price of sin once for all! And through that sacrifice, he had established the Kingdom of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Why were the people so excited when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the donkey? (*He was the Messiah and they thought he would be a king like David.*)
- What was Jesus talking about when he compared the bread and wine to his body and blood? (*His sacrifice on the Cross.*)
- What crime was Jesus accused of? (*Blasphemy.*)
- What are two things that Jesus showed us about God? (*That he is loving, good, and powerful.*)
- Jesus compared the Kingdom of God to a mustard seed. How are the two things alike? (*They both start small and grow really big!*)

GOING DEEP

Tell the story of Palm Sunday from Matthew 21:1-11, using this script. You will need a Bible opened to this passage.

(If they are able, have your children read the *red, italicized* statements throughout this story.)

Today we pick up our story of Jesus at the beginning of the most important week of his life! The week began with Palm Sunday—which we celebrate today. In preparation for the celebration of Passover, Jesus and his disciples traveled to the city of Jerusalem. Many other Jewish people had traveled there also.

Passover was a celebration of something that had happened long ago. Do you remember the story of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt? Well, before Pharaoh would let the people go, God sent 10 terrible plagues. Can you name some of them? (Turning the Nile to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, diseased livestock, boils, hail, locust, darkness.) The final plague—which was the worst—was that all the firstborn children and animals in Egypt would die. But God made one way that the firstborn children could be spared. If the family painted the blood of a spotless lamb on their doorposts, God would pass over and their firstborn children would live. This was a preview of the day when the perfect Lamb of God would shed his blood for the sins of the world so that we could be saved.

As they came into Jerusalem, Jesus asked his disciples to get him a young donkey to ride. The disciples spread out their cloaks on the donkey's back for Jesus to sit on. As Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem, a large crowd of people spread their cloaks and palm branches on the road—something that would have been done for royalty—and said: *"Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"*

Does it sound like the people were happy that Jesus was there? Yes, they were! But many Jews believed that Jesus had come to be their earthly king and overthrow the Romans so that they would once again have their own country. For many people welcoming Jesus, this was the best day of their life! (*Read Matthew 21:10-11.*) Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem made a big impression!

What began as a thrilling week quickly turned tragic. On the Thursday after Palm Sunday, Jesus and his disciples celebrated the Last Supper. That night Jesus—betrayed by Judas, one of his own disciples—was arrested as he was praying in a garden. He was put through an unfair trial, beaten severely, and finally hung on a cross to die.

The same people who had welcomed him less than a week earlier watched him die a horrible death on the Cross. His body was laid in a tomb and a large, heavy stone was rolled in front of the entrance. The situation must have

seemed hopeless. Though Jesus' friends and followers couldn't see it, the very best part of the story was yet to come. This was all a part of Jesus ushering in the Kingdom of God. We'll hear more about that next week!

CLOSER LOOK

Activity: Learn about the Seder Meal

You'll need: Seder food and plate cutouts (downloadable off of the lesson webpage), Double-sided tape or glue. (If you are unable to print, looking at the digital copy will work just fine)

SAY: Jesus celebrated Passover, a very important Jewish holiday, with his disciples. All of the food and drinks in the Seder meal represents something from the time the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt. Jesus gave two parts of this meal a new meaning! We'll talk about all of that, but first lets put together our Seder meal.

Have your children cut out and tape/glue the Seder meal elements onto their appropriate spots on the plate. After they do so, explain what each food represents:

LAMB SHANKBONE — represents the sacrifice the Israelites made when they left Egypt.

ROASTED EGG — represents one of the offerings made in the temple.

MAROR — a bitter herb, usually horseradish, this herb makes you cry and reminds you of the bitterness of slavery.

CHAROSET — a mixture of apples, nuts and cinnamon which represents the material the Israelites used to make bricks in Egypt.

KARPAS — a green vegetable that reminds you of the newness of spring.

SALT WATER —served in a bowl and represents the tears the Israelites cried while they were slaves in Egypt.

MATZAH — unleavened bread to remind you that the Israelites left Egypt so quickly that their bread did not have time to rise.

DRINK — cups of wine or grape juice.

Say: Do you remember which two elements of the Seder meal Jesus gave new meaning to?

MATZAH – Jesus said, “This is my body which is broken for you.”

DRINK – Jesus said, “This is my blood which is shed for you.”

The Seder meal reminds us of Jesus freeing us from the bondage of sin, just as God freed the Israelites from the bondage of slavery in Egypt. Jesus is the Passover Lamb for everyone!

THE GOOD WORD

Write the memory verse on a piece of paper, white board, etc.

Say: Jesus did many amazing things on earth and lots of people loved him and felt his love. But his real purpose in coming was to suffer and die for the sins of the world. Today's Good Word tells us about this great sacrifice.

1 Peter 3:18.

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”

Explain unfamiliar words and concepts:

RIGHTEOUS FOR THE UNRIGHTEOUS — because Jesus was God, he never sinned, so he was righteous. Though he was sinless, he died for us—the unrighteous.

PUT TO DEATH IN THE FLESH — Jesus died. His body stopped working and he was buried, just like any other human.

MADE ALIVE IN THE SPIRIT — The Spirit of God brought Jesus back to life, making him different from any other human.

Have your children repeat the verse with you one or two times. Then make it fun! Repeat the verse as softly or as loudly as you can. Repeat the verse in a funny voice. Cover up parts of the verse to see if your children can remember it without seeing the entire thing. Then see if your children can repeat the whole verse without any aid!

Review this verse throughout the rest of the week with your children!

BIBLE TO-GO

You'll need: Encouragement Cards (downloadable off of the lesson webpage)

SAY: *What began as an exciting week for Jesus and his disciples led to a day that was definitely the worst day any of them had experienced. Jesus was the best friend these men had ever known. More than that, they believed he was the Messiah God had promised them long ago. Now he was dead. I'm sure his friends felt lost and alone and wondered how life would ever get better.*

*We're all going through a bit of a difficult time right now. People are getting sick, and we aren't able to go out and see our friends. Maybe there's other things going on in your life as well. You may be having a tough time with schoolwork. Maybe you aren't getting along with your siblings or friends. Maybe it's something else. You may feel like some days are your **WORST DAY EVER**. Jesus understands that. Next week we'll find out why even on the worst days, we can always have hope! Until then, let's listen to some of God's words of hope for us that can be found in the Bible.*

Hand out the printed encouragement cards. Have your children read them out loud. After that, have your children cut out and decorate these cards. They can put them up on the refrigerator, in various places in your home, etc. to continue to encourage you and your family during this time.

OPTIONAL EXTRA: Last Supper Coloring Page (downloadable off of the lesson webpage)

PRAY

Spend a few minutes in prayer as a whole family. Pray for personal needs, pray about the lesson we just learned, and pray about the current situation we all find ourselves in. While parents may lead this time of prayer, encourage your children to participate as well, even if it is only a brief sentence or two. Here are some prayer points to go off of:

- That God would guide and help medical personnel and our leaders
- That God would heal anyone who is sick
- That God would protect those who are not sick
- That we will be able to physically gather as a church again soon
- That we will remember that even when things seem bad, God is always in control