

LENTEN DEVOTIONALS

WEEK 6: JESUS PRAYED IN COMMUNITY

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 19:37-38

As Jesus was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the king, who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!"

REFLECTION

This Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week in the Christian faith. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday and includes the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples, Jesus' death on Friday and his resurrection on Easter Sunday. Many Christian traditions have several special services during this time including Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday. Each service shares the story of what happened to Jesus during his final week.

Palm Sunday is a special Sunday where we tell the story of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. Crowds of people welcomed and celebrated Jesus and shouted, "Hosanna!" They laid palm leaves and clothes on the path as Jesus passed by. Many congregations act out this event by inviting people to carry palms and walk into and around the sanctuary. This story might surprise us after learning over the past couple of weeks that Jesus liked to pray to God in small groups or by himself. Palm Sunday is different. It is a great example of Jesus in the mix of things, surrounded by many people praying joyfully out loud.

What makes this passage especially helpful for our lives is that it is a vivid picture of what prayer can be like in a large group. Sometimes, we might think that prayer is something we can only do quietly, with our heads bowed and eyes closed. Our Palm Sunday story tells us something very different. Palm Sunday is a parade of prayer, with bright colors, sounds, and smells. This story invites us to think of ways that we can approach God together as God's family, filled with joy and energy, in a way that encourages and lifts each of us up in our own faith journeys.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page, ponder these questions together:

- Does your faith community recognize Palm Sunday? Maundy Thursday? Good Friday? Holy Saturday? What are some of your memories from these services?
- Do you find it easy or challenging to pray out loud around other people? What could help you feel more comfortable praying around friends and your family?
- What are some of your family's traditions during Holy Week? If your family does not have traditions surrounding this week, what could be one that you create together?

ACTIVITY

Preparing for Holy Week: Making your way from Palm Sunday to Good Friday.

Supplies needed: This week's activity page (or wood), cardboard or plastic strips, colored paper or sticky notes, glue, markers/crayons/pencils

To prepare for Holy Week and Easter, we invite you to make a Prayer Cross.

Depending on your preference and level of craftiness, take two pieces of wood or cardboard or plastic strips and fashion them into a cross or color and cut out the paper cross we created for you, that you can lay on your kitchen table or another common area. During the week, gather as a family, write prayers on sticky notes, and then fill the cross with your sticky-note prayers. Prayers of praise, prayers of lament, prayers for yourself, prayers for others. Make it a goal to fill the entire surface of the cross with prayers. We will return to this cross on Easter Sunday.

PRAYER

Dearest Jesus,
Your Holy Week is filled with so many emotions.
From the pure joy of a Sunday celebration
To the loneliness of your final Friday,
We take this journey with you,
remembering to be mindful of the seriousness of your choice
and recognizing the boundlessness of your grace and love.
Help us to be prepared and present for all you will reveal
To us this week.

Amen.