

# Palm Sunday: A Service for Children (5 April 2020)

Theme for church-at-home this week: explore the idea of being a pilgrim Church on the move, following Jesus from wherever we are

## 1. Gather

*Pray*

Jesus the Messiah,  
welcome to our meeting!  
We have come to hear from you,  
we have come to learn from you,  
we have come to offer you our praise.  
Welcome, Jesus, welcome!  
**Amen.**

## 2. Read the Word

*Context*

Passover is a big festival, with lots of preparation. At the time this story took place, people living near Jesus travelled to Jerusalem in groups with friends and family. Imagine that you are going to the Passover festival and the excitement is growing as you get nearer. Describe the scene, the noise you can hear and the sight of Jesus in the distance. Let's count down from 10 to 1, imagining that we are getting closer, before reading the story.

*Story (Matthew 21.1-11)*



Hosanna! Hosanna!' The crowds shouted and sang as Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Now who'd get excited about a man riding on a donkey? People who had read the Old Testament, that's who. Some laid their cloaks down in the road, and some cut branches from the nearby trees to mark the way, as they would do for a king.

A king? A king on a donkey? What made them think of that? Well, the Old Testament prophet, Zechariah. Years before, he'd said: 'Shout for joy, Jerusalem! Your king comes to you, riding humbly on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.' Jesus knew the Old Testament very well, of course. That's why he'd sent his disciples ahead of him to get the donkey in the first place. 'Go into Bethphage,' he'd

said. 'You'll find a donkey and her foal tied up there. Bring them to me.' Just as his followers were about to go, he'd said, 'If anyone tries to stop you, just say, "The Lord needs them," and they'll let you go.'

So the disciples had gone and got the donkey, a humble animal, just as Zechariah had described it, and thrown cloaks on its back for Jesus to sit on. And that's what he was riding into the city.

'Hosanna to the Son of David!' cried the crowds, both behind and ahead of Jesus. 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'

When Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, everyone was excited. 'Who is this?' people asked. And the singing crowds replied, 'This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.'

### *Glossary*

**Hosanna!** a Hebrew word usually used to mean 'Praise', but it actually means 'Save us, please!'

**Prophet** someone who receives messages from God to pass on to the people.

## 3. Play

Miming the story

- Ask everyone to recall the timeline of the story.
- Repeat the order of events and ask for volunteers to be Jesus, disciples and the crowd (you could also use dolls and soft toys to be the crowd, depending on how many children/adults you have with you at home!)
- Mime the story. Younger children may need you to use a word to help them move through the story.

## 4. Talk

*Reflect with children*

- What was the most surprising part of the story and why?
- Have you ever been part of a big crowd watching an event?
- If you saw Jesus on the street, what word might you shout and why?

*Reflect with young people*

- How might the bystanders have felt when they watched what was happening?
- What might you have thought if you were one of Jesus' disciples?
- What may the crowds have anticipated happening straight after this incident?

*Additional background and reflection points for older children:*

- Every year at this time, Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims arriving for the Passover. It would have been a chaotic time, more like a demonstration or a march than a

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pilgrimage walk. The inevitable strains on law and order would have drawn in extra soldiers to keep the peace, which only heightened the pilgrims' hopes for freedom.

- When Jesus and his followers went on this pilgrimage, this was a clear moment when Jesus' disciples may have anticipated him acting differently. Would he turn the stones of popular expectation into the bread of political freedom? Was he willing to risk everything to show the crowds who he was? Instead he entered the city as a peacemaker, on a donkey, hungry only for righteousness and mercy.
- A man and his followers coming into the city on a donkey would have been a tiny part of this chaos. Would he have even been noticed? What would the Romans and bystanders have thought of this? As some were shouting 'Hosanna to the Son of David', would they have been heard above the noise of the crowds?
- But Jesus was making a peaceful statement about the kind of king, prophet and leader he was. The reading from Isaiah foreshadows Jesus' suffering by reminding us that a prophet's vocation is costly, and the passage from Philippians talks of being 'emptied'. Would we, as a community of faith, rejoice and celebrate Jesus coming to us as this kind of king?

## 5. Create

*Make a praise banner*

Decorate leaves (draw/cut out your own or use the attached template) and join them all together on a large sheet of paper to make a praise banner.

You could move around the space and use this banner as you sing or listen to music (suggested songs listed below).

## 6. Pray

*Mind map prayers*

Place a large sheet of paper in the middle of the room. Create a mind-map together, using the following questions:

- What do we want God to change in the next year?
- What turning points would I like to see in my life?

Pray together silently, asking God to be present in change and turning points, as each element of the mind-map is written down.

*Finish by praying together:*

Jesus our King,  
give us ears to hear your voice,

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and minds and bodies  
ready to do what you ask.  
Help us to go out  
and sing Hosannas to you.  
Amen.

## More activities for the week

### *Where's Jesus?*

Show everyone the 'Where's Jesus?' picture (attached) and ask them to find Jesus in the turmoil. Ask what else they notice in the picture.

Jesus was on a journey into Jerusalem through the turmoil of a city during festival season. How do we walk together through busy lives and times of turmoil?

Note – the picture contains a number of rats/mice among the people. Counting these could form an additional activity as could colouring the picture in.

### *Colourful praise*

Create an abstract picture of the Passover festival

**You will need:** newspaper, one sheet of A4 paper each or one large piece, pots of different coloured paint with several brushes in each, wipes or damp flannels.

Spread the newspaper over the surfaces. Give out paper to everyone or use one large piece of paper for the group.

Ask everyone to think about the noise and colour of the festival. Invite them to create an abstract image of what they can imagine using splashes of colour and shapes.

## Songs

[Lord I lift your name on high](#), Rick Founds on *Cedarmont Worship for Kids, volume 1*

[Little donkey](#) (Tune: Little donkey, words by Emily Hoe-Crook)

[Hosanna](#), Planetshakers on *Nothing is Impossible*

[Make a move](#), Royal Tailor on *Black & White*

[Breaking free](#), Skillet feat. Lacey Sturm on *Unleashed beyond*

[Still rolling stones](#), Lauren Daigle on *Look up child*

Also check out Same Boat at Home (<https://sameboatmusic.com/>) for free music and activities you can do at home throughout the week.