



SESSION

1

Palm Sunday



MEETING AIM

To celebrate with the people as Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 12:12-19



BACKGROUND

Younger children may not understand the significance of the way Jesus enters Jerusalem, but they will be familiar with the joy and celebration that accompanies his arrival. Help children to experience this celebration and remember it when you come to explore the sadder story of Jesus' trial and death.

+ CIRCLE TIME



Welcome the children by name and invite them to join you sitting in a circle. Share out your refreshments and chat about what the children have been doing that week. Ask them to think about the last time they arrived somewhere. Was it exciting? Did it take a long time to get there? This might be the last time they visited family members or even when they came to church this morning (or whenever you're using this resource). Have a story ready about the last time you arrived somewhere in case the children struggle to think of something.

+ INTRO ACTIVITY



You will need: green tissue or crepe paper; child-safe scissors; sticky tape; newspaper; pictures of palm trees (optional)

Before the session, draw and cut out large leaf shapes from the tissue or crepe paper, several layers at a time. Roll several sheets of newspaper into a tight tube and secure them with a piece of tape. Make sure you have enough rolls of paper for one per child.

Give each child a newspaper roll, and help them attach the leaves to the sticks with tape. Next, show them how to cut slits down the sides of the leaves so they swish satisfyingly when waved (help any children who might find this difficult). During this activity, chat about what palmtrees look like

and where they grow. If you have any pictures of palm trees show them to the children as you chat.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: palm branches from the 'Intro activity'; toy donkey; pieces of fabric, rugs or throws

Practise waving the branches with the children and then organise them so they're sitting in two rows facing each other, holding their palms. Start to tell this story:

Jesus was travelling into Jerusalem for the Passover, a very important festival. Lots of other people had travelled to Jerusalem and the city was full! When they heard Jesus was coming, they got very excited. They broke palm branches off trees to wave like flags! *Encourage the children to stand up and wave their branches. Make sure they don't get carried away and hit anyone by accident!*

When Jesus arrived, he was riding on a donkey. A long time ago, a man called Zechariah had written that this would happen. It was in the scrolls about God that the people read, though they didn't remember at the time. *Move the toy donkey up and down the 'road' between the two lines of children. If any children want to have a go walking the donkey up and down, let them do so.*

The people began to wave their palms and shout: "Hosanna!" "Praise God!" and "Bless the one God has sent!" *Practise shouting these three phrases as loudly as you can! If you know a simple song that praises God in a similar way, sing that. As they do this, ask a leader to walk with the donkey along the 'road'.*

Some people even took off their coats and cloaks, and put them on the floor in front of Jesus. *Ask a few children to put down their palm branches and help you lay out some fabric, rugs or throws in front of the leader and the donkey.*

The people were so happy to see Jesus! *Everyone cheers together.*

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, making sure everyone has a chance to contribute:

- What was your favourite part of the story?
- What does it feel like when you see someone you love?
- How do you welcome others when they come to your house?

- How did the people feel when they saw Jesus?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: paper leaves; felt-tip pens; the outline of a branch drawn on paper; glue sticks

Ask the children how they felt when they were singing and cheering. How do they think the crowd felt? What did the people think about Jesus? Who did they think he was? Write all the words on small paper leaves and ask the children to stick them onto the branch one by one.

Explain that the important Jewish leaders were also watching the crowd and saying to each other: "Nothing is going right for us. Everyone is following Jesus." Talk about how they were feeling. The children may understand words like sad and cross, but you may need to explain trickier emotions, such as jealousy and frustration. Add these words to the outside of your picture.

+ PRAYER



You will need: palm branches from 'Intro activity'; upbeat praise music and the means to play it (optional)

Gather the children together and ask them to be quiet for a moment (try this for as long as they can manage!). Then say this prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that we can celebrate you together. Help us worship you in the fun times, but also in the sad times. Amen.

End your prayer time by getting the palms out and praising Jesus. If you have any praise music, play it as the children wave their palm branches around. (Supervise this carefully so that no one gets hurt.)