



PALM SUNDAY

MEETING AIM

To feel some of the excitement of Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 11:1-11

BACKGROUND

The noise and energy that accompanied Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem must have been quite something. There is much going on in this story beyond the noise and the singing. Jesus is announcing himself as the king and saviour promised by God, fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9. The people have been waiting a very long time for this, and have been oppressed by empire after empire. Whether the people get the saviour they want is another matter, but at this moment, their excitement is palpable. Help the children to catch some of the excitement about Jesus and to discover something of who he is.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the group about their week; share in their triumphs and drawbacks, and share something from your own week if appropriate.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: paper of different sizes, including lining paper; art materials; dowelling and garden canes; sticky tape
Show the children the art materials and challenge the group to make flags or banners that they could use to celebrate and welcome people. If the children are struggling for ideas, you could show them videos of football teams running onto the pitch, accompanied by flag-waving ball-girls and boys. Once everyone has finished, stick the flags and banners to dowelling or canes and practise waving them.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: Mark 11:9-10 written on card or on a PowerPoint slide; flags and banners from 'Intro activity'; a Bible
Gather the children together and show them Mark 11:9-10. Practise shouting the words that the crowds shouted as Jesus rode past them on a donkey. See how loudly and enthusiastically the children can shout! (If you disturb the adults or the young people in their groups, all the better!)

Tell the children that all this noise and shouting forms part of your story today. Go on to read Mark 11:1-11 from a child-friendly translation of the Bible, inviting the children to act out the first part of the story (verses 1 to 7) and then use the flags and banners from 'Intro activity' as the children shout out the words from verses 9 and 10. Alternatively, you could tell this story:

Jesus and his friends were travelling to Jerusalem for the important Passover festival, when God's people remembered how God rescued them from Egypt. They got to a place called the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of his friends into a nearby village. "As you enter the village," he told them, "you'll find a donkey tied up. Bring it here. And if anyone asks what you're doing, tell them that the Lord needs it." *Two volunteers should walk to the other end of the room.*

Off Jesus' friends went and found exactly that. They brought the donkey back to Jesus. *The volunteers return, miming leading a donkey.* They threw their cloaks on the donkey's back and Jesus climbed on. *Your volunteers can mime doing this. Ask for another volunteer to be Jesus and pretend to ride on a donkey.* He rode all the way to Jerusalem! As he rode along, crowds came out to see him. They waved their cloaks and branches from palm trees and shouted loudly. *All the children apart from 'Jesus' should wave their flags and banners and shout out the words they practised earlier from Mark 11:9-10.*

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- Why do you think the people were excited to see Jesus?
- What would you shout if you saw Jesus today?
- What makes you excited about Jesus?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art and craft materials; building blocks; Bibles; Bible storybooks; playdough

Before the session, gather together any resource you can find that will help children respond to the Bible story. What you provide is only limited by what you have access to. Set out everything you have collected and encourage the children to choose anything they might like to use to respond to what they have heard. They might want to create a picture or a model, play with the building blocks or read the story again in the Bible or a Bible storybook. They might just want to sit and reflect.

Facilitate whatever the children would like to do, making sure they can access the resources they want to and be available if the children want to chat or ask you questions. This activity is set at ten minutes, but you can spend as long as you would like to. This is time for children to listen to God and process what he is saying to them.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: recording of crowd noises and the means to play it

Ask the children to sit or lie down on the floor. Play the crowd noises and ask the children to imagine they are there in the Bible story, watching Jesus arrive in Jerusalem. Ask them to imagine that he stops in front of them. What do they want to say to him? What questions would they ask? How might Jesus reply? Allow a moment of quiet as the children think and pray.

ALEX TAYLOR

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THE LAST SUPPER

MEETING AIM

To discover the events and meaning of the last supper.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 14:12-26

BACKGROUND

Following the noise of Palm Sunday, Jesus has spent time in Jerusalem telling parables, teaching and generally turning people's expectations upside down. It's now Thursday evening and Jesus and his friends are celebrating the Passover. In the midst of this meal, Jesus uses the food to create lasting symbols of his upcoming sacrifice. Before the session, reflect on what these symbols mean to you and how you might explain that to the children in your group.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As the children arrive, welcome them by name. Ask the group about their week; share in their triumphs and drawbacks, and share something from your own week if appropriate.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: simple food to prepare (see below); kitchen equipment

Before the session, choose some simple food that your group can prepare as part of the session. This could be preparing vegetables and dips, making sandwiches or decorating biscuits and cakes.

Show the children the food you have brought and ask them to help you prepare it. Make sure you follow food hygiene guidelines (everyone should wash their hands!) and provide options for those children with allergies. As you work, chat about special meals you have experienced: when were they? What did you have? Ask if any particular food brings back memories for the children.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: chairs, a table and tablecloth (or picnic rug); plates; cups; cutlery; food from 'Intro activity'; a bread

roll; red juice

Ask the children to help you set the table for a meal. If you don't have a table large enough to seat everyone at, then set out a picnic on the floor. Place the food you prepared in 'Intro activity' in the middle of table (or picnic rug), as well as the bread roll and juice. As you do so, tell the children that every year, Jesus and his friends would prepare a special meal to remember how God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt – this was called the Passover. This happened hundreds of years before, but God's people still remembered it.

Invite everyone to sit down and read Mark 14:12-16. Ask the children what similarities there are between the passage and what you have just done. Start to eat the food together and after a minute or so of sharing read Mark 14:17-20. Ask the children what they think about this part of the story. Have they ever been let down by a friend?

Go on to read Mark 14:22 and act out what Jesus does with the bread roll. Share it with the children and invite them to eat a piece. Read Mark 14:23-25 and pour out some juice into the cups and share those with the children. Take a drink together.

Ask the children to imagine they are one of Jesus' friends there at the meal. They don't know what's going to happen next. What do they think the disciples think Jesus is talking about?

Finally, say that they finished the meal by singing together. Sing a song that the children know well, one that gives thanks to God.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of the story?
- What do you think the bread and the wine (juice) mean? (If appropriate, tell the children about what these symbols mean to you.)
- Have you ever seen a meal like this in church? What do you know about it?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art and craft materials; building blocks; Bibles; Bible storybooks; playdough

Before the session, gather together any resource you can find that will help children respond to the Bible story. What you provide is only limited by what you have access to. Set out everything you have collected and encourage the children to choose anything they might like to use to respond to what they have heard. They might want to create a picture or a model, play with the building blocks or read the story again in the Bible or a Bible storybook. They might just want to sit and reflect.

Facilitate whatever the children would like to do, making sure they can access the resources they want to and be available if the children want to chat or ask you questions. This activity is set at ten minutes, but you can spend as long as you would like to. This is time for children to listen to God and process what he is saying to them.

PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: Bible; bread roll; cups of red juice

Give the children a piece of bread and invite them to eat it. Read Mark 14:22 to the group and ask them to think about what they have discovered about Jesus today. Leave a moment of quiet to let the children think and pray.

Give the children a cup of juice and invite them to drink it. Read Mark 14:23-25 and ask the children to think about what they want to say to Jesus. Leave another moment of quiet, then finish with a closing prayer, thanking God for sending Jesus.

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CRUCIFIXION

MEETING AIM

To encounter the death of Jesus and think about what it means.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 15:16-41

BACKGROUND

This story can be incredibly sad for children. We spend much of our time with them talking about how wonderful Jesus is and how much he loves them (all of which is true), but here we see him die on the cross through no fault of his own. Be ready for all kinds of reactions as you explore this story with children, particularly from those who have never heard it before.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the group about their week; share in their triumphs and drawbacks, and share something from your own week if appropriate.

INTRO ACTIVITY

5 MINS

You will need: a large sheet of paper; a marker pen

Ask the children to think about different things that people do wrong. Don't go too serious here: try to stick to things that children encounter in their own lives. Write their ideas on one side of the paper. Then work together to think of suitable punishments for those things. For example, if someone is rude to you, they should spend five minutes telling you how amazing you are.

Once you have finished, chat about whether the punishment fits the crime. Finally, see if you can rank the things people do wrong in order of seriousness.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: video of the story of the crucifixion (see [youthandchildrens.work/links](#)) and the means to show it; a Bible; a cross

Gather the children together and explain that you are going to watch a film clip

that tells the story of Good Friday – the day on which Jesus died. Ask the children what they know about the story. Get some ideas from the group.

Play the video from [youthandchildrens.work.links](#) from the start to 4:05. Then read Mark 15:16-41. Show the children the cross and explain that this represents the kind of cross Jesus died on; crucified means put to death on a cross. Ask them what they think about this story. What is really happening here? Why did Jesus have to die?

If the children are sad about what happens, then show the remainder of the film clip, which tells the story of Jesus' resurrection.

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is the most important part of the story?
- What do you think Jesus' friends thought about what happened to him? How do you think they felt?
- Why do you think Jesus died on the cross?
- What does this story tell you about Jesus?
- What does this story mean to you today?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

10 MINS

You will need: art and craft materials; building blocks; Bibles; Bible storybooks; playdough

Before the session, gather together any resource you can find that will help children respond to the Bible story. What you provide is only limited by what you have access to. Set out everything you have collected and encourage the children to choose anything they might like to use to respond to what they have heard. They might want to create a picture or a model, play with the building blocks or read the story again in the Bible or a Bible storybook. They might just want to sit and reflect.

Facilitate whatever the children would like to do, making sure they can access the resources they want to and be available if the children want to chat

or ask you questions. This activity is set at ten minutes, but you can spend as long as you would like to. This is time for children to listen to God and process what he is saying to them.

PRAYER

10 MINS

You will need: a volunteer from the church leadership; a cross

Invite someone from your church leadership to come and speak with the children about the story of Good Friday. (Make sure that they have thought about how they might explain this story to the children in your group in an appropriate way.) Once they have done so, invite the children to ask any questions that they would like to about the story or what your visitor has said. Remember, what might appear silly questions to us might have a real importance for the child. Think around the question to try and understand what is happening in a child's head as they think about these issues.

At the end of your question time, invite the visitor to pray for the children. To be prayed for by someone 'in authority' in your church can be a formative experience for the group – that someone in charge cares enough to spend time with them and pray for them sends a powerful message to them about their value, particularly as part of a session where children are exploring the idea that Jesus died for them. Make sure you leave enough time for this at the end of your session.

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RESURRECTION

MEETING AIM

To hear that Jesus is alive!

BIBLE PASSAGE

Mark 16:1-8

BACKGROUND

After the sadness of Good Friday comes the joy and excitement of Easter Sunday. However, it's easy for the children to lose sight of what happens in this story amid the excitement of holidays, family visits and chocolate eggs ("How many did you get?!"). As you explore this story with the children, help them to start to see the eternal joy and victory among these few days of celebration.

CIRCLE TIME

5 MINS

As the children arrive, welcome them by name and share out any refreshments you have brought. Ask the group about their week; share in their triumphs and drawbacks, and share something from your own week if appropriate.

INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

You will need: a large sheet of paper; a marker pen

Sit in a circle and spread out the sheet of paper in the middle. Write the question: "What's the best thing that has ever happened to you?" Ask the children to think about their answer and then share that with the group. Write down all the different suggestions the children make, being careful that it doesn't turn into a time of one-upmanship! Try to tease out why these times are so good – initially they might seem to be all about spending money or material things, but behind that are times spent with family and friends, of achievement and fun.

BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

You will need: any materials you can gather to create a 'tomb' (see below); a Bible

Before the session, gather together boxes, pieces of material, clothes dryers – anything that you might use to make a 'tomb'.

Remind the children of what happened on Good Friday. Explained that when Jesus died, his friends put his body in a tomb. Read out Mark 15:42-47 to the group. Show the children what you have brought and use these items to create a 'tomb', together with whatever furniture you have in the room. Close your 'tomb' by rolling whatever you are using as a stone (eg a large beanbag or cardboard circle) to cover the entrance.

Explain that Jesus died just before the Sabbath, God's day of rest (Saturday), so for a whole day they couldn't do anything. Ask the children how Jesus' friends might have felt.

Early on Sunday morning, some women went to the tomb. Read out Mark 16:1-3 and ask the children to wonder how they might open the tomb. Read out verse 4 and ask someone to roll your 'stone' away. Ask the group how they women might have felt when they saw the tomb was open.

Look inside your 'tomb' and read verse 5. Again, ask the children what the women might be thinking now. Read verses 6 and 7 and wonder about what the angel said and what they women might do next. Finally, read verse 8 and see if the children would have done as the women did.

Explain that, for Jesus' friends, this must have been confusing, exciting, scary and joyful all at the same time. Do the children think this was the best thing that had ever happened to them?

CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What do you think happened next?
- How do you think Jesus came alive again? What happened?
- Why do you think he came alive again?
- What does this story mean to you today?

CREATIVE RESPONSE

15 MINS

You will need: art and craft materials; building blocks; Bibles; Bible storybooks; playdough

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children respond to the Bible story. What you provide is only limited by what you have access to. Set out everything you have collected and encourage the children to choose anything they might like to use to respond to what they have heard. They might want to create a picture or a model, play with the building blocks or read the story again in the Bible or a Bible storybook. They might just want to sit and reflect.

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PRAYER

5 MINS

You will need: the 'tomb' from 'Bible story'

Ask the children to sit around the open 'tomb' and spend some time in quiet, thinking about the events of Easter Sunday. Explain that, in two of the other Gospels, Matthew and John, Jesus meets the people who come to visit the tomb.

Ask the children to imagine that Jesus is standing there in the room with them. What would they like to say to him? Give the group a moment to think about this and then ask them to imagine what he would say in response. Again, pause for a moment for the children to think about this. If the children seem to be engaging with the activity, encourage them to have a conversation with Jesus.

Finally, ask what they have discovered about why Jesus died and came alive again. Thank God for all these things and ask that you carry on discovering this joyful good news.

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