**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 1 of 4

# Palm Sunday

### MEETING AIM

To explore the difference between how God wanted to ‘announce’ Jesus to the world and how the world (the Pharisees, the disciples and others) wanted to announce him.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

John 12:12-19

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

This is a pivotal moment in the grand story of the world. It is essentially when Jesus gives himself up to the authorities for them to kill him. In the world’s eyes, this might look like a mistake, weakness, failure…but he was demonstrating the upside down way that the kingdom of God operates, the epitome of subverting common understanding; that ‘winning’ could be achieved a different way, a nonviolent way of love. All of the prophecies and all of Jesus teachings are here: the crowd tries to put him on a pedestal, but he comes riding in on a donkey, refusing to play the celebrity, refusing earthly plaudits and worldly methods of gaining power, but making himself vulnerable and in doing so, undermining the sin of the world.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As people join you, share any refreshments you have. Ask the group to share what they have been doing during the past seven days. Ask everyone to say two things that they are happy about right now and two things that they are unhappy or cross about.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

Ask the group which celebrity is best and worst at social media. What makes them successful (or unsuccessful)? Work out which celebrity is followed on Instagram by the highest number of your group. If chaos ensues, ask them to list the top three celebrities they like to follow and create a table of results, and hopefully the most common celebrity will become self-evident!

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper; pens

Create two teams from your group. Ask them to imagine Jesus was to make his long-awaited return to the world and would be arriving in London in six months’ time.

Ask one group to devise a marketing campaign about God coming back to earth – a campaign so good and so huge that it would eclipse all other promotion campaigns the world has ever seen! (A good reference point might be the way boxing matches get so much press.) They have a budget of £500m and should think through everything from taglines to TV adverts to social media to venue hire to press conferences.

Ask the other group to come up with an alternative campaign with a more modest budget of £500! The aim is still to spread the message, but who are they trying to reach? How can the entire nation see the message behind it? This group should think more like a grassroots social movement – what is the real message that might get eclipsed by the big advertising campaign of the other group? How can they keep Jesus’ return to the key points of who he is and what he is about? How can they let people know about it but without compromising his values – what *are* those values?

Chat through the pros and cons of both campaigns and discuss the ways they could both help and hinder the spread of the gospel message.

Encourage the group to imagine they were the main players in the story. How might they answer these questions?

* What is the aim of this arrival in Jerusalem?
* How could it be used to my advantage?
* What are the threats or risks to me / my current situation?

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Chat about the story using these questions, encouraging everyone to join in if they want to:

* What do you think about the approach Jesus takes here?
* What does this approach tell you about Jesus?
* What response do you have to what Jesus does?
* What does this story mean to your life today?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** pens; paper

In pairs, think up a few similes for Jesus using the best feature of any celebrities, brand names, famous items, or movies, or songs. When you bring them all together after five or ten minutes, you will have a hilarious but also hopefully quite profound poem of how Jesus surpasses all the best bits of all the things we worship, look up to, follow and admire.

For example: “You are more everywhere than Coca-Cola, more bountiful than baked beans.”

“You would be more followed on TikTok than Khaby Lame and more liked on Instagram than Selena Gomez.”

“You are more meaningful to our childhood than Harry Potter, a better healer than even the NHS.”

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** poems from ‘Creative response’

Read out the poems from above again but in an attitude of prayer this time. Pause regularly and encourage the young people to be aware of Jesus inside every aspect of our world and culture. In that silence encourage them to ‘look’ for him in the quiet, humble places, such as when they enjoy a sunset, or in how they feel when someone gives them an unexpected gift, or when a member of their household hugs them when they are sad. End by thanking Jesus that he offers a different way of looking at our society and that among all the busyness and clamour for our attention, he is still King and more powerful and more kind, more forgiving and more loving to us than any other thing:

“You went to Jerusalem and quietly died on a cross and now you are now always present in our lives and live in our hearts. Amen.”

**JOEL TOOMBS**

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