**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# Palm Sunday

### MEETING AIM

To see the way that the events of Palm Sunday evolved.

### 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.

Tensions are rising – people are flocking to see and hear this amazing Jesus who paints a radically different picture of God than anyone had previously understood; but the religious leaders don’t like it one bit and they know they’d better act quickly before things get really out of hand. As Jesus makes a huge statement with his triumphal, kingly entry into Jerusalem, the Pharisees become even more determined to shut him down. For good.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments. Chat about what the children have done this week and ask them who the most famous person they’ve ever seen is.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** Post-it notes or paper; pens

Ask the children to get into pairs or threes and make sure they have Post-its and pens. Ask them to write down as many stories about Jesus as they can think of – one per Post-it. Don’t give them too long to do this. Ask them to come and stick their notes in a central area or just read out what the story is. Chat about why people would have loved this event. Ask everyone which people might not have liked this and why. For example, Jesus heals the paralysed man – people would have loved seeing the miracle, the man would have loved being healed but the Pharisees would’ve been super-mad that Jesus forgave the man’s sins.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** the phrases below written out on slips of paper; donkey mask (optional)

Start by pointing out the tensions you’ve uncovered from the opening activity. Lots of people love Jesus and what he’s doing, but the religious authorities think he’s bad news. Jesus knows that this tension isn’t going to end well for him, but he goes to Jerusalem anyway, where they are about to celebrate the Passover. Loads of people hear that Jesus is on the move and they all want to see him. Ask the group to sit in two lines facing one another, as if there is a road in the middle.

Give these phrases to four volunteers:

• Praise God!

• God bless the One

• who comes in the name of the Lord!

• God bless the King of Israel!

Get a volunteer to be Jesus and another to be the donkey – if you can get a donkey mask, so much the better. The donkey will need to be able to give Jesus a piggy-back so choose wisely! Ask them both to take their shoes off.

Ask the group what it’s like to be waiting to see someone famous. Have they ever been to a pop concert? Or maybe they’ve seen crowds on the TV. Ask them to try to feel that sense of excitement inside. The crowds were so excited that Jesus was coming and they believed he was a king – especially since, when he appeared, he was riding a donkey (as the prophet Zechariah had said in Zechariah 9:9). They laid down their coats (see the three other Gospel accounts) to make a red carpet for him, and they waved palm branches (that’s why we call this Palm Sunday). Ask everyone to take off their jumpers and make a carpet on the road between them. Then have Jesus and the donkey walk down the carpet, while your four volunteers read out their lines and everyone else waves their arms. If it’s your church tradition to give out palm crosses, you could get the children to wave these too.

Read out the passage and get the children to act out the story once more as you read.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

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

* Why did the crowd lay down their coats and wave palm branches?
* What do you think the crowd thought Jesus was going to do next? (Remember that Israel is under Roman control just now and no one likes that much!)
* How do you think Jesus felt about this episode?
* How do you think his disciples felt?
* How do you think the religious leaders and teachers felt?
* If you didn’t know any of these stories, what do you think would happen next?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** scraps of fabric; scissors

Three of the Gospel accounts talk about the crowd laying down their coats to make a red carpet for Jesus. Let everyone cut a jumper or coat shape out of fabric. Talk about whether you would let Jesus walk on your clothes. Are there some clothes that you’d be happy for him to walk on and some that you wouldn’t?

### PRAYER – 5 mins

The crowd on Palm Sunday were explosive and excited in their expression of praise for Jesus. Have a look at the four lines your volunteers read earlier. Ask the children to create their own lines of praise to Jesus. Once everyone has something, let everyone take turns to shout out their new lines of praise.

**JENNY CHEUNG**

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