



## PALM SUNDAY

### MEETING AIM

To explore the story of Jesus riding into Jerusalem and how the crowds responded to him.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 19:28-44

### BACKGROUND

This story is one of celebration tinged with sadness. The crowds welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, but opposition to him was growing and Jesus knew that his death was imminent. Palm Sunday can help us introduce the whole Easter story to children, particularly those who have never heard it before. How can you lay the foundations for the life-changing events of Easter today?.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting recently.

### PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** green or white A4 paper; scissors; green or brown felt-tip pens or pencils; crepe paper; glue

Cut out leaves from green or white paper. Your children can colour these and stick on crepe paper. They can cut out and create their own different leaf shapes and decorate.

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** coats, shawls and scarves; leaves from 'Play'

One person should be Jesus, the rest of your family the crowd. Encourage everyone to put on their coats etc. Decide where to locate 'Jerusalem', and choose one family member to go there before you start. Decide where the donkey in the next village will be found. Tell this story:

Jesus and his followers set off from the north of the country to travel to Jerusalem for Passover. At this festival, Jews celebrated when God rescued them from Egypt. Jesus knew he was going to die in Jerusalem. Jesus tried to help his

friends understand this, but they found it very difficult. Half the family walk round your meeting area in a tight group around Jesus.

The road was rough. Lots of robbers hung around there. So, Jesus and his friends travelled with lots of others, all going to Jerusalem for the festival.

After several days, they saw the city of Jerusalem. Jesus stopped and everyone in the small crowd with him stopped too. Everyone stands still facing 'Jerusalem'.

"Go into the next village," Jesus told two of his friends, "and when you find a young donkey there, untie him and bring him back to me!"

"What if someone asks us what we're doing?" they said.

"Say, 'The Lord needs it,'" Jesus replied.

Jesus sends two to find an imaginary donkey, which they 'untie' and bring it back as you read. The two disciples did what Jesus told them. They went to the village. They saw a young donkey. They untied it. When someone challenged them, they said... What did Jesus tell them to say? Pause for the answer. They brought the donkey back to Jesus.

All the remaining children join the others to make a larger crowd around Jesus.

Jesus got onto the donkey and headed towards Jerusalem. Long ago, King Solomon had ridden a donkey into Jerusalem to be crowned as king. The crowd got very excited. Jesus was someone special. They knew the Messiah was going to come as king. Was Jesus the Messiah, the king who would save them from the Romans?

They took off their coats and threw them on the ground! They shouted: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Hooray for Jesus! Make way!" Children take off their coats and shawls to lay on the ground in front of the donkey to make a carpet.

Jesus got closer to the city gates. People rushed towards him, to see what was going on. They snapped off branches from trees and shouted, "Hooray for Jesus! Make way!" Say this three times, getting louder each time. Throw the leaves onto the road.

As Jesus came through the city gate, he met crowds more people who had come for Passover. Some of these

joined in. But some did not like Jesus, what he said or did. They were planning to kill him! The one family member in Jerusalem wags their finger at Jesus, then turns their backs.

Jesus knew his enemies wanted to kill him but he went on into the city.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask your family these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- What it was like for Jesus in this story?
- Why did Jesus do what he did?
- What would it have been like for the crowd, for the owner of the donkey and for the enemies of Jesus?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** leaves from 'Play'; toy donkey (or a picture); an arch made of boxes

Sit the children, holding their leaf, in two lines facing each other on either side of a 'roadway'. Place the donkey in the middle, with your arch at one end.

Ask children to think, if they had been there, how close to Jesus they would have wanted to be. Setting out with Jesus at the start? Chosen to find the donkey? Joining Jesus as he approached Jerusalem? Just watching as he rode into the city? In Jerusalem, turning their back on Jesus? They should place their leaf somewhere along the 'roadway'. Invite comments on why they made their choice.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** more paper leaves; pens or pencils

Either use the same leaf or give children another paper leaf. Most people were very excited to see Jesus, but he was not going to be a king in the way that they imagined. He was going to rescue them but not in the way they expected. Children can either write or draw on the leaf something they want to say to Jesus.

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## THE LAST SUPPER

### MEETING AIM

To connect the children with the story of Jesus' last meal with his friends, which every church celebrates regularly, although children may or may not be participants.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 22:7-23

### BACKGROUND

If children have been around church for a while, they will have seen Holy Communion take place, but may not understand what is going on. This session will help them explore what the Lord's Supper symbolises and why Jesus told his disciples to remember what he was going to do for them.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning).

### PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** objects for Kim's game; cloth; tray; pens and paper

Lay out ten objects on a tray which represent something that appears in the Easter story, such as a nail, silver coins or a piece of bread. Explain what each object represents and where in the Easter story it appears.

Give your family one minute to memorise all ten objects. Cover up the tray and give everyone two minutes to draw a picture of the objects. Which were the easiest to remember? Why?

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** tablecloth; loaf of flat bread; bowl of red grapes

Lay out the tablecloth and sit around it. Place the bread and grapes near to you on the cloth. Tell this story:

Jesus had been telling his disciples he was going to die. But how could they understand? He kept on teaching in the temple; his enemies were getting more

and more angry, wanting to see him dead! But they could not find a way to kill him.

On the Thursday of Passover, when Jews celebrated God rescuing his people from Egypt, Jesus wanted to eat the special Passover meal with his friends. Ask the children if they know what Jesus would have eaten. This includes: roast lamb (the blood of the lamb was painted over the doorposts of the Israelite homes), bitter herbs (because life in Egypt was hard), salt water (as tears of sadness), flat bread (they were in such a rush, they had no time to let bread rise).

Jesus had known where to find the donkey he rode on into Jerusalem. Ask who remembers this from the last session. In the same way, he knew where they could eat this Passover meal.

Jesus said to Peter and John: "Go into the city. You'll meet a man carrying a jar of water. Follow him into the house and say to the owner: 'Our teacher wants to know where we can eat the Passover meal.' The owner will take you upstairs and show you a room. Prepare the meal there."

It happened just as Jesus said. Ask the children if they can remember what Peter and John had to do.

They gathered in this room at the top of the stairs. They ate the same food they had eaten every year at Passover. What do you think they drank? What colour was the wine? Jesus took a cup of wine. He thanked God for it. Then he handed it to his disciples and told them to drink it and share it with everyone else. No one was to drink it all. He told them this was his last meal with them.

Then Jesus did four things with a loaf of bread. It would have been a flat loaf. Ask if anyone can remember why; repeat the four actions Jesus did. He took the bread in his hands. He thanked God for the bread. He broke it. He gave it out to his disciples. He said: "This bread is my body which is given and broken for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me." Everyone took a piece as they passed it round.

Ask who can remember the actions; pass the bread round, reminding children to picture the scene of Jesus' last supper.

Then Jesus picked up another cup of red wine. Pick up the grapes. Jesus said: "This is my blood, which is poured out for you." He passed the cup round and everyone drank from the cup. Pass round the bowl of red grapes, specifying how many grapes each child can take. Suggest everyone holds their grapes until everyone has taken theirs, so you can eat your grapes together.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask your children these questions:

- Why do you think Jesus wanted his friends to have some actions to remind them of his death
- How do you think Jesus' disciples would have felt afterwards?
- Why is the service of Holy Communion or Eucharist important for Christians?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** a church leader to talk about Communion

Ask your volunteer to join you via video call. Brief them about chatting with your family about how your church celebrates communion and answer some of their questions.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** thick rubber bands; card; scissors; hole punch

Give everyone a piece of card to cut into any shape they like. They should write or draw something they've discovered about Jesus today which they don't want to forget. Punch a hole in the card, flatten the elastic band and thread one end through the loop made by the other end. Gently pull tight. Hang the cards around the house so they won't forget!

Ask God to help everyone remember what Jesus has meant to them today.

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## GOOD FRIDAY

### MEETING AIM

To listen to the whole story of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion and burial (with some omissions) so that the children can see how it all fits together.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 22:47-23:56

### BACKGROUND

Exploring the story of Jesus' death outside of Easter week gives space for you and your children to spend more time thinking about what happened and what this story means. It can be quite upsetting, particularly for children who have never heard it before. We will have introduced them to Jesus, who loves them and wants to be their friend, and now he is killed. Remember this, and be sensitive to how the children react as you explore the story.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning). What do the children know about Easter? How many of the things they mention are in the Easter story and how many are just what people connect with springtime?

### PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** copies of a picture of a cross that can be coloured in (search the internet or draw one yourself); felt-tip pens or crayons

Share out the pictures of the cross and colour them in together. As you do so, talk about Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and burial. Find out what your children know and don't know. Remember with this activity that it is the talking that is the important thing, not the colouring in. Children often talk more freely when their hands are occupied with an activity. These chats don't have the pressure of a face-to-face conversation, and so can flow more!

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** objects to create sound effects; copies of the Bible text and instructions; access to lots of different styles of music and the means to play it (optional)

Share out your sound-effect objects and copies of the Bible text. (Some sections for Luke 22 and 23 have not been included for brevity's sake.) Read the Bible text as the children follow, then add in the sound effects when they come up. If your family includes some able readers, you could ask them to read the words spoken by Jesus and Pilate.

After you have finished, look through the story and see if you can find any other sound effects to make. If you have time, you could score the story with appropriate pieces of music – happy music, sad music, dramatic music etc.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Chat about the story using these questions:

- What part of this story surprised you the most?
- What was fair about this story? What was unfair?
- If you were one of Jesus' friends, what would you have thought during the four different parts of the story?
- What do you think about Jesus dying? Why did it happen?
- What do you want to say to God after exploring this story?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials; old magazines; large sheets of paper; flat biscuits (such as Rich Tea); writing icing in different colours

Remind the family of the four parts of the story: the arrest, the trial, the crucifixion and the burial. Imagine they are all newspaper journalists and can only report on one of these parts, which one would that be? Think of as many newspaper headlines as possible and then choose the best.

Children could either make a collage of the newspaper headlines, using old magazine lettering, bubble writing or paint. Or they could ice plain biscuits

or cakes with a cross, using coloured writing icing.

As you work, talk about the story and everyone's reactions to it. Share something of what this story means to you. It would be good for all the adults to talk about this – this way the children get a lot of different views and see that they can respond to the story in their own way, rather than there being one way to see the story of the crucifixion.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

Begin to pray with the first line of the song 'When I think about the cross, when I think of Jesus, I'm reminded...' Go around in a circle and ask each child to complete that sentence as a way of saying thank you to Jesus.

Finish your time with a general prayer of thanks. Encourage your family that this is not the end of the story! Say that, as they think about this story, if they have any questions, they can ask you at any time.

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## LUKE 22-23

### PART 1: JESUS IS ARRESTED

<sup>22:47</sup>While Jesus was still speaking with his friends in the garden, a crowd came up. Stamp feet on floor, bang saucepan lids. It was led by Judas, one of the twelve apostles. He went over to Jesus and greeted him with a kiss. Make a kissing sound.

<sup>48</sup>Jesus asked Judas, "Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?"

<sup>52</sup>Jesus spoke to the chief priests, the temple police, and the leaders who had come to arrest him. He said: "Why do you come out with swords and clubs and treat me like a criminal? <sup>53</sup>I was with you every day in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. But this is your time, and darkness is in control."

<sup>54</sup>Jesus was arrested and led away to the house of the high priest, while Peter followed at a distance. <sup>55</sup>Some people built a fire. Crunch up newspaper and blow to get the fire to catch in the middle of the courtyard and were sitting around it. It was cold! Rub hands together and blow on them. Peter sat there with them, <sup>56</sup>and a servant girl saw him. Then after she had looked at him carefully, she said: "This man was with Jesus!"

<sup>57</sup>Peter said: "Woman, I don't even know that man!" Everyone says: "Not me!"

<sup>58</sup>A little later someone else saw Peter and said: "You are one of them!"

"No, I'm not!" Peter replied. Everyone says loudly: "Not me!"

<sup>59</sup>About an hour later another man insisted: "This man must have been with Jesus. They both come from Galilee."

<sup>60</sup>Peter replied: "I don't know what you are talking about!"

Everyone shouts: "Not me!" Right then, while Peter was still speaking, a rooster crows. Everyone crows.

<sup>61</sup>The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered that the Lord had said: "Before a rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will say three times that you don't know me."

<sup>62</sup>Then Peter went out and cried hard. Cry loudly.

### PART 2: JESUS IS PUT ON TRIAL

<sup>63</sup>The men who were guarding Jesus made fun of him and beat him. <sup>64</sup>They put a blindfold on him and said: "Tell us who struck you!" <sup>65</sup>They kept on insulting Jesus in many other ways until daybreak where he was brought to be tried by the religious leaders.

Tell your children Jesus was later taken before Pilate, the Roman governor. Here he was wrongly accused of three things:

"We caught this man trying to get our people to riot."

"We caught this man telling people to stop paying taxes to the Emperor."

"We caught this claiming he is the Messiah, our king."

Ask your children to tell you again if they remember the three accusations.

<sup>23:13</sup>Pilate called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people. <sup>14</sup>He told them: "You brought Jesus to me and said

he was a troublemaker. But I have questioned him here in front of you, and I have not found him guilty of anything that you say he has done."

<sup>18</sup>The whole crowd shouted: "Crucify Jesus!" Check children know what 'crucify' means, then shout this three times getting louder and louder.

<sup>20</sup>Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, so he spoke again to the crowds. <sup>21</sup>But they kept shouting: "Nail him to a cross!" Shout this three times as before.

<sup>22</sup>Pilate spoke to them a third time: "I have not found him guilty of anything for which he should be put to death. I will have him beaten with a whip and set free."

<sup>23</sup>The people kept on shouting even louder: "Crucify him!" Shout this four times. <sup>24</sup>Finally, Pilate gave in ... and handed Jesus over for them to do what they wanted with him.

### PART 3: JESUS IS CRUCIFIED

<sup>32</sup>Two criminals were led out to be put to death with Jesus.

<sup>33</sup>When the soldiers came to the place called 'The Skull', they nailed Jesus to a cross. Make the sound of hammer and nails. They also nailed the two criminals to crosses, one on each side of Jesus.

<sup>34-35</sup>Jesus said: "Father, forgive these people! They don't know what they're doing."

<sup>44</sup>Around noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until the middle of the afternoon. Clench your shoulders and shiver. <sup>45</sup>The sun stopped shining, and the curtain in the temple split down the middle. <sup>46</sup>Jesus shouted: "Father, I put myself in your hands!" Then he died. Long, sad pause! Invite the children to close their eyes.

<sup>47</sup>When the Roman officer saw what had happened, he praised God and said: "Jesus must really have been a good man!"

<sup>48</sup>A crowd had gathered to see the terrible sight. Then after they had seen it, they felt broken-hearted and went home. Cry loudly. <sup>49</sup>All of Jesus' close friends and the women who had come with him from Galilee stood at a distance and watched.

### PART 4: JESUS IS BURIED

<sup>50-51</sup>There was a man named Joseph, who was from Arimathea in Judea. Joseph was a good and honest man, and...a member of the council, but he did not agree with what they had decided.

<sup>52</sup>Joseph went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>53</sup>He took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in fine cloth. Rub together layers of cloth. Then he put it in a tomb that had been cut out of solid rock and had never been used. A stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb. Make a grinding sound as stone is rolled over the entrance.

<sup>55</sup>The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and watched how Jesus' body was placed in the tomb. <sup>56</sup>Then they went to prepare some sweet-smelling spices for his burial.



## EASTER SUNDAY

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on the experience of the women as they discovered that Jesus was alive. To wonder why this is important to us.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 24:1-12,36-39

### BACKGROUND

The celebration of Easter can get lost among Easter eggs and family trips out. This session should give you and the children the space to explore the real meaning of this story. Help the children discover the excitement and joy of Jesus' resurrection and wonder together about what it means.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments and chat about what your children have found exciting today (or yesterday, if you're doing this in the morning).

### PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** Easter eggs (chocolate or plastic – or chocolate balls, if you can't find Easter eggs); empty yoghurt pots

Before the session, hide the eggs around your house. Give everyone an empty yoghurt pot and send them off to find the eggs! (At the end, you might need to redistribute the eggs if some have more than others!)

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** a man's sandal; a woman's sandal; two card feet (one with a black 'nail mark', one white and sparkling)

On Friday, the women had watched Jesus die and saw his body being buried in a cave in a garden. They had gone home to fetch lots of sweet-smelling spices. They wanted to put these spices beside Jesus' body in the cave. This was what people did in a hot country, to hide the smell.

On Saturday, they stayed at home. It was the Sabbath, the day for resting. Early on Sunday morning, they got up,

put on their shoes and walked to the cave, carrying the spices. Produce the woman's sandal. If you'd been one of these women, how do you think you would have been walking? Remember it's almost dark, you're sad, the spices are heavy. Ask for demonstrations.

An enormous stone had been rolled across the cave. The women wondered how they were going to get in. But when they got there, the stone had been rolled away!

Jesus' body had disappeared. And right beside them were two men in shining white clothes, bright and dazzling! Produce the white sparkling foot.

The women fell down with their faces to the ground, where the only thing they could only see were these angels' feet. What do you think an angel's foot looks like? Ask your children what they think.

The angels spoke calmly to the women. They said:

"You won't find Jesus in a place where people are buried."

"He's not here!"

"He's come alive again and has a new body!"

"He told you he'd be nailed to a cross and three days later he'd rise again. Have you forgotten?"

The women remembered that Jesus had said this. They went to tell Jesus' disciples what they'd seen and what they'd been told. How do you think they moved this time? Ask for demonstrations.

The women told Jesus' disciples what the angels had told them. Can you remember what things the women would have said? Let the children tell you.

Jesus' disciples didn't believe the women. But Peter decided to find out for himself. Produce the man's sandal. How do you think he got there? Ask for demonstrations. Peter looked inside the cave. No angels or body, but the cloth that had been wrapped round Jesus' body was still there. The women were right!

Later that day, Jesus came into the room where his friends were. They thought he was a ghost! Jesus said to them: "Why are you scared? Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me. I'm no ghost. I've got flesh and bones."

Produce the card foot with the nail mark. Talk about how Jesus was nailed to a cross. The nail would probably have

gone through his ankle rather than his foot. We don't know how Jesus walked once he'd come alive again with a new body. We do know he walked and ate and talked with his disciples and 500 other people. They all knew that this was Jesus who had died but was now alive again!

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Use these questions to chat about the story:

- How important is it that women were the first people to be told Jesus had come alive again?
- Why do you think the disciples didn't believe what the women said?
- Why is it important to you that Jesus is not dead but alive?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** thin elastic bands; foot shapes made of card or craft foam; hole punch; felt-tip pens

Using felt-tip pens, children can write 'Jesus is alive' or draw a small cross (or any image from the Easter story) on the foam feet. Punch a hole in the foam and then attach these to the children's shoes. Say that when they see the foot on their shoe, they can remember the story and that Jesus is alive!

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** one large paper foot, felt-tip pens

The women's first reaction to what the angels said was to go and tell other people. Jesus is not dead. Jesus is alive! He is still alive and with us, by his Spirit, all the time.

On a large paper foot, invite children to write a note to Jesus telling him what they think about the fact that he is alive and with them now!

Conclude by asking that God will help us to be like the women and share the good news with others that Jesus really is alive today!

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