

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C – Palm Sunday**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Luke 23:1-49**

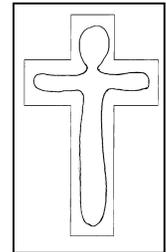
The Lord is full of compassion and mercy: Come, let us adore him. (Antiphon for Lent, Book of Common Prayer, page 81.) And what if, during this season of Lent, we sought a deeper understanding of this amazing gospel of grace? Will that image of grace energize us to do the spiritual housekeeping we need to be ready for the "new thing" God is doing in Easter?

**A notation for this week's Gospel**

Gathered in our comfortable churches, we struggle to let the difficult words of the Crucifixion land anywhere in our psyches. Would any of us have been there, or would we have waited for the news to reach us? Had we shown up, would we have demanded that Barabbas be released instead of Jesus? Would we have stood with the few at the foot of the cross? What time will we scrounge in the week ahead to pause and squint at the grace of this awesome love?

**Theme: What love is this?**

**Before Class.** Be prepared to relate today's scripture continuing all the way through Easter's Resurrection, especially if you will not have class on Easter. A project to help the children see that Jesus goes THROUGH the cross will require copying and cutting on your part. Copy the picture at the end of this lesson (see the thumbnail at the right) and cut the shape of Jesus out of the stock so they will be able to see through the cross. Then the children can decorate the cross, possibly coloring it brown and adding flowers at the base, if they so choose. You will need crayons, and you may want to offer glitter. Have a *Book of Common Prayer* with you. If the children were not in church, gather sufficient palms (or palm crosses) so each child can take one home. If your session will be significantly longer today, you may want to take the children on a walk outside if at all possible. You might want to check with the teacher of the older children to see if your classes could go together.



**Beginning:** Set up your altar, inviting the children to help you arrange the items they have made during Lent. If you are using a candle, light the candle. If the children have been in the worship service, or for part of it, provide an opportunity to hear what they observed. If they have picked up on the fact that people were waving palm branches because they were so glad to see Jesus, notice that with them. If they understood that we were also talking about Jesus dying on a cross, own that yes, that is sad. Today we are sad that Jesus had to die. And we thank God that Jesus did not stay dead.

**Praying:** Thank you, Jesus, that you love us so much that you were willing to die for us. Amen.

**The Story:** The people in charge were trying very hard to do the right thing. It is sometimes hard to know what the right thing to do is. They had lots of laws to help them do the right thing. They thought that Jesus was breaking their laws. They could not understand the things he was telling

people to do. So they decided Jesus had to be killed. And so they killed him by nailing him onto a cross. Just before he died, Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." And they did not know what they were doing. The people who loved Jesus took his body and placed it tenderly in a cave. They were very sad. Three days later, when they went to sit and be sad at the cave, the cave was empty! Jesus was standing there — looking different, but there. We call what happened "Resurrection." It means that Jesus went on through the cross by coming back from the dead and now is with God.

**Option:** To honor the children's need to move about, especially on a day with so much sitting, give each child a palm branch (or palm cross) and plot a parade outside, if the weather and your location permit, or inside, if that is preferable, even if just around the classroom. If the children want, they can sing something they know ("Jesus Loves Me," for example). If you are musically inclined you could teach them the setting of the Sanctus you use in your church (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 367) Or, if this portion is usually said instead of sung, you could teach the children the words, and you could say it together as you march around.

**Activity:** Give the children the crosses you have prepared for them. Tell them the hole in the cross means that Jesus has gone through the cross. Invite them to decorate the cross, and then have them decide how to decorate one for the altar.

**Option:** If your time with the children today will be extended as a result of the length of the worship service, and you think the children will be in church on Easter instead of in your class, you could select a portion of the service they may not know and rehearse it with them. Can they recite the Lord's Prayer, for example, or "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." found on page 363 of *The Book of Common Prayer*.

**Option:** If you have been caring for little plants to go home with the children, and you will not be meeting on Easter, the plants could be prepared to go home with the children. Tell the children we are not going to water them today, so they can travel better, but that as soon as they get home the plants will want a drink.

**Getting Closure:** Gather the children around your altar. Tell the children that this week, in our big church, all the things that are usually on the altar will be taken off to remember that Jesus was killed. So, let's take each thing we have on our altar off and put them in a safe place (a box, perhaps). Leave only the candle on the altar. Have the children position the cross they made for the altar on the altar, and then light the candle again. If the children are not too tired to be silent for a minute, invite them to sit and look at the candle for a minute. (If they are worn out from all the sitting, omit this!)

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, that you stretched out your arms on the cross and die. Thank you that you love us so much that you would do this. Amen.

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