

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Palm Sunday
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 12:1-8

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: Gather materials to produce "A Week in a Few Minutes" with your group. You will need several sheets of paper, felt markers or crayons, and masking tape to secure the paper to the wall. You may want to also have child appropriate magazines for them to use to create their art.

You will need Bibles or copies of the scripture for today, preferably one for each child, and copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Acquire a schedule of the services that will be offered in your church in the week ahead. (If the schools in your community will be on Spring Break, and the children will be in town, be prepared to tell them about the services offered during the day.) If the children are not in church today, be sure to acquire palm branches (or palm crosses) so each child can have one.

If your class is during the church service, the service will be longer today so you will probably use both options suggested. If the children were in church for the service, or for a part of the service, you will probably have only time for the second option.

Beginning: If the children have been in church for all or part of the service, invite feedback. What did they notice? What do they remember? If not, tell them that today we squeeze a whole week into our service and we will unpack that today.

Opening Prayer: Help us, dear God, to hear in the Scripture we have today the word you have for us. Amen.

Option One: Luke 19: 28-40. Tell the children this is the part of the story we use at the beginning of the service when people all have palms. This passage explains why we use palms. Perhaps you could read this passage to the children, asking them to follow along in their Bibles.

Questions:

Why did Jesus need a colt — a donkey colt, at that? (To ride into Jerusalem but not as a fancy king.)

What did the people do? (Verse 36)

Tell the children that we don't wave our coats, but use palms instead, because one of the other Gospel accounts (Matthew) tells that the people also cut branches from the trees, and most of the trees were palm trees.

Who did the people think Jesus was? (Verse 38)

Activity: Show the children the art supplies you have gathered. Tell them we are going to portray the events of Holy Week using drawings, words from Scripture, paraphrases, pictures or phrases from magazines that capture the scripture, or some of each. The children can choose. They can decide how many sheets for this passage. (Selecting the donkey? Jesus on the donkey? The crowds spreading their cloaks on the road? Or, the words we proclaim that are probably what those people were saying: Verse 38b)

Option: You might take the children for a walk, possibly with the younger children joining your group, outside if at all possible, waving the palms. If your situation (or the weather) precludes going outside, perhaps they could do a silent procession somewhere inside the church, waving palms, walking in silence, as quietly as possible.

Option Two: Luke 23: 1-49. Tell the children that this is such a long passage, you will summarize parts of it, and they can read parts of it. They can follow along in the Bible as you paraphrase and as others read.

Luke 23: 1 - 17. The leaders of the Hebrew people were now sure that Jesus was not only teaching things that they thought were wrong, but he was likely to get all of them in trouble with the Romans who were occupying their country. So they turned Jesus over to Pilate, the head Roman official. He couldn't find anything Jesus was doing that broke Roman laws, so he sent him on to Herod, the Judean ruler. Herod couldn't find anything illegal either, so he sent Jesus back to Pilate. There, Pilate thought he could get off the hook because it was the custom to release a prisoner. Surely the crowd would want Jesus released.

No such luck. They wanted Barabbas released, so Jesus then, would have to be crucified. (Ask the children if they have any questions at this point. And if they have a question you do not know how to answer, own the fact that you do not have all the answers. Tell them you will see what you can do by checking with the clergy and getting back to them.) Ask the children to be thinking about how they will portray this portion.

Ask a child to read each of the following verses. After each invite questions and clarifications and suggest the children be thinking of a way to portray each.

Luke 23: Verse 26.

Luke 23: Verse 32-33.

Luke 23: Verse 34

Luke 23: Verses 35 - 37

Luke 23: 39-43. As the children follow along in their Bibles, tell them that two thieves were crucified, one on each side of Jesus. One of them was bitter to the end; the other owned his crime and asked Jesus for forgiveness which Jesus quickly gave him, promising him that on that day the thief would be with Jesus in Paradise.

Luke 23: Verses 44-49. Read the words from the Bible, the children following along with you.

Activity: Facilitate the children's collaboration on how they will portray the elements of the story. If time is running out, they may want to select only certain portions to portray. Be available to consult with them if they ask your assistance.

Getting Closure: Gather the children in a circle. Ask them to line up their portrayals, in sequence, in the middle of your circle. Invite any comments they choose to make. Your response could be something to the effect that their work is helping you hold these events all together. The children may choose to post their work on the wall, or they may want to take it home with them. Let them choose. Remind them of the things happening at church this week and make sure they know about any special things happening on Easter Sunday.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for your amazing love of us. Walk with us on this journey through Holy Week. Amen.

Luke 19: 28-40

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples,³⁰ saying, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here.³¹ If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” just say this: “The Lord needs it.”³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them.³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, ‘Why are you untying the colt?’³⁴ They said, ‘The Lord needs it.’³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road.³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen,³⁸ saying,

‘Blessed is the king
who comes in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven,
and glory in the highest heaven!’

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, order your disciples to stop.’⁴⁰ He answered, ‘I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.’

Luke 23:1-49

23 Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate.² They began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’³ Then Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ He answered, ‘You say so.’⁴ Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no basis for an accusation against this man.’⁵ But they were insistent and said, ‘He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place.’

6 When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.⁷ And when he learned that he was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign.⁹ He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer.¹⁰ The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.¹¹ Even Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him; then he put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate.¹² That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

13 Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, ‘You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him.¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death.¹⁶ I will therefore have him flogged and release him.’

18 Then they all shouted out together, ‘Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!’¹⁹ (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.)²⁰ Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again;²¹ but they kept shouting, ‘Crucify, crucify him!’²² A third time he said to them, ‘Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him.’²³ But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed.²⁴ So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted.²⁵ He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

26 As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus.²⁷ A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him.²⁸ But Jesus turned to them and said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.²⁹ For the days are surely coming when they will say, “Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.”’³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us”; and to the hills, “Cover us.”³¹ For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.³³ When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.³⁴ Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they cast lots to divide his clothing.³⁵ And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’³⁶ The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine,³⁷ and saying, ‘If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!’³⁸ There was also an inscription over him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’⁴⁰ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’⁴² Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’⁴³ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon,⁴⁵ while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in

two.⁴⁶ Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last.⁴⁷ When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’⁴⁸ And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts.⁴⁹ But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

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