

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Palm Sunday**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**Scripture: Matthew (26:36-75) 27:1-54 (55-66)**

Lent invites us to step off our mental treadmills, take a breath, and look around. Lent invites us to ask: Where are we demanding solutions? Where can we risk staying in tension? Where are we blind just not noticing? What do we thirst for? Where are we bound or stuck? What will we risk doing during these 40 days of Lent to clear a space in which Easter can break through?

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

As we hear the story of Christ's passion today, how do we hear it anew? Where is this story hitting us differently this year? I wonder what questions you bring to the story and how it relates to your life today.

**Theme:** The crucifixion

**Before:** You will need copies of the scripture for today or copies of the Bible. You will need response materials: watercolors, chalk, markers, colored pencils, bits of colored paper and glue sticks, clay. If you choose to play music, make sure you are set up before the children arrive.

**Ways to Begin:** Gather as usual spending some time together talking.

**The Story: Matthew (26:36-75,) 27:1-54 (55-66)** This story will be read, usually as a drama during the church service. You may wish to provide an outline on newsprint for your class which would be as follows:

- 1) Jesus enters Jerusalem for Passover on the back of a donkey. He is greeted as the long-awaited Messiah.
- 2) During the week he throws out the Moneychangers in the Temple who are selling animals and birds for guilt offerings. This annoys the Pharisees and other high officials of the Temple.
- 3) On Thursday night he celebrates a meal with his friends telling them that the bread and wine is like his body and blood and in the future, whenever they eat and drink together, to remember this...that he will be with them in the substance of bread and wine.
- 4) After the meal, going out to pray, Jesus is confronted by soldiers, betrayed by Judas and arrested. He is condemned by the Sanhedran (Jewish leaders) and turned over to Pilate, the Roman Governor.
- 5) Pilate is hesitant to condemn him for lack of evidence but doesn't want to start a riot among the Jews who are calling for Jesus' death. Jesus provides no defense. The people choose to have Pilate release a murderer called Barabbas, and call for Jesus' death.
- 6) Jesus is whipped and condemned to death by crucifixion. His charge is blasphemy.
- 7) Jesus is crucified between two thieves.

Then have someone read or have a volunteer read Matthew 27:33-54.

**Questions:**

- As you hear this story, what strikes you, moves you, raises questions for you?
- Take a look at the central figures in the story: Judas, Disciples, Pharisees and temple leaders, Pilate, Barabbas, soldiers. What do you imagine was going through their minds as the events proceed from Palm Sunday to the Crucifixion?
- I wonder what their thoughts and feelings were at each point of the story.
- I wonder who you can identify with and why?
- If you had been standing at the foot of the cross, what questions would you have wanted to ask God?
- What questions still linger for you today?

**Activity:** Invite the children to express their responses to questions below with paint or markers, or poetry or some abstract design.

How do you understand the Holy Week events?

What is their meaning for you personally?

(Provide a variety of mediums...watercolors, chalk, markers, colored pencils, bits of colored paper and glue sticks, clay.)

You may wish to play some music such as a Bach Requiem as they work. Suggest they work very quietly.

**Getting Closure:** If time allows, invite them to share their creations with one another.

**Closing Prayer:** Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 220.)

## **Matthew 27:33-54**

<sup>33</sup>And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), <sup>34</sup>they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. <sup>35</sup>And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; <sup>36</sup>then they sat down there and kept watch over him. <sup>37</sup>Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” <sup>38</sup>Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. <sup>39</sup>Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup>and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” <sup>41</sup>In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, <sup>42</sup>“He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup>He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” <sup>44</sup>The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way. <sup>45</sup>From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>46</sup>And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” <sup>47</sup>When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” <sup>48</sup>At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup>But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

<sup>50</sup>Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. <sup>51</sup>At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

<sup>53</sup>After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup>Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

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