

date:



Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19

(Palm Sunday)

# PALM SUNDAY CELEBRATION

Jesus Is King







## **Inspire**

I attend the 9:00 p.m. service at my church on Sunday nights. I love this service because there is a sense of freedom. Since the service is characterized by energetic college kids, it's not unusual for people to raise their hands, shout, or even dance. I've found that people who come to "The Nine" come truly desiring to worship Jesus wholeheartedly.

This particular service is well known in our church because of the passion that is displayed. Because we're so willing to uniquely worship God, our worship leaders sometimes suggest new or different postures of response to God. I'll never forget one Sunday. The pastor had given an incredible message that left us challenged and inspired, and as the worship leader came on stage, he prayed and began to lead us in song. Halfway through the first song, he stopped. "I think it would be great," he said, "if we got to our knees to worship Jesus, our King." Suddenly the room was silent. We looked around at one another, bewildered.

The space between the rows of seats at my church is tight! It was almost comical to consider a little more than a thousand of us squishing together to kneel between the rows. But slowly, one by one, everyone maneuvered to his knees. Even the worship band followed suit. I will be honest: It was uncomfortable. Yet something about the experience was powerful—one thousand people in one room, uncomfortable, inconvenienced, willing to deny their needs in order to honor Jesus as King.

To me, it was a physical expression of what our hearts and lives should look like. We are called to glorify Christ regardless of our situations. We are called to be the sort of people who submit to God even when it's inconvenient. We are to lift up Jesus, always, because He is our King.



Erika Abdelatif
TruStory Team





## **Equip**

The people of Israel had long awaited their coming Messiah. From the beginning to the end, the Old Testament records the history of God's people awaiting the arrival of their promised Savior. They envisioned a king who would come with a sword and save Israel from its enemies. Their hope for this sort of Messiah is evident in the way they welcomed Jesus on what we refer to as Palm Sunday or the triumphal entry. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, crowds scurried to cut palm branches and wave them over Him as He entered the city.

The palm branch was a symbol of Jewish patriotism. It represented victory for the Jewish people. Palms were used in decorating Jewish coins, buildings, and even synagogues. They were prominently displayed during many of the major feasts and festivals. Throughout the Old Testament and various Jewish texts, palm branches were used to symbolize Jewish pride, and Israelites would only cover the ground with them for honorable and worthy individuals. For them to lace Jesus' path with palm fronds while waving branches over Him as He passed implied that they perceived Him to be a king coming to rescue them. In fact, the people cried out, "Hosanna," which means "Save us" or "Rescue us." The people shouted it in celebration, as if to say, "Hooray—He is here to save us!"

In His first coming, Jesus didn't intend to be an earthly warrior king. He came to restore a broken relationship between mankind and God. Instead of bringing a sword, He brought a message of peace and humility for true salvation. And one day He'll return to earth as our conquering King.

Jesus freed us from much more than earthly enslavement—He freed us from enslavement to sin. That is why, one day, people from every tribe and tongue will shout, "Jesus is King!"





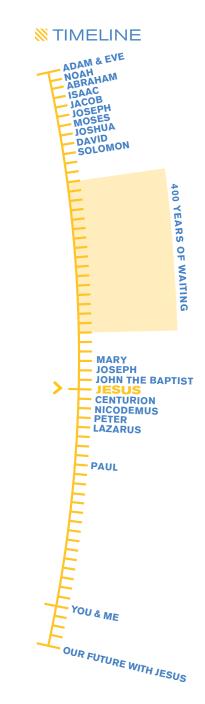


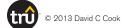
## **Support**

How do you honor a king? In the movies, everyone bows in the presence of a king. Sometimes a servant or messenger will kneel or walk backward so as not to turn his back to the king. This gives the king the honor and respect he deserves. Subjects bow down in submission, recognizing the power and majesty of the king.

The Bible proclaims that Jesus is the King of Kings! We probably don't bow down before Jesus—simply for the sake of giving Him honor—often enough. Sometimes we forget His position of authority and rule over us because He is such a loving and generous King.

This week, try remembering that Jesus is King. Every morning, spend a few minutes bowing down before God. Instead of running into His throne room with requests, spend a few moments worshipping and praising Him for who He is and the fact that you're His daughter or son.











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Experience	Time	Summary	Supplies/Prepare
Anticipate// Small Group Check-In	5–10 min.	Encourages interaction among kids, leaders, and parents; engages the kids in curiosity and anticipation of the lesson; and creates an inviting atmosphere.	Pin the Tail on the Donkey  • Donkey Poster (see Resource Files)  • tape  • yarn (4" per child)  • scissors (1 pair)  • blindfold
Celebrate// Large Group	20-35 min.	Establishes community and tells stories both personal and biblical in a fun and engaging way.	<ul> <li>Traditions</li> <li>mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)</li> <li>Connect</li> <li>Connect Question slide (see Resource Files)</li> <li>The Big God Story</li> <li>Bibles (1 per child)</li> <li>palm branches (real, paper, or other material)</li> <li>images: Arena, Map of Ancient World, Donkey, Prophecy, Royal Procession, Horses, Palm Branch (see Resource Files)</li> <li>optional: Palm Branch printable image (see</li> </ul>
Respond// Large Group	15-20 min.	Creates space for children to respond to the Holy Spirit in worship and community as a large group.	Resource Files)  Hosanna to Our King  • "Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)" by Brenton Brown  • Worship Response Stations
Respond// Small Group	15-20 min.	Discusses truth, reflects on the lesson, engages in relationships, and creates a project or a piece of art individually or together.	Reflect: Jesus Is King  • Bibles (1 per child)  Create Option 1: Crowning the King  • Crown template (see Resource Files)  • scissors (1 pair)  • markers and crayons  • gems, stickers, and other decorations  • tape  • large cross  Create Option 2: Palm Sunday Still Life  • construction paper (several sheets per child)  • scissors (2–3 pairs)  • tape  • optional: camera
Bless// Small Group	5 min.	Sends the kids out with a sense of peace and blessing so they can be a blessing to their families and others.	Bible HomeFront Weekly (1 per child; see Resource Files) HomeFront: A Spiritual Parenting Resource (1 per family; see Resource Files or <a href="https://www.HomeFrontMag.com">www.HomeFrontMag.com</a> )





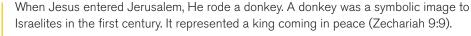
# Anticipate// 5-10 min. Small Group Leaders



An energizing time for parents and kids to start engaging with the material that will be presented in the lesson.

It is intentionally designed to spark curiosity and cultivate a sense of awe and wonder about God.

Encourage parents to participate in this time with their kids.



# Pin the Tail on the Donkey

## SUPPLIES

- Donkey Poster (see Resource Files)
- tape
- yarn (4" per child)
- scissors (1 pair)
- blindfold

#### **SET UP**

Print and tape together the Donkey Poster. Hang the poster on the wall. Measure and cut a four-inch piece of yarn for each child.

## **ENGAGE**

Play this classic children's game as the kids arrive to get them curious about the part of The Big God Story they'll hear today. One at a time, blindfold each child, and hand him a piece of yarn with a piece of tape attached to one end. Then give him a turn guessing where to "pin" the tail on the donkey (using the tape and yarn).

For older kids, add a challenging twist to the game by spinning them around in circles before they pin the tail.







# Celebrate//20-35 min.

Host/Storyteller



Kids get to be a part of the faith community of God's family.

They participate in traditions and share them with newcomers, connect through fun and interaction, and experience The Big God Story through storytelling.



# Partner Church Comments

"We covered the floor of our room with palm branches, and the kids were very surprised. It made the lesson come alive." International Church of Las Vegas

# **Welcome and Traditions**

# **Connect**

Question

Have you ever seen a royal procession? If so, what did it look like? If not, what do you imagine a royal procession would look like?

# The Big God Story

## **Leader Tip**

Before sharing this part of The Big God Story, tell your kids they're about to hear a true story that's recorded in the Bible. Open your Bible to Matthew 21:1—11 (and later John 12:12—19), and invite kids to follow along in their own Bibles as you storytell.

# **Ponder Point: Jesus Is King**

Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19 Storytelling Technique: Images and Interactive Response SUPPLIES

- Bibles (1 per child)
- palm branches (real, paper, or other material)
- slides: Arena, Map of Ancient World, Donkey, Prophecy, Royal Procession, Horses, Palm Branch (see Resource Files)
- optional: Palm Branch printable image (see Resource Files)

## **SET UP**

Hand out the palm branches beforehand or set them up front to hand out during the storytelling time. Note: If you don't have actual palm branches, print copies of the Palm Branch printable image for the kids. (Cue the slides.)

## **ENGAGE**

By a show of hands, who loves holidays? What's your favorite thing about holidays? (Allow kids to respond. If you want, share your answer.) I think we can safely say everyone loves holidays. One of the Jews' most important holidays was called Passover.

Today's part of The Big God Story begins in the city of Jerusalem during one of the most important Jewish feasts: Passover. Passover was one of the three feasts Jewish people traveled to Jerusalem to attend. About one hundred thousand





people lived in Jerusalem. So when people traveled from all over to go there, the city's population got three times bigger. Wow!

Many of the people who had come to the festival in Jerusalem had heard of Jesus and were hoping He would be there. They had heard about Jesus healing people and even raising a man from the dead! They hoped Jesus was the Messiah—the One prophesied about for hundreds of years.

Imagine a crowd of people—maybe so many people that they could fit in an arena (Show Arena Slide)—all hoping to see one person: Jesus. Jewish people had been waiting since the beginning of The Big God Story for the promised Messiah. They knew the Messiah would save His people. Because the people were living under Roman rule (Show Map Slide), they thought the Messiah would save them from the Romans. The people were expecting a warrior king to ride in on his magnificent horse and beat the bad guys so they could be free again to live as God's people.

Of course, Jesus is the King of Kings. He is King over everything because He is God! But He wasn't the kind of Messiah the Jewish people thought He would be. He had come to save them, but not from their enemies or Roman rule. Jesus had come to save His people and the rest of the world from their sins. This would be a hard fact for many Jewish people to accept. They had expected for so long that the Messiah would be a warrior king, but Jesus wouldn't be that kind of king yet.

The Bible says that as Jesus and His disciples approached Jerusalem, Jesus sent two disciples to find a donkey and its colt and bring them to Him (Show Donkey Slide). If you wanted to find a donkey, where would you look? I mean, they aren't exactly wandering the streets. Jesus said, "If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away" (Matthew 21:3).

Jesus knew ahead of time that the person with the donkeys would want to give Him a donkey to ride on. He knew this because He is God, but He also knew the ancient prophecy in the Bible that said (Show Prophecy Slide): "See, your king comes ... gentle and riding on a donkey" (v. 5). Jesus knew His choice to ride in on a donkey was the fulfillment of prophecy.

Once the disciples brought the donkey to Jesus, they threw their cloaks over it like a saddle, and Jesus climbed on, prepared to ride into Jerusalem where the crowds of people waited to see Him—the man whom they expected to be their Messiah and king. If you were waiting for a king, what would you imagine would happen when he showed up? (Show Royal Procession Slide.) You might imagine that he had a caravan of people or chariots, that trumpets would sound, or that soldiers would walk with him. Or you might imagine him riding on a big, beautiful, decorated horse, like kings did when they headed to war (Show Horses Slide).

# Partner Church Comments

"I also added some video clips for the triumphal entry."

Mount Paran North Church of God







# Partner Church Comments

"Talking with the children about what a king would normally ride into town versus what Jesus did was impactful."

The Beacon



Well, Jesus—the King of Kings—chose to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. He was riding on the donkey for a reason. Why do you think this was how He entered Jerusalem? (Allow answers.) Well, back in Bible times, donkeys symbolized humility and peace. Jesus rode on a donkey because He was trying to show His people that He was indeed the King they sought, but not in the way that they had imagined.

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the Bible says, "A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road" (Matthew 21:8) (Show Palm Branch Slide). "They took palm branches and ... [shouted] 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (John 12:13). (Give the kids a chance to act out the scene by waving palm branches and shouting, "Hosanna!") Back then, people spread their garments on the pathway to cushion the ride of a king. They also waved palm branches because palms symbolized triumph. The word *triumph* means victory. So the Jewish people waved palms because they thought Jesus would bring military victory over the Roman government.

They also shouted, "Hosanna!" This word means "Save us!" Clearly, these people wanted Jesus to save them. They thought Jesus would save them from living under Roman rulers. But they had no idea how much Jesus actually *would* save them! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus saves everyone who believes in Him from the chains of sin and death. Wow!

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem that day, He knew the crowd had an incorrect view of Him. They thought He would only save them from their earthly problems. They knew He was a king but wrongly thought He was only an earthly king. Jesus wanted them to know that His kingdom and His reign are much bigger and much greater than simply a kingdom on earth. But Jesus did not come as an earthly king on a warrior horse to take down the Roman government. He is God of the universe, the King of Kings, who sacrificed Himself in love to save people from the misery of sin and death! Jesus is the wonderful King who came to earth to conquer sin so He could save everyone who believes.

God still wants to show us who He really is. And sometimes we miss it because He is so different from what we expect Him to be, or we have an idea of God that isn't really true. We might think God is like Santa Claus—someone who is there to give us what we want. We might think God doesn't care because we can't see Him. We might not trust Him or believe that He loves us because the people in our lives have not been trustworthy or loving. But God wants us to know who He truly is—the God who loves us and who is also the King of everything.

God wants us to know Him. Our part is to cry out to Him and allow Him to help us submit to who He is and what He wants to do in us.





# Respond// 15-20 min.



This is a time for kids to worship through silence, prayer, singing, giving, sharing, thanksgiving, and many other ways.

Make plans for your worship time, but prepare yourself and your team to hold them loosely if the Holy Spirit leads the group in a different direction.

# Partner Church Comments

"The 'Hosanna' song you suggest for large group response is the song we sang in the sanctuary with our palm branches!"

Mount Paran North Church of God

# Hosanna to Our King

#### **SUPPLIES**

- "Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)" by Brenton Brown
- Worship Response Stations (see below)

### **SET UP**

(Cue the song.)

#### **ENGAGE**

Jesus may not have been the earthly king the Israelites had been hoping for. However, because Jesus died and rose again for our sake, we know He is our heavenly King for eternity—who will also rule over a new earth, forever. Because we know Him for who He truly is—a God who loves us and cares for us—we can worship Him all the time, regardless of what happens. We know He has a bigger plan, both for our lives and for His kingdom! As you consider God being your King, feel free to dance, shout, and celebrate Him!

Lead the kids in a time of worship through singing. Play "Hosanna (Praise Is Rising)" for the kids, and let them respond as they choose. They may want to sing and dance, or perhaps they'll choose to respond by visiting one of the Worship Response Stations.

## **Worship Response Stations**

Worship Response Stations give kids the opportunity to worship God corporately and individually. Choose from the examples below, or create your own Worship Response Stations and make them fixed features in your large group space. Find images and more detailed ideas for constructing them in the How It Works document among the Resource Files.

## 1. Prayer Wall

Kids write prayers on sticky notes or small squares of colored paper and secure them to a corkboard, magnet board, whiteboard, or other memo board.

## 2. Prayer Journals

Kids express their thoughts and prayers by writing in a journal. For this station, provide pencils or pens and several notebooks in which the kids can write collective prayers. You can make the notebooks available at the Prayer Wall or at a separate station.

## 3. Giving Boxes

Kids and their families give money offerings as an act of sacrificial worship.

## 4. Encouragement Cards

Kids and their families write notes of encouragement, love, or affirmation to each other, their friends, and other people.





# Respond// 15-20 min.



A time to engage in relationship, reflect on the lesson with spiritual conversation, and/or create a meaningful project or piece of art.

#### NOTES:

# Partner Church Comments

"The crowns allowed for the kids to put their thoughts into words or pictures and then lay them at the foot of the cross or take them home and pray about them."

Good Shepherd Church

# **Reflect:** Jesus Is King

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, crowds of people lined up to worship Him as they would worship a king. They cried out, "Hosanna!" and put palm branches down onto the street. These were things people did to worship a king. Jesus was trying to show the crowd that He was not the kind of king they expected. Jesus was showing them He was God—the King of Kings. (Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.)

## **Questions for Younger Kids**

- Why did Jesus ride on a donkey? (Matthew 21:1-5; John 12:14-15)
- What were the people shouting as Jesus rode into Jerusalem? (Matthew 21:9; John 12:12–13)
- · What does hosanna mean?
- What kind of king is Jesus?
- · How can we show Jesus, today, that He is our King?
- · How can we worship our King?

## **Questions for Older Kids**

- Why did Jesus ride on a donkey? (Matthew 21:1-5; John 12:14-15)
- · Why were the people waving palm branches?
- · Why wasn't Jesus the kind of king they were hoping for?
- · What kind of king is Jesus?
- · What does hosanna mean?
- Is there a place in your life where you feel like shouting, "Hosanna!" to Jesus?
- Today, how can we show Jesus that He is our King?
- · What does it mean to you to have Jesus as King of your life?

# Create Option 1: Crowning the King

## **SUPPLIES**

- Crown template (see Resource Files)
- scissors (1 pair)
- · markers and crayons
- gems, stickers, and other decorations
- tape
- large cross

## **SET UP**

Print and cut out a crown for each child. Place the cross at the front of the room.





#### NOTES:

#### **ENGAGE**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the Israelites recognized Him as King. The problem was, they didn't know what kind of king He really was! We, however, have the privilege of knowing Jesus for who He really is: the King of Kings! Today we will worship Jesus and let Him know He is our King!

Invite the kids to take a crown. Read aloud Zechariah 9:9, 1 Timothy 6:14–16, and Revelation 17:14, which explain what kind of king Jesus is. Ask the kids what they think about these verses and how it makes them feel to know they can be in relationship with Jesus, the King, and how this matters in our lives.

After you've talked about who Jesus is, encourage the children to write or draw on the inside of their crowns something they would like Jesus to know, or have them write or draw something that tells Him He will be the King in their lives. If there is time, encourage the kids to decorate the outside of the crown for Jesus. When they're finished putting together their crowns, ask them if they would like to set their crowns before the cross, telling Jesus they want Him to be their King.

# Create Option 2: Palm Sunday Still Life

#### **SUPPLIES**

- construction paper (several sheets per child)
- scissors (2-3 pairs)
- tape
- · optional: camera

#### **ENGAGE**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, the Israelites recognized Him as King. The problem was, they didn't know what kind of king He really was! We, however, have the privilege of knowing Jesus for who He really is: the King of Kings! Today we will worship Jesus and let Him know He is our King.

Encourage the kids to use the construction paper and tape to create a "snapshot" of the scene of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. Kids can make palm fronds out of green paper, crowns and Bible-times head coverings out of yellow or brown paper, etc. They can even make their own donkey out of brown paper. Once the kids have built their scene, have them act as if they'd actually been on the scene.

If you have a camera, take a picture of them as they act as a "still life" of the action.

# Partner Church Comments

"Cut large pieces of brightly colored wrapping paper in long strips. Have kids write on the strip who Jesus is. Take the strip and drape it over the cross (like fabric). Then, on Easter Sunday, place the cross somewhere that people can see it. We did this two years ago and people loved to read what the kids wrote."

Brookwood Community Church







# Bless//smin.

**Small Group Leaders** 



A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words of encouragement or guidance.

A blessing can be offered in order to ask God's Spirit to overflow from the child's life to bless others or prayed over a child for the purpose of declaring God's protection, joy, or wisdom.

As you bless your kids, tell them they have the opportunity to also be a blessing to others. Encourage them to freely share the joy and love they have received from God.

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Matthew 21:9:

"Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

This week, may you live your life knowing God knows what is best for you. May you sense God is with you in your highs and your lows, guiding and directing your life. May you glorify Jesus as the King of Kings in all your actions!

# home|front

HomeFront Weekly: Be sure to send home the HomeFront Weekly for next week's lesson! This preteaching tool for parents encourages families to spend time in God's Word together before children arrive at church.





## HomeFront: A Spiritual Parenting Resource:

This magazine gives families ideas for creating fun, spiritually forming times in their homes—setting aside a sacred space for family in the midst of their active, everyday lives! As the new issue becomes available each month, you may choose to print them for families or encourage them to visit <a href="www.HomeFrontMag.com">www.HomeFrontMag.com</a> to subscribe to have the magazine sent directly to their inbox. HomeFront is also available as an app for your iPhone, iPad, or Android device.