



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## LESSON 25

### ***Jesus Enters Jerusalem (Palm Sunday)***

#### **Summary of Today's Story**

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Jesus and his disciples come to Jerusalem for the Passover. Jesus tells his disciples to find a donkey and bring it to him. He gets on the donkey and rides into Jerusalem.

As he enters the city, a crowd of people spread their cloaks on the road. Other people spread palm branches on the road before him, shouting, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

#### **Where You'll Find Today's Story**

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##### **In the Bible**

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

**Matthew 21:1-11**

##### **In Children's Bibles**

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

##### **In Our Sunday Lectionary**

Today's story is told in church on the following Sunday:

Year A: Palm/Passion Sunday

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## Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

Most of the people at the time saw Jesus as an earthly messiah or a prophet. But we know him as the Messiah, the one who comes from heaven to reconcile us with God.

This story of Palm Sunday, though it depicts Jesus' "triumphal entry into Jerusalem," contains in it the seeds of sorrow. For we know also that his journey ends not in triumph but in death. We know that later he "was crucified, died, and was buried." We know that the people later deny him, that Peter later denies him, that even we sometimes deny him. And Jesus knew that, too.

Still Jesus stayed with us to the end, to his crucifixion and death. He remained true to his mission—to be *God with us*. This event, which we call *Palm Sunday* or *Passion Sunday*, is the beginning of the end of his mission. But it is also the beginning of new life for us, as Jesus gives his own life to bring us new life in him.

That is why this time—the beginning of Holy Week, the most solemn time of our church year—is so important to us as Christians.

It is fitting that this Palm/Passion Sunday event begins our Holy Week, for in Jesus' life and ministry his entry into Jerusalem just before the Passover was an enacted symbol of the coming of the reign of God. Jesus knew the prophetic writing of Zechariah 9:9:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah here proclaims the coming of the ruler of God's people, one who would restore Jerusalem

to the eschatological glory promised to her as the mother of Israel. Jesus takes this symbolic story of Zechariah and enacts it in reality, to signal the reign of God coming to fulfillment in him—*God with us*.

Jesus' enactment of the coming of the reign of God will continue as he brings to his people a renewed covenant between God and God's people in his Last Supper. As he shares his body and blood with his disciples, it becomes clear that Jesus himself is the center of that new covenant. Jesus becomes for us the fulfillment of God's promises of union with God in a new creation.



## The Episcopal Thread

The service of The Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday (*BCP*, p. 270-273) is one of the most majestic services of the entire Church year, marking the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week of the Church year.

On this day, Episcopalians will ring out with the processional hymn for the Liturgy of the Palms, Hymn 154 from *The Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985):

All glory, laud, and honor to thee, Redeemer,  
King! to whom the lips of children made sweet  
hosannas ring.

When the people greet Jesus with the acclamation, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" we are reminded of the words we sing at the beginning of the Holy Communion (the Sanctus): "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest." (*BCP*, p. 362) So at every Eucharist, we sing the song that the people cried as they waved their palms to Jesus, acclaiming him as the Blessed One of God.



## Gathering

As the children begin arriving, engage them in a simple activity in preparation for

the lesson. Today you might tape a large piece of butcher paper to the wall and invite the children to begin a mural. Provide green and plain white construction paper and have the children draw palms and cloaks and cut them out, then glue them onto the bottom half of the butcher paper. Later the children can draw large pictures of people and of Jesus on a donkey and add them to the mural. For other Gathering activity ideas, see pages 1-2 in the Appendix on the Website.

As an option for the older children, you might offer a brief fellowship time. This gives them a chance to visit with each other and encourages them to build relationships and community.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer, such as:

- Thank you, Lord, for being with us today. Show us the light of your love as we hear the story of your Son Jesus, who came into Jerusalem to be hailed as our king. We ask this in the name of Christ.  
*Amen.*



## Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or

read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-9.

If you tell the story, focus on the large crowds of people who hail Jesus as the Messiah, the one "who comes in the name of the Lord," though by later this week they will have him killed. But now, tell about the joy in the city, the cloaks spread out and the palms thrown down to greet him as people in those times greeted the arrival of a king.

You may connect this story to your church's celebration of Palm Sunday in your worship service, especially if you have the children re-enact the story in the procession of palms and/or tell the story in dramatic form.

Or you could show excerpts from the film version of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, specifically the scene relating to Christ's passion. There are also other, more traditionally presented films depicting Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and showing the kind of excitement that Jesus' action generated, which very soon dissolved into the chaos around Jesus' condemnation and death.

After telling the story, proceed to Prayer, saving any discussion for later, while having snacks or doing an activity.



## Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

### Materials

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

*For younger children:* Matthew 21:8

*For older children:* Matthew 21:8-9

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

*Reader:* A reading from the Gospel of Matthew:  
(*Read the selected passage.*)

*Reader:* The word of the Lord.

*All:* Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week.
- Welcome prayers of concern or petition. Children may offer prayers for themselves or for others in need or trouble.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



## Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- For this food that God has given us, and for the hands that made it, let us thank the Lord. *Amen.*

Or:

Bless each of our families.  
 Bless this food that we eat.  
 May we be a blessing  
 To all that we meet. *Amen.*

—from *One Hundred Table Graces*, p. 94  
 (New York: Bell Tower, 1992)

Or have children say a table grace that they have learned elsewhere.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Help the children compare the kind of king that Jesus was to earthly kings by asking questions such as:

- How is Jesus different from earthly kings?
- What earthly king rides a donkey?
- What earthly king is servant to his people?







## Memorization

Older intermediate children may learn the Sanctus that is sung at the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*



## Weaving Our Faith

As the class draws to a close, help the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:

- What was today's story about?
- Who was in this story?
- What did Jesus do?
- What did the people do when they saw him?

Encourage the children to remember key words or phrases from today's story, such as: *Jerusalem, donkey, palms, hosanna, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."*



## Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes in the knowledge of God's love and protection. Make up a prayer of your own or use the following:

- Heavenly Father, we thank you for bringing us together to celebrate your Son Jesus Christ as Messiah and King of the whole universe. Help us this week to spread his love to our families and friends in all that we do, in his name. *Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## MATTHEW 21:1-11

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem with his disciples. He knows that when he gets there, the leaders will try to arrest him. He wants to make too many changes, and changes are dangerous.

Jerusalem closes on them as they walk from Jericho. Its hills and small mounts stand tall, with the temple shining bright in the sunlight on the temple mount.

Jesus has a plan for entering the city. He remembers what one of the old prophets said to the Israelites a long time ago: “Tell the daughter of Zion: Look, your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

Jesus is the King now. He is not just any king. He is the Son of David, the holy One of Israel, whom God has sent to save Israel and her people. He is the Son of God, sent from God. Later, we will also call Jesus the King of all creation.

So Jesus will now show himself as king, the humble king coming to Israel. He calls two of his disciples and says, “Go to the village just up ahead. When you get there, you will find a donkey tied up to a fence, with her colt with her. Untie the donkey and her colt and bring them to me.”

The disciples say, “But what if somebody says something to us? They are not our animals.”

Jesus says, “If anyone says anything to you, just say this. ‘The Lord needs them.’ The owner of the animals will give them to you right away.”



So the two disciples go to the village up ahead. There, just as Jesus told them, they find a donkey and her colt tied to a fence. They take the ropes off and walk the two animals back to Jesus.

Jesus goes up to the donkey. One of the disciples puts his cloak on the donkey. Another puts his cloak on it also. Then Jesus gets up upon the animal and the donkey starts to walk straight toward the gates of Jerusalem.

A crowd sees Jesus on the donkey. Maybe they too remember Zechariah's words, "Your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey." Maybe they just recognize Jesus and know what he has done for them. Maybe they know that Jesus has been sent from God.

As the donkey with the colt ambles along toward Jerusalem with Jesus on it, people take off their cloaks and spread them on the road—a greeting for a king. Other people cut some big branches from the palm trees that line the road. They take these branches and spread them on the road also. Cloaks and branches fill the road to greet Jesus and welcome him to Jerusalem.

Other people in the crowd go ahead of Jesus. They are announcing his arrival. They shout, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Jesus rides into Jerusalem, the crowd in front and behind him shouting and waving and cheering. The whole city is excited. Some people ask, "Who is this person?"

The crowds shout excitedly, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth! Jesus is here!" Yes, Jesus is now in Jerusalem. Soon the welcome will be gone. But now, he enters in triumph, to the cheers of the people of Jerusalem.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

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## PALM SUNDAY PLACE MATS for Preschool

Children make place mats that recall Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem.

### Materials:

- construction paper: green, and white (or other colors for the place mat backing)
- clear stick-on shelf paper, 2 pieces per child
- scissors
- glue
- markers or crayons
- optional:* small piece of "biblically appropriate" fabric (no Hawaiian prints!)



### Preparation:

Cut narrow strips of green construction paper, approximately 8" long, for the *palm frond stalk*. Cut *palm leaves* of varying sizes from the green paper. On the white construction paper, write, *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*. Make enough frond stalks, palm leaves and papers with captions so each child can take home one place mat.

### Directions:

Give each child the construction paper with the caption and invite them to make a Palm Sunday place mat to use at home. Help the younger children as needed:

1. Have each child glue a green palm stalk onto the construction paper with caption.
2. Show them how to add the green paper leaves to the stalk with glue to make a palm frond.
3. Let the children decorate their place mats with colors or markers if they desire.
4. Cut two lengths of clear shelf paper, about the same size as the place mat, for each child. Lay one out flat, sticky side up. Carefully lay the place mat on top. Then place the other sheet over the top of the place mat, being careful not to let it wrinkle.
5. Trim off the excess edges of the shelf paper.

### Variation:

For a transparent place mat, leave out the construction-paper backing.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

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## PALM SUNDAY FLAG(S) for Intermediate

Children make a flag that depicts a Palm Sunday scene. (*This could be an individual flag or a group project.*)

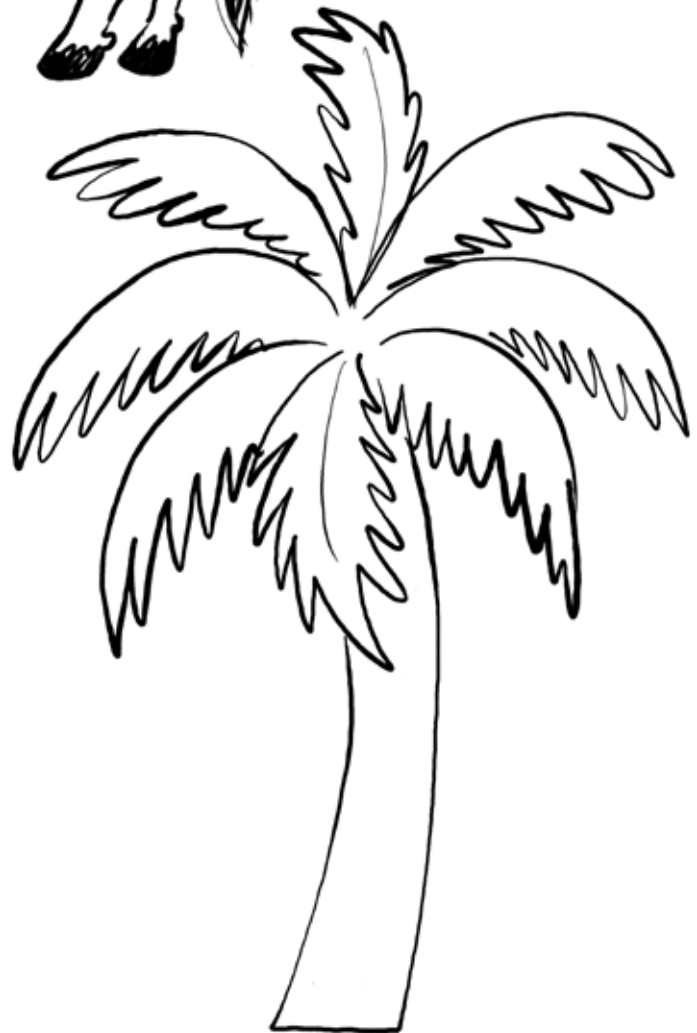
### Materials:

- dowel rod(s)
- plain fabric for a banner
- assorted colors of felt or other fabric
- marker or pen
- paper
- glue
- scissors
- stapler (or other means of securing flag to dowel rod)

### Directions:

1. Have the children think of and design a simple picture of a Palm Sunday scene. It may be helpful to sketch on paper or a chalkboard, if available, before drawing on the fabric. See the *Palm Sunday Sample Illustrations* on page 12.
2. Transfer an outline of the picture onto the fabric.
3. Cut the felt or other fabric into the shapes in the picture (gray felt for the donkey, green felt for palm fronds, etc.)
4. Glue the felt onto the picture.
5. Fold the top of the flag over the dowel rod and secure.
6. Display the flag in the classroom.

# PALM SUNDAY SAMPLE ILLUSTRATIONS





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## THE EVENING NEWS

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children report Palm Sunday happenings in an evening news format.

### Materials:

*All materials are optional:*

- microphone (may be fake or pretend, for example a pencil)
- script
- business-type outfit
- camera (may be fake or pretend, for example a large matchbox)
- camcorder
- TV or monitor (if recording the show)
- props: donkey, palms, cloaks, etc.

### Preparation:

For younger children, you may want to prepare a script ahead of time. Or copy the Bible reading for the anchor person to read as the news story. You may also want to gather the props ahead of time, if you don't make them up as you go.

### Directions:

Invite the children to come together as a news team to report Palm Sunday happenings:

1. Have the children make up a news script about Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.
2. Assign the parts: *camera person, anchor person, on-the-spot news team, Jesus, disciples, crowd, resentful Pharisees, donkey.*
3. Use props you've gathered ahead of time, or make up the props as you go, using classroom objects.
4. Put on an impromptu evening news show and actually tape it for reshowing, if possible.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

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## ASSORTMENT OF CROSSES

for Preschool, Primary

Children create decorative crosses.

### Materials:

*Cross Pattern* (p. 15)

stiff paper, such as poster board, thin wood or foam board

glue

variety of materials, as desired (sea shells, egg shells, sequins, beads, glitter, colored sand, etc.)

newspaper

*optional:* gold or silver spray paint

### Preparation:

Copy the *Cross Pattern* onto stiff paper, board or wood, and then cut out, one per child.

### Directions:

Give a cross to each child and invite them to decorate it however they like. Help the younger children as needed:

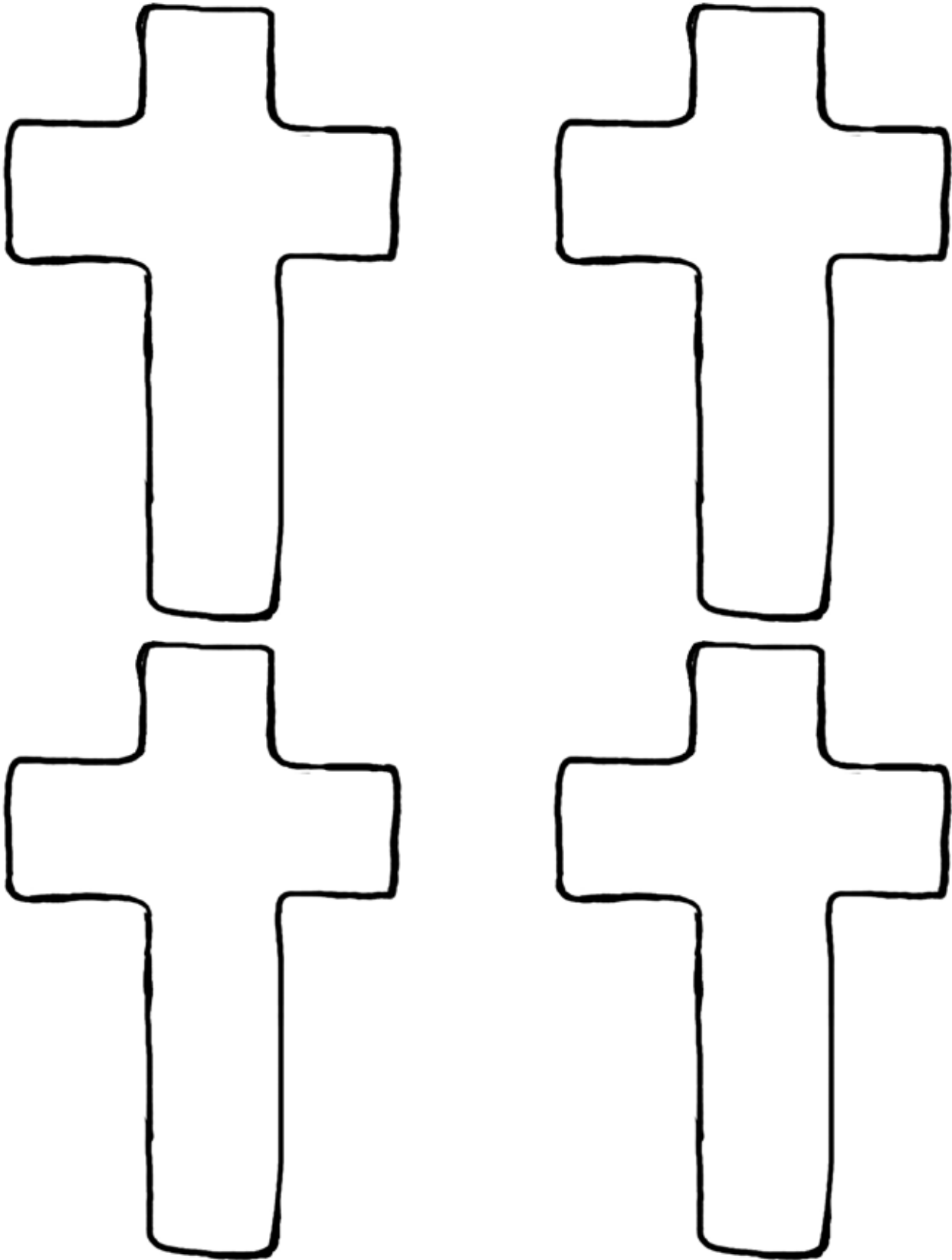
1. Put newspaper on the table to protect it.
2. Cover the cross with glue.
3. Carefully place the decorative materials on the cross. It's suggested that you use only one kind of material per cross for a more consistent look, though it's fine if some children wish to mix it up! Let dry.
4. If you wish, spray paint the cross and let dry again.

### *Variation:*

For a fancy background, you could spray paint the cross first and let dry. Then cover it with glue, decorate and let dry again.



# CROSS PATTERN





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## AN UNUSUAL SCENE: ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM for Elementary, Intermediate

Children use snacks to create a scene that depicts Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

### Materials:

- soft tortilla shells, one per child
- graham crackers
- frosting
- Bugles® crackers
- Fruit Roll-Ups®, assorted colors
- coconut, dyed green
- animal crackers
- large paper plates, as flat as possible

### Preparation:

Dye the coconut green.

### Directions:

Distribute a paper plate and tortilla shell to each child. Invite children to make a scene depicting Jesus' entry into Jerusalem:

1. Tell the children that the plate and tortilla shell will serve as the ground.
2. Have the other materials available to make the scene, as follows:
  - *Jerusalem*: graham crackers
  - *Jesus and people*: Bugles
  - *peoples' cloaks*, also to be spread on the ground: Fruit Roll-Ups
  - *palm branches*: green coconut
  - *donkey*: animal crackers (need to find animals that work for this)

**Note:** The frosting will be used to stick the materials together.

3. Give the children plenty of time and let them use their imagination! When they're finished, allow each child to share a bit about his or her creation.



# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## STAND-UP CROSSES

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make and decorate a cross that can be placed on a shelf or table as a remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice.

### Materials:

- cross made of wood, Styrofoam™ or other sturdy material
- poster board or thin wood for a base
- clay (air-drying or nondrying)
- materials to decorate the cross, if desired (paint, spray paint, markers)
- silk or dried flowers
- glue

### Preparation:

You can buy wooden or Styrofoam crosses at craft stores. Cut the poster board or thin wood to make a base for the cross. Each child will need a cross and a base.

### Directions:

Give each child a cross, a base and a lump of clay. Invite children to make a stand-up cross to remind them that Jesus gave his life for us:

1. The cross may be decorated. However, as a symbol of the crucifixion, a plain cross may be desired.
2. Put the clay on the base and firmly insert the cross. You may want to glue the cross to the clay and the clay to the base, to make sure everything sticks, especially if using air-drying clay.
3. Glue the flowers around the base of the cross.





# WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

*for Children*

## DONKEYS AND DISCIPLES

for Preschool

Children act out the scene of the disciples obtaining a donkey for Jesus.

### Materials:

towel

### Directions:

1. Divide the class into two teams: the *donkeys* and the *disciples*. The teams should stand at opposite ends of the room. Instruct the *donkeys* to get down on their hands and knees. You may want to clear out the center of the room, or you can leave the furnishings for obstacles.
2. Give a towel to one *disciple* and ask that child to go get a *donkey* for Jesus.
3. The child with the towel will walk to the other end of the room, select a *donkey* and put the towel on its back. The two will then walk back to the *disciples'* side of the room.
4. Retrieve the towel and give it to another *disciple*, who, upon your instruction, will do the same. Continue play until all *disciples* have had the opportunity to retrieve a *donkey* for Jesus.

### Variation:

You may want to select one child (or yourself or an adult helper) to play the part of *Jesus*, who can thank each *disciple* when he or she retrieves a *donkey*.

# LESSON 25: JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM (PALM SUNDAY)



## We Believe . . .

The service of The Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday (BCP, p. 270-273) is one of the most majestic services of the entire Church year, marking the beginning of Holy Week, the most important week of the Church year.

When the people greet Jesus with the acclamation, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” we are reminded of the words we sing at the beginning of the Holy Communion (the Sanctus): “Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” (BCP, p. 362)

## Words of Faith



*Jerusalem*—the city into which Jesus enters on Palm Sunday; where he will spend his final week

*Donkey*—what Jesus rode on as he entered Jerusalem

*Palm*—to praise Jesus, people waved branches from this tree and spread them on the ground before him

*Hosanna*—a word of acclamation, used as Jesus rode into Jerusalem; it may mean “Save us!”



## Today's Story:

Matthew 21: 1-11

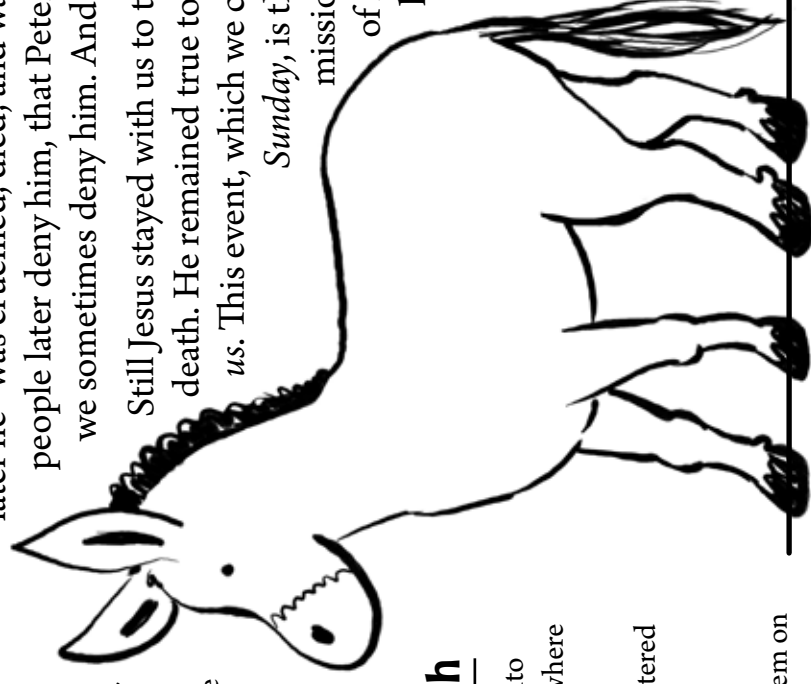
Most of the people at the time saw Jesus as an earthly messiah or a prophet. But we know him as *the* Messiah, the one who comes from heaven to reconcile us with God.

This story of Palm Sunday, though it depicts Jesus’ “triumphal entry into Jerusalem,” contains in it the seeds of sorrow, for we know also that his journey ends not in triumph but in death. We know that later he “was crucified, died, and was buried.” We know that the people later deny him, that Peter later denies him, that even we sometimes deny him. And Jesus knew that, too.

Still Jesus stayed with us to the end, to his crucifixion and death. He remained true to his mission—to be *God with us*. This event, which we call *Palm Sunday* or *Passion Sunday*, is the beginning of the end of his mission. But it is also the beginning

of new life for us, as Jesus gives his own life to bring us new life in him.

That is why this time—the beginning of Holy Week, the most solemn time of our church year—is so important to us as Christians.



Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.—what the people said of Jesus as he entered Jerusalem

**Jesus rides into Jerusalem, our Messiah and King.**







## Sharing

Read today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the story in your own words. If you tell the story, focus on the large crowds of people who hail Jesus as the Messiah, the one "who comes in the name of the Lord," though by later this week they will have him killed. But now, tell about the joy in the city, the cloaks spread out and the palms thrown down to greet him as people in those times greeted the arrival of a king. You may connect this story to your church's celebration of Palm Sunday in your worship service, especially if you reenact the story in the procession of palms and/or tell the story in dramatic form.

## WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

### This Week at Home



- **Go social with Palm Sunday.** If today is Palm Sunday, and if your family is social-media savvy (Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, Pinterest, etc.), do a post or two wishing friends and followers a "Happy Palm Sunday." Post a picture of your family coming out of church with your palm fronds. If you complete the Palm Sunday art project elsewhere on this page, have everyone hold up their artwork for the photo. Share the joy!
- **Make crosses out of palm fronds.** This is a long-standing Palm Sunday/Holy Week tradition. Search online for "palm frond cross" for simple directions for doing so. Together create these crosses as a Holy Week reminder for the next week. Not sure where to find palm fronds? You may be able to bring some home from today's church service. Also check your closest florist; most will carry these the couple of weeks prior to Easter.
- **Explore the irony in the imagery of a king (indeed, the King of Kings), riding on a donkey, the humblest of conveyances.** Talk about the ways in which Jesus is our King, but also the many images we have a Jesus as a very different, very humble *servant* king, for example, washing the disciples feet, dying on the cross between two criminals, serving dinner to the crowd that follows him. What does this tell us about the kind of king Jesus is? What does it tell us about following such a king? In this final week of Lent, how can we serve others the way Jesus served others? Is there a neighbor, friend or church member who could use our help this week? Make concrete plans to offer help to this person.
- **Keep track of the events of Holy Week.** Cut some string and tape each end to your refrigerator or wall. Cut plain paper into quarters. Draw pictures of Holy Week events—or draw pictures of some objects that are part of the Holy Week story, like a *donkey*, a *lantern* for the garden, a *sword*, a *cup of wine*, etc. Assign the appropriate date to each picture. Then, on the appropriate date of the event (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, etc.), use a clothespin or paper clip to attach each picture to the string.



## Household Prayer

Jesus, we hail you as King, the one who comes in the name of the Lord. May we always be ready to hail you as our Lord and Savior, the Son of God who gave himself for us because he loved us so much. *Amen.*

