April 5, 2020

**Bible Passage:** **Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19**(Palm Sunday)

Jesus Is King

**Schedule**

**EXPLORE**

**DISCOVER**

**RESPOND**

**BLESS**

**Equip**

*Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

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 waved palm branches 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**

*Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

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.

**EXPLORE**

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s portion of The Big God Story.

Option 1:Pin the Tail on the Donkey **(for younger kids)**

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He rode a donkey. To the Israelites, a donkey represented a king coming in peace (Zechariah 9:9). Play this classic children’s game to get the kids curious about the part of The Big God Story they’ll hear today.

SUPPLIES

• Donkey poster (see Resources)

• Yarn (4" per child)

• Scissors

• Tape

• Blindfold

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Donkey poster. Cut the yarn into four-inch pieces; make one piece for each child.

SET UP

Tape the Donkey poster to the wall.

RELATE

One at a time, blindfold each child and hand him a piece of yarn with a piece of tape stuck to one end. Then invite him to try to “pin” the “tail”—tape the piece of yarn—on the donkey. Add a challenging twist to the game by spinning around the children before releasing them to pin the tail on the donkey.

Option 2:Sounds of Celebration **(for older kids)**

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people shouted and called out in celebration, welcoming Jesus as King. Today the children will create noisemakers they can use to make their own sounds of celebration.

SUPPLIES

• Plastic Easter eggs (1 per child)

• Raw popcorn kernels or small dried beans (1 tsp. per child) 

• Disposable spoons (2 per child)

• Masking tape (1 roll for every 3–4 children)

• Markers

RELATE

Invite each child to use the supplies to make a noisemaker. To make a noisemaker, begin by filling one side of a plastic Easter egg with popcorn kernels or beans. (The noisemaker sounds best when the egg is only a third full.) Securely close the two sides of the egg together. Place the egg between two disposable spoons with the wider end of the egg at the bottom. Have someone hold the egg and the spoons while you tape around the circumference to hold everything together. Smooth down the tape to help it stick. Continue taping around the spoons until tape covers the entire egg and the heads of the spoons. Finally, tape the ends of the spoons together. Once the kids assemble their noisemakers, encourage them to decorate their noisemakers and write words of praise on the tape.

**DISCOVER**

Children participate in discovering God’s Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

**Connect**

Question

What type of animal (real or imaginary) would you like to ride and why?

Activity: Animal Bingo

SUPPLIES

• Bingo cards (see Resources)

• Scissors

• Pencils or pens

PREPARE AHEAD

Print one copy of the Bingo cards for each child

RELATE

Invite each child to take a Bingo card and a pencil or pen. Read the Connect question, and have the kids write or draw their answers under the “B” on the card. Under the rest of the letters, have them write their guesses of what they think the other kids might answer. When they’re ready, have children circulate around the room and ask one another the question. If they find someone whose answer matches a guess on the card, they can yell, “Bingo!” and cross off that letter. See who can make the most matches in the time given.

**The Big God Story**

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

Storytelling Technique: Images and Interactive Response

Jesus Is King

SUPPLIES

• Bibles

• Palm branches (1 per child; real, paper, or other material; see Resources for optional Palm Branch cutout) 

• Optional: scissors, Bible-times costume

PREPARE AHEAD

If using paper palm branches, print one per child, and cut them out. Invite a second storyteller to help with The Big God Story this week.

SET UP

Set up the palm branches near the front for handing out during storytelling. Optional: Have the leader reading the prophecy dress in a Bible-times costume.

RELATE

Leader onstage (wearing optional Bible-times costume) reads Zechariah 9:9 in loud, declarative voice and then moves offstage.

*Have kids do a Drumroll.* Storyteller starts from back of the room and runs to front while drumroll plays. Storyteller arrives onstage in dramatic fashion. **Don’t you love a big entrance? Well, Jesus knew how to make an entrance! And Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem was prophesied more than 500 years before He was even born!** Did you hear what Zechariah said at the beginning? **But before we hear more, let’s pause and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us today.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. Passover, one of the most important Jewish festivals, celebrated how God had delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of people traveled to Jerusalem to attend Passover. Along the journey there, Jesus had stopped in Bethany to visit friends. Here Mary worshipped Him by pouring perfume on His feet. She knew Him as a teacher and as a healer, and soon she and everyone would know Him as King.

**Many of the people coming to the Passover festival in Jerusalem hoped that Jesus would be there. Imagine a crowd of people, as many as in a sports arena, all hoping to see one person: Jesus. They had heard about how Jesus healed sick people, blind people, and paralyzed people—and how He’d even raised a man from the dead! Who remembers a miracle that Jesus did?** Invite kids to share.

The Jewish people had been waiting since the beginning of The Big God Story for the promised Messiah. The Romans ruled God’s people, and the people thought the Messiah would come to save them from their enemies. They expected a warrior king to ride in on a huge, powerful horse and beat the bad guys so they could be free again to live as God’s people. They expected Jesus to be that warrior king.

**As Jesus and His disciples came near Jerusalem, Jesus told them something. Let’s turn to Matthew 21:2–3 to hear what Jesus said.** Read verses aloud as kids follow along*.* **Jesus knew exactly where to find the donkeys and that they would be given to Him. He knew this because He’s God and He knows everything, but He also knew the prophecy in Zechariah that predicted what would happen.** **Jesus knew that His choice to ride in on a donkey would fulfill this prophecy and would reveal Him as King.**

**The disciples found the donkeys just as Jesus had said they would. What happened next?** Invite responses. Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 21:7. **Crowds of people were waiting to see Jesus. Imagine that you’re waiting for a king. What do you think you’d see when he arrived?** Invite responses. **Good thoughts. You might imagine that the king would be surrounded by lots of marching soldiers or people riding in chariots. Maybe a trumpet would sound.** **Maybe the king would ride a big, beautiful, decorated horse like kings rode as they headed to battle.**

**Well, Jesus—the King of Kings—chose to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Why do you think He chose a donkey?** Encourage responses. **Back in Bible times, donkeys symbolized humility and peace. Jesus rode on a donkey to show His people that He was indeed the true King—but He came in peace. He didn’t come to destroy their enemies, the Romans, like the people hoped.**

**Let’s read what the crowd did when they saw Him.** Read Matthew 21:8 as everyone follows along*.* **Palm branches symbolized victory. The people shouted, “Hosanna!” which means “Save us!”** Pass out palm branches and invite kids to act out the scene as you read John 12:13. As you read each phrase, encourage kids to repeat it.

Jesus is the King of Kings. He is the King over everything because He is God! The Israelites had expected for so long that the Messiah would be a warrior king, and they wanted Him to save them from the Romans. And Jesus did come to save them, but not from the Romans. He had a bigger plan. Jesus came to save people by dying on the cross for their sins and rising again. He came to save people from death! He came to bring them into relationship with God.

**The Bible tells us that Jesus is the King immortal. That means He lives forever** (1 Timothy 1:17)**.** **Jesus is the King of glory. He is strong and wins every battle** (Psalm 24:8)**.** **The armies of heaven follow Him** (Revelation 19:14)**.** **Jesus is a righteous King. He makes right decisions that please God** (Isaiah 32:1)**.** **And Jesus is a loving King. The powerful Ruler of all chose to free us from our sins by dying for us** (Revelation 1:5)**.** **When we know Jesus as our King, we can cry out to Him, “Hosanna! Save us!” We can ask Him to help us bow down to who He is and what He wants to do in our lives.**

Worship as Response

This time allows kids to respond to God through worship.

SUPPLIES

• Crown cutouts (see Resources)

• Large cross

• Scissors

• Markers or colored pencils

• Misc. craft decorations (examples: gems, stickers)

PREPARE AHEAD

Print a Crown cutout for each child and cut it out.

SET UP

Place the cross at the front of the room; lean the wood cross against the wall or tape the paper cross to the wall. Place the crowns near the cross along with the markers or colored pencils and decorations.

RELATE

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 was. We, however, have the privilege of knowing Jesus for who He really is: the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Where in your life do you see Jesus as the mighty King of Kings? How does it make you feel to know He rules over everything and everyone? Are there areas of your life you need to submit to Jesus, your King? Take a few moments to talk to God about these things. Then, when you’re ready, you can respond to Him as you worship Jesus as our powerful and loving King.

Point out the cross, the crowns, the markers, and the craft decorations. Explain that the children can come to the front, take a crown, and write or draw about how they see Jesus as King or where they need to see or to submit to Jesus as King. They can also decorate their crowns using the craft decorations. Then, when they’re ready, they can place their crowns at the foot of the cross to symbolize how they’re honoring Jesus as the King of Kings.

**RESPOND**

*Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.*

Reflect:Jesus Is King

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

**• What did the people shout as Jesus rode into Jerusalem?** Matthew 21:9

**• What does *hosanna* mean?**

**• How can we show Jesus 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 did the people wave palm branches?**

**• What did the people expect the Messiah to do?**

**• 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?**

**• How can we show Jesus that He is our King?**

**• How can you recognize Jesus as King of your life?**

Sack Race

SUPPLIES

• Pillow cases (1 for each child)

• Masking or Painter’s Tape

SET UP

• Use masking tape or painter’s tape to create two lines about 10 ft long on the floor – about 6 ft apart

RELATE

In the midst of the crowds, someone very special was entering the city – Jesus. On the way in, Jesus sent some of His disciples on a special mission. (Matthew 21:2-3). What did Jesus tell His disciples to go get for Him? Pause for answers. Right, a donkey.

Read Matthew 21:5 aloud. The prophet Zechariah told about a king who was coming to Jerusalem, riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus was that King. In fact, He is the King of Kings! Jesus came in a way that nobody expected. He was humble. He didn’t come in a king’s chariot with a crown on. When people saw Jesus coming, they spread out palm branches and coats on the road, and they shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matthew 21:9). On that day, people called out for Jesus to save them. What they didn’t know is that Jesus was about to save them from their sins by dying on the cross that very Friday.

Let’s hop our way into Jerusalem as if we were there that amazing day.

PLAY

Invite children to participate in a sack race. Divide into two groups. If possible, have people not racing spread out along the two taped lines like the people lined the road to Jerusalem. Encourage them to cheer on the sack racers. Have racers gather at one end. Give racers a pillowcase and have them stand in their pillowcases. When ready, shout, “Go!” and have the children hop to the other end. The child who arrives first wins. Make sure everyone has a chance to race.

**BLESS**

Children receive a blessing. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

• Bible

**RELATE**

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!”

Encourage the kids to crouch down. Then, as you read the verse a second time, invite them to jump up, raise their hands in the air, and shout, “Hosanna!” each time you read this word.

To end your time together, speak the following blessing over the kids:

May you trust Jesus to be King in your life. May you know that you can call out to Him and He will save you. May you know that the King of heaven and earth loves you and cares for you.