



Session 1
Spring 2016
Middler

Jesus rides into Jerusalem

LUKE 19:28-40

prepare

PRAYER

God, you come to us again and again. Help me to celebrate you coming, even when it is in a different place or person than I expect. Amen.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To celebrate with the crowd that welcomed Jesus

STORY SUMMARY

Jesus and his friends traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover. Two of Jesus' friends borrowed a young donkey and put their cloaks on it. Jesus rode down the Mount of Olives on the donkey, and a large crowd gathered, shouting praises and spreading clothes and branches on the road. Some Pharisees asked Jesus to quiet the crowd, but he said that if the crowd were quiet, the rocks would start shouting.



teaching tips for middler

Today's story begins the events of Holy Week, which are covered in the next five sessions. Today's story comes a few weeks before Palm Sunday, giving time for children to experience several stories leading up to Easter. Middlers need time to experience the joy and sorrow of the unfolding events.

To help tell the Bible stories during these sessions, set up a story area. This can be a separate area of the room or a table in the middle of your meeting space. Keep your storytelling materials together in this area, which include a Bible, *Shine On*, a candle, a cloth for a story mat, and symbols added each week.

Decide which Explore activities you will do. For Create, you will need materials for making palm branches (see page 2 of *Glow*). Check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared. Make copies of the Letter to families from page 96 in this guide. This letter gives an overview of the quarter as well as where to find the Bible stories in *Shine On: A Story Bible*. Send one letter home with each child.

dig deeper

by Sheila Klassen-Wiebe

In this text, Jesus draws closer to Jerusalem, the end of a long journey in Luke's Gospel (9:51–19:44). Jerusalem is the seat of Jewish religious and political power: the city of Zion, dwelling place of God, and the home of the powerful judicial body, the Sanhedrin. Jerusalem is also the place of Jesus' final destiny, his death on the cross. As narrative time slows to a crawl, the tension that has been building since the beginning of the Gospel mounts. Twice Luke mentions that Jesus is "approaching" (19:29, 37); twice he mentions the Mount of Olives, the site of God's coming judgment and reign, according to the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 14:4). Jesus' conflict with religious leaders (5:17) and his repeated passion predictions (13:31–35; 18:31–34) are about to reach their climax.

Jesus' instructions to his disciples about procuring a donkey and the completion of their task are narrated with remarkable detail. The disciples find everything just as Jesus said, and they obey him to the letter. This communicates several things: it suggests that Jesus is in full control, orchestrating what is about to happen; it highlights the theme of prophetic fulfillment; and it portrays the disciples as obedient and faithful, even though they have not always been so thus far.

The main point of the story is to depict Jesus entering the royal city of David as its king. He enters not to *claim* royal rule but as an *already* victorious king. Throughout his public ministry Jesus has been announcing the advent of the reign of God; however, the word pictures he has painted about this kingdom are unusual, and his actions have not been those of a typical king. This carefully orchestrated entrance into Jerusalem is a sign-act, a deliberate move by Jesus to present himself as the long awaited ruler of Israel. Like a king who has authority to requisition supplies from his subjects, Jesus sends two disciples to procure an unriden colt. Although Luke does not explicitly quote Zechariah 9:9, as do Matthew and John, the allusion is clear. In this prophetic text the king does not come with arrogance on a conquering warhorse; rather, he comes with humility, on an ordinary work animal, to destroy weapons of war and bring peace (Zechariah 9:10).



The responses to Jesus' sign-act also befit a king. Although Luke does not mention the waving of palm branches, he does say that the crowds spread their coats on the road, a practice that heralded the coming of a new king (as in 2 Kings 9:13). As Jesus approaches Jerusalem, a multitude of disciples acclaim him as king with the words of Psalm 118: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord." Scholars believe this was a royal psalm used in Israel's past at the entry and enthronement of a king. The second part of the disciples' proclamation is unique to Luke's Gospel and echoes the words of the angels at Jesus' birth: "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven." Like the host of angels who heralded the birth of Christ the Lord (2:13–14), the host of disciples also praise God (19:37–38). For readers who know the end of the story, however, their words have tragic overtones. Right after this Jesus will weep over Jerusalem and lament the fact that they did not recognize "the things that make for peace" (19:41–44). Peace remains "in heaven" as God's intention, but it has not yet come "on earth," as the angels sang.

The Pharisees attempt to squash the disciples' praise. Earlier, when Peter confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus ordered him not to tell anyone (9:20–21). Now the time for silence is over. If Jesus' followers don't bear witness to the one who inaugurates God's reign, creation itself will erupt in praise.

Tragically, not everyone acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah who comes bringing God's reign. Jesus ascends his throne and becomes king in the most unlikely places and in the strangest of ways. He becomes king on the cross, extending forgiveness to enemies and criminals and saving others rather than himself.

gather

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Rhythm instruments (optional)
- "Stations of the Easter journey" instructions (from Additional resources)

poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Luke 22)
- Easter journey poster

to do

- Display the Bible memory and Easter journey posters.
- Review the "Stations of the Easter journey" instructions (page 85 of this guide) so that you can guide children through the spiritual practice.

media connections

- YouTube search for "Jesus' triumphal entry" (choose several video clips, including one from the donkey's perspective)
- *The Donkey That No One Could Ride* by Anthony DeStefano
- "Come into the Streets with Me" by Shirley Erena Murray
- "Silence My Soul" by Francisco F. Feliciano
- Internet search for "Palmpedia Publications palm online mag" (online interactive magazine about palm trees)

BUILD COMMUNITY

Welcome the children as they arrive. Gather in a circle and have children say their names and a word that starts with the same letter that describes them or something they like, accompanied with an action. (For example, "Baseball Brad" could mime swinging a bat.) See if anyone can repeat all the names and actions in order. Doing this activity gives children shared experiences and helps them learn about each other.

For smaller groups: Children can add names and actions for people in their families or other church members for more of a challenge.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing "Som'landela" (We Will Follow), track 19 on the Shine CD. Music and lyrics are on page 28 of the *Year Two Songbook*; lyrics are also at the back of *Glow*. Encourage children to clap, stomp, or play rhythm instruments to accompany the song.

Pray:

Thank you, God, for the joy that comes from following Jesus. Amen.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The Spiritual practice can be used at various points in the session. For the first five sessions of this quarter, it will make most sense to do it after sharing the Bible story.

Gather near the Easter journey poster. Briefly explain the process of reflection outlined in the "Stations of the Easter journey" instructions on page 85 of this guide. (While looking at the appropriate picture on the poster, children will repeat a prayer, do an action, listen to a reading, reflect silently, and repeat a final prayer.) Invite children to focus on the "Jesus enters Jerusalem" picture and guide them in today's reflection.

Bible memory

On the Bible memory poster, point out the words below as you describe them. Then repeat the passage together.

- *lord it over*: "act like the master over them"
- *authority over*: "be in charge of" (a teacher has authority over students).
- *benefactor*: "someone who gives money or help, usually to someone with less status"

But he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves."

—Luke 22:25–26

teaching tip

Help children understand that while benefactors may sound like a good thing, Jesus was talking about a better way. When we give to others, we can give out of a generous heart rather than to stay in charge and be seen as a big important person.

experience

SHARE THE STORY

Gather at your story area. Pass out several small paper cloaks and branches to each child, cut from page 84 of this guide. Light (or turn on) a candle and quietly prepare your props. Lay out a cloth to serve as a story mat on a table or the floor. On top of the cloth, lay a path made out of brown cloth or a brown paper bag. Scatter a few small stones along the path. Say:

This story about Jesus is so important that we find it in four books of the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each book tells it a little differently. It is the first event in the week before Jesus died.

Ask a child to open the Bible to Luke 19. Turn to page 248 in *Shine On* and show the illustration. Tell or read the story, inviting children to add their cloaks and branches onto the path at the appropriate time. Point to the stones when Jesus refers to them.

WONDER AND REFLECT

After a few moments of silence, reflect on the story together. Extinguish (or turn off) the candle after this time. Keep one stone in your story area as a symbol of today's story in future sessions.

- I wonder what the disciples were thinking as they untied the donkey colt. I wonder what they were thinking as Jesus rode into the city.
- I wonder why the people were so excited to see Jesus coming.
- I wonder why the Pharisees wanted the people to be quiet. I wonder what Jesus meant by saying that the stones would shout out.
- I wonder what we hope Jesus will do today.

PEACE NOTES

All of creation is included in God's big plan for peace and salvation. Jesus said that if the people were silent the stones would praise him. Maybe nature is sometimes better at praising God than we are!

Look at the psalms on page 1 of *Glow* that describe nature praising God. Children can also write the word *hosanna* in different languages in the space provided. This word means "save us, we pray." Talk about what nature and humans might need saving from. What can we do to participate in God's work of peace and salvation in the world?

teaching tip

Designate a part of your room (or a table in your room) as the "story area." Keep a Bible, *Shine On*, a candle, and a cloth to lay out for telling the story together there. You will use these materials for the first five sessions of this quarter and add symbols for each story.



Jesus rides into Jerusalem

Luke 19:28-40

supplies

- Bible
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- *Glow* magazines
- Candle (real or battery-operated)
- Pencils

storytelling props

- Cloth (for story mat)
- Brown path (cloth or paper bag)
- Small stones
- Paper cloaks and branches (from Additional resources)

to do

- Make a "path" out of brown cloth or a brown paper bag.
- Copy and cut out cloaks and branches from page 84 of this guide, enough for each child to have several.
- Practice telling the story from *Shine On*.

teaching tip

Today's Spiritual practice would work well following the story and questions. See page 85 at the back of this guide.

explore

CREATE

Children can learn about palm branches and Palm Sunday celebrations on page 2 of *Glow*. Provide materials for one of the options to create their own branches (instructions on page 2).

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Green construction paper or tissue paper
- Chopsticks, dowel rods, twigs, or floral wires
- Scissors
- Tape
- Pencils

other ideas

- Practice a creative reading of the scripture passage your church will use on Palm Sunday, or plan a palm branch dance. Ask about sharing it with the congregation.
- Decorate the paper cloaks and hang them around your room.
- Write praise words on stones or paint them with bright colors.

MOVE

Have the children stand in two lines facing each other. Play “Come into God’s Presence,” track 4 on the Shine CD. Have one person walk between the two rows while everyone else lays down the paper cloaks and waves the branches used during the story (or branches made during Create). They can also shout “Hosanna! Peace and glory in heaven!” or sing along to the music. After everyone has had a chance to walk between the rows, walk around your space waving branches, shouting, and/or singing. Gather the group and talk briefly about how it felt to be celebrated by others. How can we celebrate Jesus—and each other—in today’s world?

For smaller groups: Instead of lining up, do a series of worshipful movements. Kneel as if spreading a cloak on the ground, then stretch hands high in praise. Repeat prayerfully.

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- CD player
- Paper cloaks and branches (or branches made in Create)

RETELL

First have children create small figures for Jesus, the colt, and the crowd out of play dough or modeling clay. (Or, provide wooden or card stock figures; pattern available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Extras.) Invite children to retell the story using the figures and the props used earlier. One person can provide guidance from *Shine On* if needed.

supplies

- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- Play dough/modeling clay
- Storytelling props

GLOW

Children can complete two puzzles on page 3 of *Glow*. Explain that the word search message is a quote from Jesus once he entered Jerusalem. It gives a hint that sad things are to come. *Answer to quote puzzle:* Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! *Answer to word search message:* If you had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace.

supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Pencils



bles

PRAY

Sing "The Jesus Way," track 11 on the Shine CD and page 18 in the *Year Two Songbook*.

Say:

Jesus was celebrated as a king when he entered Jerusalem. But he did not come on a strong horse ready to go to battle. He chose a more peaceful way, which many people, including some his disciples, did not understand.

Lead the group in praying for strength to follow Jesus' peaceful way.



SEND

Send the group with this blessing:

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Go in God's name today, following Jesus' way of peace.

Send home a copy of the Letter to families from page 96 with each child.

supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Copies of Letter to families (from Additional resources)

Telling a Bible story is always enhanced by telling it instead of reading it, using figures, and/or setting up a story mat.

—Mary Lou Beck
Pettisville, Ohio

looking ahead

To help tell next week's Bible story, you will need pita bread and juice in a cup or goblet. (Use grape or another dark juice.)

leader's closing prayer

It is often easy to focus on requests and complaints when we come before God. But today's story is about praise. Reflect on your time with the children today. Think of some ways they inspire you to praise God.

God, thank you for the joy of children. May I find room for praise in the mixed emotions of my life. Amen.