



Palm Sunday



MEETING AIM

To see the way that the events of Palm Sunday unfolded.



BIBLE PASSAGE

John 12:12-19



BACKGROUND

We're beginning to reach the climax of this part of the story. Tensions are rising. People are flocking to see and hear this amazing Jesus, who paints a radically different picture of God from what anyone had previously understood. But the religious leaders don't like it one bit, and they know they'd better act quickly before things get really out of hand. As Jesus makes a huge statement with his triumphal, kingly entry into Jerusalem, the Pharisees become even more determined to shut him down. For good.

+ CIRCLE TIME



As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass around a simple object. When a child has the object, they can share their response to the question: who is the most famous person you've ever seen? Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If a child doesn't want to say anything they can just pass the object on.

+ INTRO ACTIVITY



You will need: Post-it notes; pens

Ask the children to get into pairs or threes, and give out the notes and pens. Ask them to write down as many stories about Jesus as they can think of, one per Post-it. Don't give them too long to do this. Ask them to come and stick their notes in a central area and say what the story is.

Ask the group why people would have loved this event so much. Ask the group which people might not have liked it and why. For example, when Jesus heals the paralysed man people would have loved to see the miracle and the man would have loved to

be healed, but the Pharisees would've been super mad that Jesus forgave the man's sins.

+ BIBLE STORY



You will need: the phrases below written out on slips of paper; donkey mask (optional)

Start by pointing out the tensions you've uncovered from the opening activity. Lots of people love Jesus and what he's doing, but the religious authorities think he's bad news. Jesus knows that this tension isn't going to end well for him, but he goes to Jerusalem anyway, where they are about to celebrate the Passover. Loads of people hear that Jesus is on the move and they all want to see him. Get the group to sit in two lines facing one another, as if there is a road in the middle.

Give these phrases to four volunteers:

- Praise God!
- God bless the One...
- ...who comes in the name of the Lord!
- God bless the King of Israel!

Get a volunteer to be Jesus and another to be the donkey. If you can get a donkey mask, so much the better. The donkey will need to be able to give Jesus a piggy-back, so choose wisely! Ask them both to take their shoes off.

Ask the group what it's like waiting to see someone famous. Have they ever been to a pop concert? Or maybe they've seen crowds on the TV. Ask them to try and feel that sense of excitement inside.

The crowds were so excited that Jesus was coming, and they believed he was a king, especially since he was riding a donkey. Only kings came into a city that way. They laid down their coats (see the three other Gospel accounts) to make a red carpet for him, and waved palm branches (that's why we call it Palm Sunday).

Ask everyone to take off their jumpers and make a carpet on the road between them. Then have Jesus and the donkey walk down the carpet, while your four volunteers read out their lines and everyone else waves their arms. If it's your church's tradition to give out palm crosses, you could also get the children to wave these.

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Can you describe the feeling of waiting for someone famous or special to come?
- Why did the crowd lay down their coats and wave palm branches?
- What do you think the crowd believed Jesus was going to do next? (Remember that Israel was under Roman control and no one liked that much!)
- How do you think Jesus felt about this incident?
- How do you think his disciples felt?
- How do you think the teachers and religious leaders felt?
- If you didn't know this story, what do you think might have happened next?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: scraps of fabric; scissors

Three of the Gospel accounts talk about the crowd laying down their coats to make a red carpet for Jesus. Encourage everyone cut a jumper or coat shape out of fabric. Talk about whether you would let Jesus walk on your clothes. Are there certain clothes you'd be happy for him to walk on and others you wouldn't?

+ PRAYER



The Palm Sunday crowds were explosive and excited in their expression of praise for Jesus.

Have a look at the four lines your volunteers read earlier. Ask the children to work with a partner to create a line of praise to Jesus. Once everyone has something, stand back in the two lines you had for the story and let everyone take turns to shout out their new lines of praise.

JENNY CHEUNG

is a schools' worker for Scripture Union Scotland and leads The Voice Project, Scotland – a missional expression inviting everyone to find their voice and enter into community to sing.