

OPENING ACTIVITY: Palm Fronds

Objects Needed: green construction paper, green pipe cleaners, scissors

Fold each piece of construction paper in half, and cut a half-egg shape out of it (so that when you unfold it, you have a full egg).

Take a green pipe cleaner, and tape it inside the green construction paper, where the crease is. Tape it so that half the pipe cleaner hangs out the bottom like a stem.

Then, cut strips out of the open side of the paper, somewhat like you would make a snowflake. Then, open the paper to see the palm frond you created.



LESSON SCRIPT

MATTHEW 21, 26, 27

Today's story begins in Matthew 21. In fact, what we are talking about today comes just a few days before Jesus death... so it's kind of a big deal.

As they all approached Jerusalem, they came to Bethphage. It was on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent out two disciples. He said to them, "Go to the village ahead of you. As soon as you get there, you will find a donkey tied up. Her colt will be with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them. The owner will send them right away."

Matthew 21:1-3

Okay, so Jesus is on the Mount of Olives, which wasn't like a mountain made out of black olives or anything... it was just the name of the place they were at. Jesus sends two disciples out and tells them to go ahead to a village and find a donkey that's tied up... which is kind of a weird request, right? Can you imagine if your Mom came home and said, "Bobby, I need you to go to the neighbor's and grab a tied-up turtle, thanks!"

Except it was a way bigger deal than you might think. Back in this time, donkeys were important ways to carry things from place to place. Water, goods... even people. They were kind of like cargo trucks before there were trucks, which means... Jesus was basically asking his disciples to go to the next town over and take a car. A super smelly car, but a car!

So Jesus tells them to go grab this tied-up donkey and bring it to Him. And not only the actual donkey, but the baby donkey, too. He wants both donkeys. Now, most of us, if we were told to go take a car from someone's driveway would be a little skeptical, right? You'd probably want to know what to do if someone caught you, right? Well, Jesus tells them not to worry about it, to tell them God needs them, and all will be well.

Can you imagine if you went into someone's yard, tried to steal their car, and they asked what you were doing, and you said "oh, God needs them!" and they were like, "oh, okay, carry on! Hey, you want a bottled water?"

The disciples went and did what Jesus told them to do. They brought Him the donkey and the colt.

They placed their coats on the animals. Then Jesus sat on the coats. A very large crowd spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Notice, that we are talking about a donkey's colt! We aren't talking about an adult donkey, who is super strong! We're talking about a baby donkey! When you were a baby, you couldn't even walk... yet this baby is about to carry the King of the World on his back... That's a lot of pressure for a baby donkey, isn't it?

So the disciples do it. They go to the next town over, they grab the donkey and the colt. They put their coats on them... and a crowd gathered. And all of the crowd had palm branches in their hands.

Some of the people went ahead of him, and some followed. They all shouted,

"Hosanna to the Son of David!"
"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!" —(Psalm 118:26)
"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up. The people asked, "Who is this?"

The crowds answered, "This is Jesus. He is the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

So Jesus rides through the crowd, and everyone starts cheering for Him and waving their palm branches. They're so excited to see Him!

This is how Jesus is greeted in town on Sunday. With people cheering for him, crowds gathering, everyone praising him for being the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior. These people all hoped that Jesus was going to save them... they just didn't realize the high price that would cost.

Have you ever heard the phrase, “life can change on a dime”? It means that life can change as fast as a coin toss. Which is pretty fast, you know? Well, this is what happens with Jesus. His coin is on heads, as in heads above everyone else. People are happy with him, they love him... And in just a few days, it suddenly flips to tails.

Jesus gathers up his disciples for a special Passover meal. While they were sitting at dinner, Jesus started talking about stuff that probably sounded a little crazy to everyone... He started saying that one of his friends was going to betray him, and that eventually they were going to eat His body and drink His blood.

That very night, one of those people at dinner betrayed Jesus. The important people in the city wanted to arrest Jesus for claiming to be God. And Judas, one of Jesus’s friends...well, he decided to make a deal. If the city officials gave him enough money, he’d give them Jesus.

So that night, Jesus was in the garden, and Judas handed Him over... for thirty pieces of silver.

The men arrest Jesus in the middle of the night, and the next morning, they take him to the Governor, a guy named Pontius Pilate. Pilate questions him and then decides he doesn’t want to get involved in this decision, so he lets the people decide what he should do to Jesus. He said that he would let one of two men in his custody go, and the other one, he would crucify.

The other choice the people had was a guy named Barrabas, who was a murderer... a really, really famous murderer. Which kind of boded well for Jesus, right? I mean between the guy known for killing people (Barabbas) and the guy known for...well, healing people (Jesus) surely, this is going to end well for Jesus, right?

Wrong.

The people choose to let Barabbas go, and they yell to crucify Jesus.

The soldiers assigned to Jesus make it even worse. They made fun of him, they mock him, and beat Him. But Jesus endured it all, do you know why?

Because He loves you. He knew that we have sin, and that sin rots you from the inside out. Jesus also knew He had the cure for sin, and it would cost him everything.

When Jesus was led outside and given the cross to carry, He did it. When they whipped him and hurt him and made him bleed, He took it. They nailed him to a cross and let him hang there, hurting. They mocked him, they yelled at him, as he suffered extreme pain. But He endured it because He loved us.

Right before he was about to die, Jesus was in so much pain he screamed out. Listen to what he said:

Jesus called out with a loud voice,

“Eli, Eli,¹ lema sabachthani?” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Jesus was in so much pain, it was as if God had forsaken him. He was crying out, He was hurting so much. It wasn't but a few moments later that He died.

When He was on that cross, it was our sin that was hurting Him. Our sin made Him feel so far apart from God that He felt forsaken and abandoned... but He took it on willingly. Jesus had the power to get off the cross... but He chose not to. Why?

Because Jesus came to earth to die...for our sins.

He did this so we could be with God, clean and pure, and full of life. Jesus was crucified not because He did something wrong, but because of all that we have done wrong. Jesus chose to come to this earth to die on the cross so that anyone who believes in Him could have a way to heaven.

MEMORY VERSE

Today we learned of Jesus death, for us, on the cross. While it is a very sad story the reason He died is so that we could live! Because of Jesus death on the cross we have the opportunity to ask Jesus to save us from our sins and take us to be with Him in Heaven one day!

Our memory verse is all about Jesus conquering death and what that means for us - everlasting life!

**I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live
even if he dies, and everyone who believes in Me will never die.**

John 11:25