

Lent 1

The Triumphal Entry



Key Scriptures: John 12:10-36

Big Idea: Celebrate Jesus who is King over all.

Teaching Points:

+ The crowd celebrates Jesus as an earthly king.

Crowds were streaming into Jerusalem for the annual feast of Passover. Word had spread that Jesus was the Messiah. People greeted Jesus as He arrived and shouted "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." This fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy; "Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem, Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zec. 9:9) The people celebrated Jesus' arrival, convinced he would become the earthly kings over Israel. The disciples, like the people around them, thought Jesus would be a political Messiah.

+ Jesus points the disciples back to the cross.

In the excitement of the celebration, Jesus kept focused on His mission. He knew the cross was before Him when He said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." (John 12:23) Jesus knew the hearts of the people and that they were looking for an earthly king. Yet, while the crowd celebrated Him, the religious rulers were continuing in the plotting of His death. (John 12:10)

The cross was not easy for Jesus and He tells the disciples of His struggle. He tells them His soul is troubled and indicates He will die on the cross when He says, "When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." (John 12:32) Unlike the disciples understanding, Jesus would not be lifted up onto an earthly throne. Instead, Jesus would be lifted up onto a wooden cross.

Gospel Connection:

How does today's Bible story fit into God's greater plan of redemption?

Even as Jesus was riding into Jerusalem, the very people who were celebrating His arrival would put Him to death in a few days, Jesus would soon die for the sins of men by suffering on the cross. It is true that Jesus came to earth to be king. But He came as a heavenly king for a spiritual kingdom. That is why He said that if people did not praise Him, the very stones would cry out. The cross did not come as a surprise to Jesus (John 12:27); it was the very reason He had come to earth. Jesus even predicted how He would die (John 12:32-33). Many of those who hailed Jesus as king in His triumphal entry would soon cry out with the religious rulers, "Crucify him!"

Object Lesson

Insults & Palm Branches (15minutes)

Supplies:

- + green construction paper
- + white copy paper
- + Jesus costume
- + scissors (or precut branches)
- + red markers or crayons

This activity is designed to show the real contrast present on Palm Sunday and make the story *come to life* for the students.

Read the story of Jesus' triumphal entry all the way through to the end of John 12:36. Explain to the children that while some of the Jews celebrated the arrival of Jesus, other reacted with unbelief and would soon kill him. We can think of Palm Sunday and the waving of branches as a happy day. Jesus, on the other hand, knew He was going to the cross. He was well aware of the unbelief in the hearts of people – in spite of the words they may say. He knew that the religious rulers were plotting to take His life.

Have the class cut out palm branches from the green paper. While they are doing this, dress up in the Jesus costume.

Tell the class that you are going to reenact Jesus coming into Jerusalem. Have them line up as though they were lining a road on both sides and wave their palm branches. Then turn and tell them (acting as Jesus) that you are not an earthly king and that you will soon die on the cross. Then instruct the children to wave their papers that say "I don't believe" while calling out "Crucify Him."

Have the children sit down and then ask them the following questions:

- + What did it feel like to both welcome Jesus with palms and then shout "Crucify him"?
- + How is this view of the triumphal entry different from what you are used to?
- + How did you feel when I asked you to wave your white papers and shout "Crucify him"?
- + Where do you stand today in your heart and life? How do you live your life? Is your heart committed to Jesus? Do you live for Jesus or yourself?

Remember to take time and

Pray

Lent Meaning/Description:

Today is the first week of our remembrance time of Lent.

Lent is the period of 40 days, beginning on Ash Wednesday, that is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. We are using this time to put our focus on Jesus' life, death, and resurrection!