



A Palm Sunday Parade

Goal: To celebrate the coming of Jesus to Jerusalem.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 21:1–11

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was a celebration! On Palm Sunday, crowds spread branches from trees along the way as 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!” The crowds believed Jesus was God’s coming Messiah, the Son of David who would liberate their nation and bring a new age of God’s peace.

Today we can celebrate who Jesus is as well. Jesus has brought freedom and liberation to us—from our sin and the brokenness of life that afflicts us. Jesus saves us. Jesus brings peace with God. In the kingdom he established, we can live in the reign of God here and now as we anticipate the fullness of God’s coming reign. We shout, “Hosanna!”—God saves! Jesus Christ is our help and our Savior.

On Palm Sunday, we celebrate God’s grace. God’s grace is a person—Jesus Christ! We shout in celebration with gratitude for God’s presence with us in Christ and for God’s loving grace that brings us salvation. Grace—in Jesus Christ; gratitude—in lives as Christ’s disciples, serving God and others. “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

Expressing gratitude is one of the first things we teach children. Some would call this the act of teaching them proper manners. As they learn how to say thank you for acts of kindness and generosity, they grow in their ability to understand with their heart what this means. This simple act translates theologically. Having been loved by God, we express our gratitude by loving others. We grow in our understanding of God’s grace and our response with gratitude.

The story of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem reminds us that the whole city was “stirred up.” What a great opportunity you have with your children to help them imagine what the people might have been thinking and feeling as they welcomed him.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children know about parades and the fun you can have. As you invite children to hear the story and perhaps participate in their own parade, shouting “Hosanna,” help them think about what they remember about Jesus from the stories they have been hearing. In naming some of the people Jesus met and the things he did (telling parables, healing, teaching, calling people to be leaders), children can put themselves in the place of those who were waving palms to welcome Jesus. In this way, they can get a real sense of their gratitude for Jesus’ presence with them.

*Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus into my life.
Help me receive him with joy. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 6, 15, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**; green, tan, and brown crayons

choice 2: mop, broom, or pool noodle

choice 3: toy cars and other modes of transportation

Exploring

choice 1: game board made from **SCM 6a, 6b**; game pieces cut from **SCM 6c**; spinner made from **SCM 6d**, paper clip

choice 2: paint (gray, green, black, white); paper plates; basin of soapy water; towels

choice 3: copies of **GN 1**

choice 4: copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Use **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule,” to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 and choice 2 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children and parents/caregivers by name and with the word “Hosanna.” Prompt the children to respond with “Hosanna.” Explain that the children will hear that Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey while people cheered, “Hosanna!”

Introduce children to your helper or helpers. Invite them to look at the guided-play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Coloring Palm Branches**—Give each child a copy of **GN 1** after you have written their name on it. Invite the children to color the palm branch drawing on **GN 1**. As they work, have a conversation with the children about a time when they were really excited or happy, like a birthday or a trip to the zoo. Listen to their stories. Set colored drawings aside for “Hearing the Story” and “Exploring God’s Grace” choice 3.
- 2. Riding on a Donkey**—Provide masking tape for the children to make a road on the floor. Ask the children how they usually travel if they want to go somewhere. Then provide a mop, broom, or pool noodle for the children to take turns riding as if it were a donkey. Ask the children whether they would prefer to pretend to ride on a donkey or to pretend to use one of the other forms of transportation they mentioned.
- 3. Taking a Trip**—Invite the children to play with toy cars and other modes of transportation. As they play, ask them to tell about long trips they might have been on. Ask where they went, who they went with, and how they got there. Encourage everyone who wishes to share.

MS As you select and plan activities, think about space children need to maneuver a wheelchair, walker, leg casts, or crutches.



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready, call them to the story corner, by dancing to “Hosanna Sing”—**SCM 15**. Consider having the children wave the palm branch (**GN 1**) they colored in “Guided Play” to the song.

Hosanna Sing

M MS

Help the children practice saying the words in rhythm. When they can repeat the words, sing along with “Hosanna Sing”—**SCM 15**.

Ho-Ho-san-na, prai-ses sing
Un-to Je-sus Christ the King!

Walk to the left in a circle as you sing the first phrase of the song, then reverse and walk to the right in a circle as you sing the second phrase.

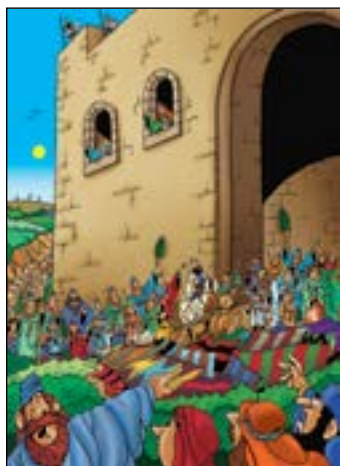
How Can I See Jesus?

L MS T

Read the following poem and invite the children to repeat after you and follow your motions.

How can I see Jesus (*stand on tiptoes as if trying to see over the crowd*)
as he rides by? (*keep elbows to sides; extend arms forward with both hands in fists as if holding reins of a donkey*)
How can I see Jesus? (*stand on tiptoes*)
I can hear them cry. (*cup right hand behind right ear*)
“Hosanna! Hosanna! (*raise both arms overhead with hands outstretched*)
Hosanna,” they sing. (*raise arms overhead*)
“Hosanna! Hosanna! (*wave arms overhead*)
to Christ the King!” (*bow up and down, as if waving palm branches*)

T Giving young children a gentle warning that you will be shifting focus soon helps them mentally prepare for the change. Say something like, “After the poem, we will hear a story.” Alerting them calmly makes changes feel like less of an emergency.



Luke's version of today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Hearing the Story



Open the Bible to Matthew 21. Comment that we read the Bible to hear stories about all of God's people. Tell the children they are going to hear a story about a very special day for Jesus, the day he came to Jerusalem.

Read **SCM 6**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

Ask the children to think about the way Jesus traveled in the story. He walked or rode a donkey. Ask if any of them have ridden a donkey or horse.

Ask the children to show you how they wave to someone. While they are waving, ask the children to imagine that they see Jesus coming down the road. Wonder how they will wave to Jesus. Since Jesus is so special, maybe they want to hold something and wave it around. Use the palm branches colored in "Guided Play" choice 1 for those who wish to wave the branches over their heads. While the people waved palm branches, they shouted and sang because they were so excited. Ask the children what the people said. ("Hosanna! Hosanna! Hooray for Jesus!")

Read the story again, and invite the children to act out the story and shout with the people as you read.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Seeing Jesus Game

*Before the session, cut out and tape **SCM 6a** and **6b** together to make the game board. Cut and fold the game markers on **SCM 6c**. Make the spinner by cutting the arm from **SCM 6d** and attaching it to a paper clip, then poke the paper clip through the spinner base and guide it to the end where the arm can spin.*

Tell the children that they are going to play a game about seeing Jesus today. Have each child select a game marker and place it on "Home." The children will take turns spinning the spinner and moving their game piece the number of spaces indicated. When they land on a space with directions, read the directions using appropriate expressions. Continue playing until all children are in Jerusalem.

If time allows and children are still having fun, play the game again.

If you have more children than game markers, form small groups and rotate them among other activities.



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2. Hosanna Poster

Before the session, write the word Hosanna in purple (the liturgical color for Lent) on construction paper for each child.

Place the prepared papers on a table, and invite the children to select one. Tell the children what it says. Identify each letter. Let each child choose one of the prepared construction papers to make their poster. Help the children remove one shoe and sock. For each child, you can either paint the bottom of their foot or allow them to gently step on the plate with the paint. Help the children press their foot on the paper and press hard enough to get the arch of the foot to the paper. Wash their feet and tell them that Jesus washed the feet of the disciples during Holy Week. Have the children gently press their hands in the green paint and make several palm prints under the donkey. To finish the donkey, the children can use their finger to add the ears, eyes, and nose. Help them wash their hands.

Encourage the children to take their poster home and tell their family, “Hosanna, Jesus is coming!” Practice the phrase with them.

3. Building a Road for Jesus

A M MS

Select a girl or boy to be “Jesus.” Have Jesus stand by the door. Ask the other children to get the palm branch pictures that they colored in “Guided Play” choice 1 and stand near Jesus. Show them how to lay their pictures out in a path on the floor in front of Jesus like stepping stones. Leave about 6 inches of space between the papers.

Have the children stand by their palm branch pictures. Instruct Jesus to walk slowly into the room, stepping on the palm branch pictures on the floor. The children can sing “Hosanna Sing”—SCM 15.

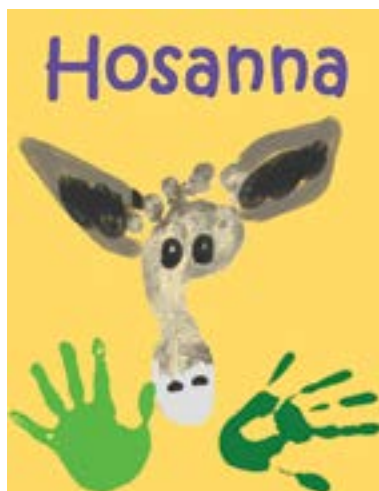
As soon as Jesus has stepped off a child’s picture, the child should pick it up, hurry in the direction Jesus is walking, and place the picture down for Jesus to step on again.

After Jesus has walked a certain distance, stop the parade. Choose another Jesus and repeat the game until everyone has had a turn. The palm-branch pictures may be very dirty at the end of the game. Provide new copies of GN 1 for the children to color and take home.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of GN 2 and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture and tell you about the story. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What does it feel like to ride on a donkey?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What do you say when you are excited?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How would you feel if you got to meet Jesus?”



Have Jesus walk slowly and not jump from paper to paper, because they might slip or fall.

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Have the children help clean by putting away one or more toys.

Ask the children how they will celebrate Jesus this week. Suggest that when they are happy or excited, they can remember the people shouting, “Hosanna!” to Jesus.

Listen to “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**—while the children serve and enjoy the snack. As the children finish eating, invite them to sing along.

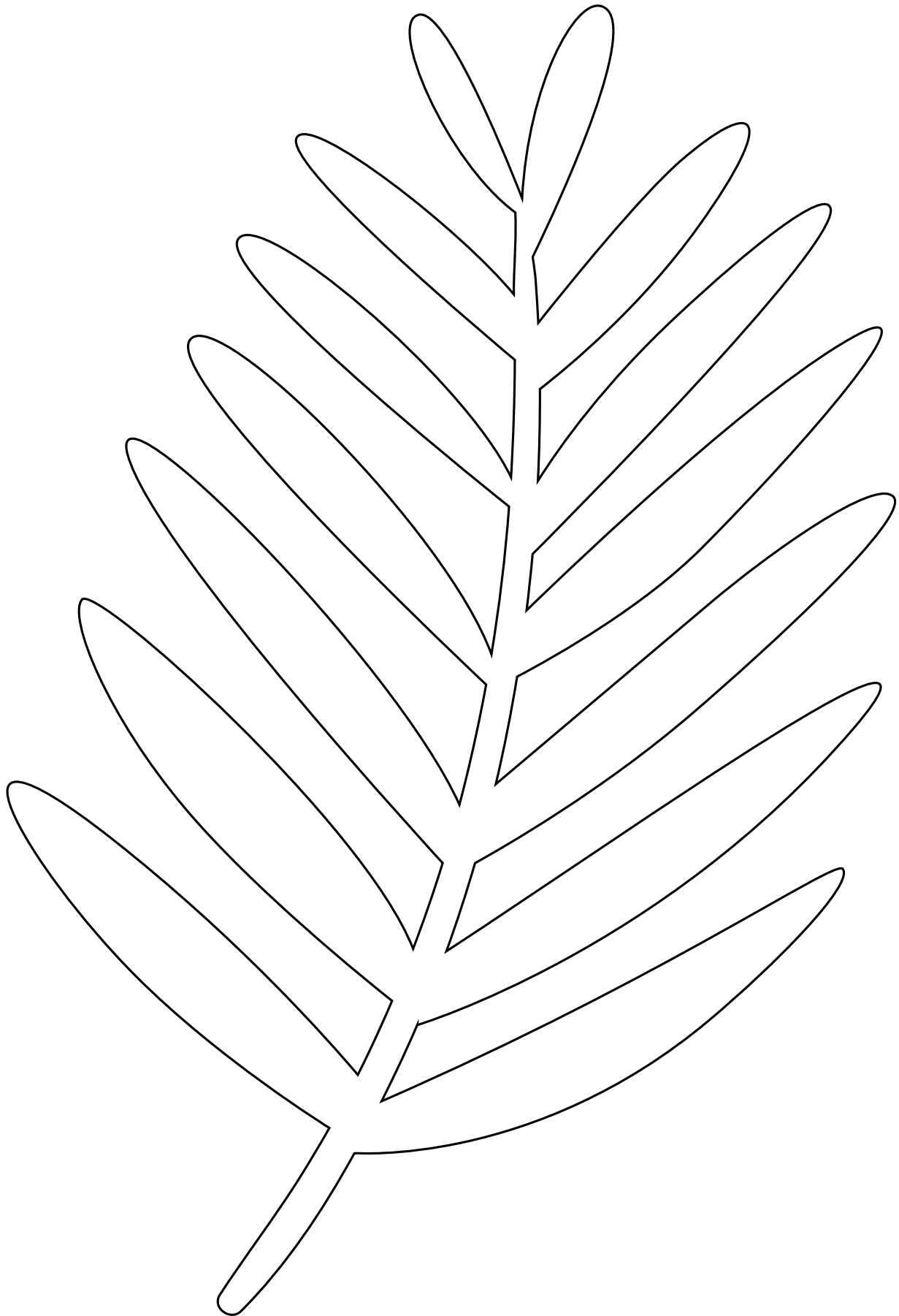
Ask the children to repeat a prayer after you:

Dear God, /
thank you for your Son, Jesus. /
We are happy he came to be our friend. /
We are happy that we can tell others about his love. /
Hosanna! Amen. /

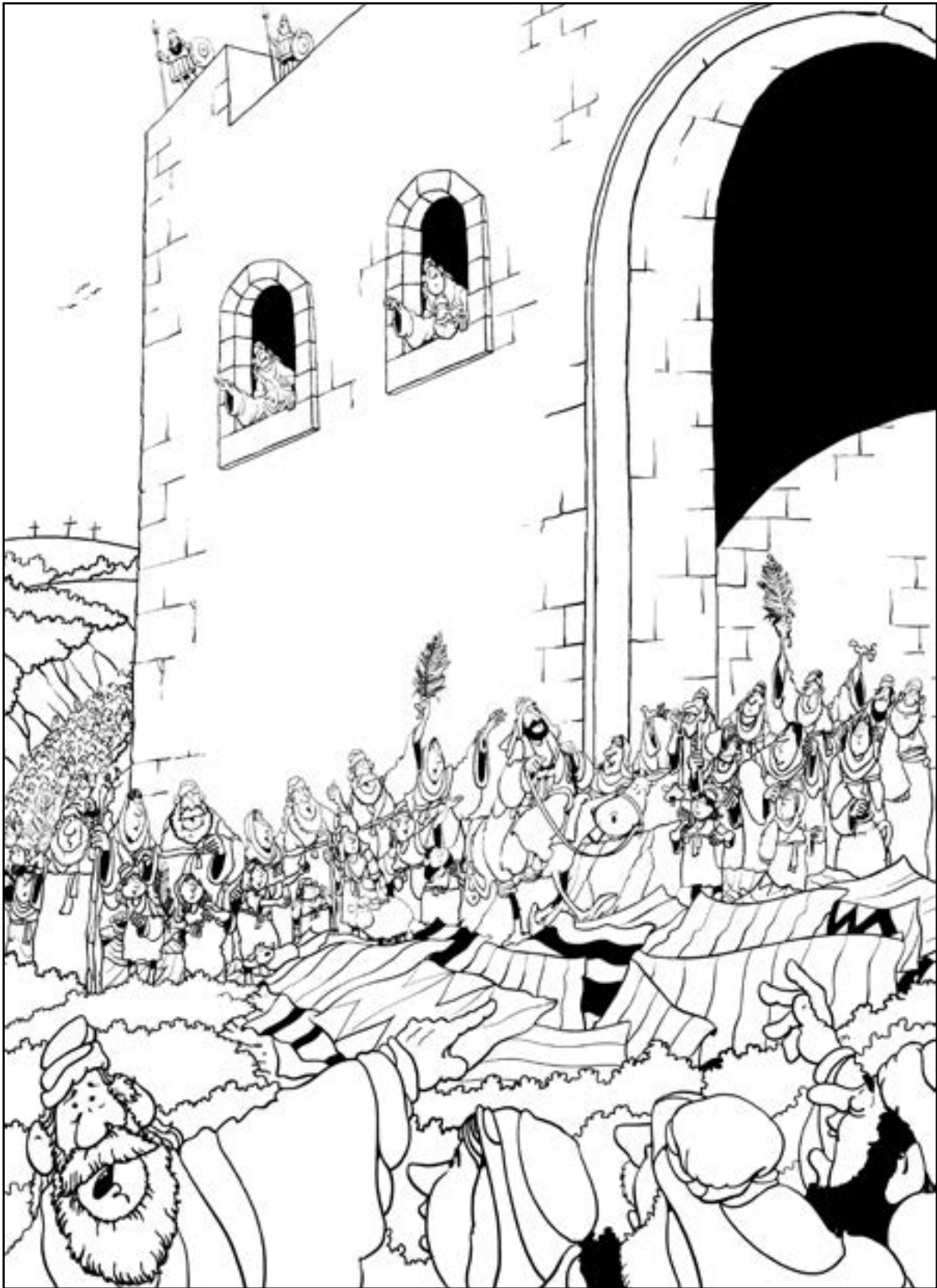
As the children leave, bless them by saying, “(Name), Jesus loves you. Go in the grace of God.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



A Palm Sunday Parade



Jesus comes to Jerusalem and the people shout, "Hosanna!"

