



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, 6a, 16

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

candle

green construction
paper

Responding

Claiming

green poster paint or
tempera paint

Celebrating

watercolor paints,
air-dry clay, rhythm
instruments

Praying

brown and green
construction paper

Extra

card-stock copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

M **MS** **A** **B**

As the children arrive, greet them by saying, “This is the day that the Lord has made!” and prompt them to respond, “Let us rejoice and be glad in it!”

Invite the children to transform your space as though they are expecting a king to arrive. Let them make their own decisions about what objects or drawings to include. Encourage them to include a table with a purple cloth, a Bible, and a candle.

Tell the children that today is Palm Sunday, the first day of Holy Week. Show the children how to make palm branches to use today. Give children a sheet of green construction paper and show them how to cut strips, about 1 inch wide, halfway down the paper lengthwise. After cutting, have the children roll the paper lengthwise and secure with tape. Show them how to pull the strips apart to form a palm branch.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing

MS **B**

Play “Hosanna Sing”—**SCM 16**.

Invite everyone to take their palm branches and face each other in two rows about 6 feet apart. Tell the children that, in today’s story, people cheer for Jesus as he enters Jerusalem.

Let each person have a turn walking through the space between the rows while the others shake their palm branches and shout, “Hooray for (Name)!” After the walk, the person being honored chooses the next person to walk and then joins one of the rows. Continue until everyone has been honored. Conclude the parade by singing “Hosanna Sing”—**SCM 16**.

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

Praying

L

Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus’ presence with us. Invite the children to close their eyes and breathe deeply as they listen for God. Say the following prayer aloud, prompting the children to respond, “We thank you, God,” after each line.

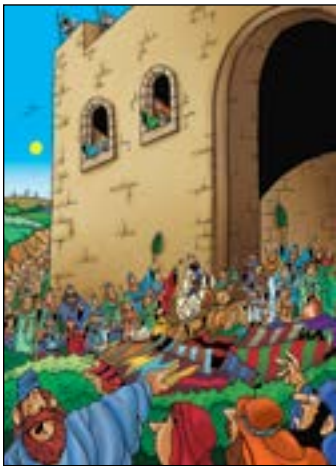


For this day,
we thank you, God.
For sending Jesus to us, to show us how to live,
we thank you, God.
For your Word to us,
we thank you, God.
Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story C

Show the children **SCM 6a** and invite them to tell you what a king might be like, what he would do, how he would act, and so on. Imagine that a king is coming to your church. Wonder aloud how the king would arrive and how the congregation would welcome him.

Explain that, in today's Scripture, people welcomed Jesus as their king on Palm Sunday, but the image they saw was not what they expected. Invite the children to listen for ways that the people celebrated and welcomed him that day.



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 B L

Invite a child to find Matthew 21 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 6** or listen to the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more engaging. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Ask the children to pay special attention to the word *Hosanna* as you read the story again or listen to the story audio. It is mentioned in the story several times. Invite them to shake their palm branches every time they hear the word.

After the story, ask the children what they think *Hosanna* means. After some conversation, tell them that the meaning of the word is "help us" or "save us." Ask them why the people might have been shouting that to Jesus. Comment that the word *Hosanna* has also come to be an exclamation, or expression of praise or joy, for Jesus.

Reflecting on God's Grace C

Explain that in Jesus' day, when a king or queen came to town, the people tossed their coats on the ground, which was dusty and dirty. It was their way of showing respect and how much they liked the person because the coats would get dirty and prevent dust from flying up around the important visitor. Wonder together:

- ▼ I wonder, "How do we greet important people when we meet them?"
- ▼ I wonder, "Why did the people put their coats on the ground for Jesus?"



Lead the children in singing the following song to the tune of “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush,” using the motions.

This is the way the donkey trots (*pat legs*),
donkey trots, donkey trots.
This is the way the donkey trots, to Jerusalem.

This is the way the disciples walk (*walk in place*),
disciples walk, disciples walk.
This is the way that disciples walk, to Jerusalem.

This is the way the crowd runs (*run in place*),
the crowd runs, the crowd runs.
This is the way the crowd runs, to Jerusalem.

This is the way that Jesus rides (*pretend to ride donkey*),
Jesus rides, Jesus rides.
This is the way that Jesus rides, to Jerusalem.

Singing

M

Invite the children to sing “Hosanna Sing”—**SCM 16**. This time, encourage them to walk around the room as if they were in a parade, moving their palm branches from side to side.

Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

T TD

Create a Palm Sunday banner using a piece of mural paper.

Ask the children to think of situations today in which crowds cheer for someone. Ask the group to think about what Jesus means to them today and how Jesus is helpful to them. As they talk about Jesus, write words and phrases on newsprint.

To make the banner:

- ▼ Using green paint, make the stem of a palm branch across the mural paper.
- ▼ Paint each child’s hand with green paint and have them add their handprints on each side of the branch, to look like palm fronds. Option: allow the children to paint strokes to form palm fronds
- ▼ Add the word *Hosanna!* to your creation.
- ▼ Ask the children to make up a cheer for Jesus and add it to the banner. Suggest that they include some of the words and phrases you wrote on the newsprint.



If your church has the children process into worship on Palm Sunday, you could use this banner at the front of the procession.

T *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*



Celebrating God's Grace

C **TD** **MS**

Before the session, write “Who is Jesus?” on newsprint.

Remind the children that, when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people welcomed him as a king. Some had met Jesus, some had been fed by him, some had been healed by him, and some had heard his teachings, while others had only just seen this man. Draw their attention to the sheet of newsprint. Invite the children to answer the question through art.

Set up three work stations, one for sculpting with air-dry clay, one for painting with watercolors, and one for singing with rhythm instruments. Invite them to share their finished projects with the group.

TD *Some children who have tactile sensitivities find working with clay or play dough unpleasant. Consider providing an option such as drawing.*

Praying God's Grace

MS **C**

Remind the children that *Hosanna* means “help us” or “save us,” as well as a shout of praise. Invite the children to create a pathway around the room by placing construction paper on the floor. Have them place a sheet of green construction paper after every two or three sheets of brown construction paper. Place a loop of masking tape on the back of each sheet of paper to anchor it so it will not slip when stepped on.

Explain to the children that they will step from sheet to sheet while you play music. When the music stops, each person who is standing on a piece of green construction paper will share a prayer by saying something for which they praise or thank God, or for help they need for themselves or someone else. The rest of the group will respond with “Hosanna! Hosanna!”

Play lively music and start the game. If a child steps on a green paper again, have them share another prayer. Continue to play until all the children have shared a prayer.



GN 1 Solution:

1. Palm Sunday.
2. Broke bread.
3. Washed feet.
4. Garden prayer.
5. Jesus betrayed.
6. Jesus died.



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).

Extra Activity

Help the children prepare books depicting the events of Holy Week and ways they can respond to the different events.

Distribute card-stock copies of **GN 1** and scissors. Invite the children to color the pictures. Then have the children cut out each part of the story and place them in order of the events of Holy Week. Demonstrate how to punch a hole near the top corner of each page, thread a piece of yarn through the hole, and tie a knot or bow.

Encourage the children to take their books home and do the activities with their families during Holy Week.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to help clean the space.

Invite the children to stand. Remind them that Jesus came as a humble king to save his people.

Lead a body prayer to close the session. Remind the children that the people in today's story shouted, "Hosanna!" Point out that they were using their bodies and their voices—their whole selves—to pray and praise God.

Invite the children to use their bodies to spell out *Hosanna!* Have volunteers create an *H*, then an *O*, and so on.

Ask the children to think about ways in which they can pray and praise God this week. Challenge them to pray each night, looking up and lifting their hands. As they leave, give each child a blessing: "(Name)! You are a child of God!"



On Palm Sunday, as Jesus rode to Jerusalem on a donkey, people laid coats and palm branches on the ground to prepare a path.

I will pick up all the toys and clothes on my floor.



Jesus broke bread with the disciples one last time.

I will remember the last supper by eating a meal with someone I love.



Judas betrayed Jesus, just as Jesus had told the disciples at the Last Supper.

I will tell the truth.



Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I will say my prayers at bedtime.



Jesus served others by washing the feet of his disciples.

I will serve my family by helping wash or fold a load of laundry.



Jesus died on the cross and was buried in a tomb.

I will celebrate Easter.

