

Isa. 50:4–9a

Ps. 31:9–16

Phil. 2:5–11

**Mark 11:1–11;
15:1–39**

The King—No Kidding!

**Goal for
the Session**

Tweens will think in new ways about power and love in the light of Jesus' suffering and crucifixion.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Mark 11:1–11; 15:1–39

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” James D. Ernest

Mark was meant to be read to assemblies of believers in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God (Mark 1:1) who needed to understand what it meant to be followers of a Lord who was crucified. In Mark 15, the moment to which the whole Gospel has been leading arrives. God is active even at this moment of crucifixion when Jesus bewails God's absence (15:34), darkness covers the land, and the temple curtain is torn in two. Jesus' last words place his death in the context of Psalm 22: the righteous one suffers but will be vindicated. At the moment of his death, the pronouncement of Jesus' identity as Son of God comes not from a disciple but from a Roman centurion.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Margaret A. Farley

Christianity is not a religion obsessed with pain. It is a religion of resistance and hope. The point of the cross is not finally suffering and death; it is, rather, that *a relationship holds*. God is not an arbitrary ruler who demands the price of suffering and death, but a God who makes possible all of our loves, as well as our resistance to evil. The meaning of the cross can be understood finally only within the whole of the good news of the promise of God to overcome terror, enfold us in Life, and dwell with us forever.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael Battle

One of the central claims of the Christian tradition has been that God is love. Such a claim is not based on any abstract or sentimental notions about love; rather it is connected to the history of God's love expressed through God's activities of creation, redemption, and sustenance. That history finds its expression, for Christians, in the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem strangely prepares us to fight our tendency toward the delusion of superficial loves. With Jesus we are given a love that withstands the horror of crucifixion. It is the kind of love that displays how illusive our sense of reality often is.

NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

Riding on the colt, Jesus comes not as one who lords his authority over others, but as one who humbly rejects domination. Jesus comes to define King or Messiah, rather than traditional understandings of these titles identifying him. When he enters Jerusalem, Jesus radically redefines political power. Definitions of political power begin with Jesus, and bring with them profound implications for both the nature of the gospel and character of discipleship.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

**Mark 11:1–11;
15:1–39**

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ purple cloth
- ☐ large white battery-powered candle
- ☐ light green paper
- ☐ pencils, markers, scissors
- ☐ wide ribbons from previous sessions
- ☐ craft sticks, paper streamers, stapler (optional)
- ☐ Resource Sheet 1
- ☐ Color Pack 8, 9, 10, 31, 32
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ red cloth
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: newspapers, news magazines, paper, pens
- ☐ option 2: Color Pack 29; *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player; copies of Resource Sheet 2; card stock, markers
- ☐ option 3: hymnals or songbooks, March 24 worship bulletins; music recordings as noted (optional)

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens hear stories about “love” and “power” in modern North American culture that contradict Jesus’ story: blockbuster movies saturated with steamy romance and violent conflict; celebrities famous for their sex appeal or bank accounts; leaders in business and politics, even the church, who abuse authority. Jesus rebukes all these as he humbly enters Jerusalem to exercise power as the king who gives himself in love for his subjects. In what ways have you experienced this powerful love of Christ? What does it mean to say that Jesus Christ is your king?

Save me, O God, from ways of selfish pride and thoughtless privilege, that I might live in your way of loving service to others. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place the purple cloth in the center of your meeting space, and place the candle on it. Arrange the wide ribbons from previous sessions on the fabric to look like a rainbow.

Greet learners as they arrive. Give each one two sheets of light green paper. Ask tweens to trace both hands, cut out the tracings, and write a reason to praise God on one “palm” and a concern to tell God about on the other. Gather the group and light the candle. Ask tweens to place the handprints on the purple fabric, reminding them that purple is a color associated with royalty. On this last Sunday in Lent, purple reminds us Jesus is our king. Teach learners their response for the gathering ritual on Resource Sheet 1 (Another “Palm” Sunday). Lead the ritual, and then sing “Every Time I Feel the Spirit” (Color Pack 31; track 6 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024).

Option: Extend this ritual with a “palm procession.” Have learners staple their handprint “palms” and several lengths of paper streamers to craft sticks. March in an impromptu parade around your church building (or, weather and time permitting, around the outside of your church), waving the palms and shouting, “God’s steadfast love endures forever!”

Show Color Pack 8, and ask tweens to imagine what he might have seen or what might have happened to make this boy react in this way. Discuss:

- ✠ What might he be saying right now?
- ✠ When have you felt like raising your arms in this way? What would you say as you did so?

Say that the Bible readings today tell about ways that people reacted to seeing Jesus.

As the lectionary readings indicate, many congregations celebrate today not only as “Palm Sunday,” but also as “Passion Sunday.” The word *passion* is from the Latin for “suffering” and refers to Jesus’ trial and crucifixion.

Jesus here takes the role of a jester, who enacts in a humorous, disorienting way a totally different understanding of “rule” and invites people to see and live in the world in a new way. (From “Homiletical Perspective” by Charles L. Campbell.)

EXPLORING

Ask tweens to find Mark 11 in their Bibles, helping one another as needed. Recruit volunteers to read aloud Mark 11:1–9a, with everyone reading verses 9b–10 in unison. Explore the story’s details by asking the following questions, referring to the verses cited as needed:

- ✂ Read Zechariah 14:3–4, 9. What do these verses say about why the Mount of Olives was important? What do these verses suggest about why Jesus chose to enter Jerusalem near the Mount of Olives (Mark 11:1)? Option: Locate the Mount of Olives on a map of Jerusalem in Jesus’ time, perhaps a map in their Bibles.
- ✂ Read Zechariah 9:9–10. How might these verses help us understand Jesus’ choice to enter Jerusalem on a colt?
- ✂ In Jesus’ day, “Lord” was a title devout Jews used for God; patriotic Romans used this title for the Emperor. How does this information affect how we hear Jesus’ instructions in Mark 11:3?
- ✂ Why do you think bystanders allowed the disciples to take the colt (Mark 11:6)?
- ✂ Read 2 Kings 9:13, Leviticus 23:40, and Psalm 118:27. How does this information help to explain what the crowd does in Mark 11:8?
- ✂ *Hosanna* is a special shout of praise. The word comes from the same Hebrew verb for “to save” as does the name of Jesus (Matthew 1:21). From what are the people asking Jesus to save them?
- ✂ How do you imagine patriotic Romans reacted to the people’s shouts in Mark 11:10?

Display Color Pack 9 and 10. Invite tweens to compare and contrast these two parade scenes. What message does each seem to send—intentionally or not—about power and authority? Option: Read aloud the quote from Charles Campbell in the sidebar and invite learners to agree or disagree with it.

Ask learners to pick up their “palms” from the worship space. Replace the purple cloth with red cloth, explaining that the church also remembers Jesus’ trial and crucifixion on this Sunday. Red represents Jesus’ blood. Ask a volunteer to read aloud Philippians 2:5–8, also one of the readings for this Sunday. Place the ribbon rainbow on the fabric. Ask learners to place their “palms” on the fabric. Discuss:

- ✂ In what ways is Jesus’ death an act that demonstrates power, authority, and love?
- ✂ Looking ahead to Easter, what promise does God make about Jesus’ death?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Hosanna Now** To help learners connect the cries of those who greeted Jesus with those who suffer today, ask them to look through newspapers and news magazines for stories of people facing oppression or injustice, whether physical, financial, or political. Offer an example of how to use one of these stories to compose a prayer for a litany, using this format:

One: Hear the prayer of (*briefly name the situation, such as “those who hunger” or “those who demonstrate for freedom”*).

All: Salvation now, GOD. Salvation now! Oh yes, GOD—a free and full life! (Psalm 118:25, *The Message*)

EASY
PREP

After praying the litany, discuss: How can we be the people through whom God will work to answer these prayers?

2. **Stations of the Cross** To consider more deeply the love and power Jesus demonstrates through his trial and crucifixion, create stations for meditation based on Mark 15:1–39. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Stations of the Cross) and read the information there. Using card stock and markers, work as a group to create a sign for each station, as explained on the resource sheet. Place the station signs in sequence around your meeting space or in a church hallway. Lead your class in procession to each station. At each station, read the verses and discuss the question. Sing “Dona Nobis Pacem” (Color Pack 29; track 5 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024), the Taizé chant “Jesus, Remember Me,” or a similar verse before proceeding to the next station. If possible, make these stations available to the whole congregation during Holy Week.
3. **Music of the Passion** To enrich tweens’ participation in your congregation’s worship, distribute worship bulletins for this Sunday and hymnals or songbooks. Look up the hymns or songs used in today’s service. Read aloud the lyrics in unison. Ask: How does this hymn or song help us understand God’s power and love at work in Jesus’ passion? You might also choose to play recordings of music related to the passion. Consider juxtaposing classical and modern pieces, such as a selection from one of Bach’s Passion settings and “Crucifixion” from *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

CLOSING

Gather around the red fabric and light the candle, if necessary. Invite tweens to quiet themselves by singing “Were You There?” (Color Pack 32; track 24 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024) two or three times. Invite learners to share new insights they have had into God’s power and love as a result of today’s session.

Were You There?

Were you there when they
crucified my Lord?
Were you there when they
crucified my Lord?
Oh! Sometimes it causes
me to tremble, tremble,
tremble.
Were you there when they
crucified my Lord?

Noting the ribbon rainbow, recall God’s promise that Jesus’ suffering is not the end of the story. However, we cannot fully celebrate Jesus’ resurrection until we have remembered his death. Ask learners to kneel as they are able. Quietly read aloud Philippians 2:9–11. After the reading, have everyone stand and sing “Were You There?” quietly. Ask learners to claim their “palms” from the table and then exchange them with another learner, so that these pairs might pray for each other’s specific joys and concerns throughout Holy Week.

Extinguish the candle.

Another "Palm" Sunday

Leader: God is good! Give thanks!

All: God's steadfast love endures forever!

Leader: Let all God's people say:

All: God's steadfast love endures forever!

Leader: On this Palm Sunday, we greet our king, Jesus, by lifting up holy hands in prayer. Jesus is our Lord, and we rejoice in his marvelous works.

(Invite volunteers to say aloud the words written on their "praise palms" from the worship space. After all have spoken, the group responds:)

All: God's steadfast love endures forever!

Leader: On this Palm Sunday, we greet our king, Jesus, by lifting up holy hands in prayer. Jesus is our strength and our might, who comes to us with saving and powerful love. We call out: "Save us, O Lord! Give us success!"

(Invite volunteers to say aloud the words written on their "concern palms" from the worship space. After all have spoken, the group responds:)

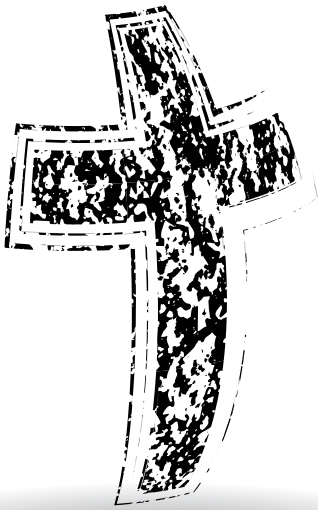
All: God's steadfast love endures forever!

Leader: In our joys and concerns, our praises and petitions, this Palm Sunday is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

All: God's steadfast love endures forever!

(Encourage participants to use their handprints to exchange handshakes, hugs, and high-fives of peace with one another.)





Stations of the Cross

The tradition of “stations of the cross” probably started as a way of representing a journey to Jerusalem. Most stations of the cross paths include 14 stations. Each one includes a picture or carving showing a part of the story of Jesus’ suffering and death. People move from station to station. At each stop, they recall that event in Jesus’ life and take a moment to pray. Stations of the cross paths are commonly associated with the Roman Catholic tradition, but Christians of many traditions find it meaningful.

The eight stations of the cross outlined below are based on Mark’s Gospel. Each station shows a part of Mark’s account of Jesus’ trial, crucifixion, and death.

Use card stock and markers to create a sign for each station. Include the station number, verse reference from Mark, and question for reflection. Add an illustration or symbol to each sign.

<p>Station 1 Jesus appears before Pilate (Mark 15:2–5)</p> <p>Who is Jesus to you?</p>	<p>Station 2 Jesus is sentenced to death (Mark 15:12–15)</p> <p>How do you respond when you see injustice?</p>	<p>Station 3 Jesus is mocked by soldiers (Mark 15:17–20)</p> <p>When have you said or done something that dishonored Jesus?</p>
<p>Station 4 Simon carries Jesus’ cross (Mark 15:21)</p> <p>What might God be calling you to do to serve?</p>	<p>Station 5 Jesus is crucified (Mark 15:25–26)</p> <p>Why do Christians call the day that remembers this event “Good Friday”?</p>	<p>Station 6 Jesus is mocked while on the cross (Mark 15:29–32)</p> <p>How do you avoid “going along with the crowd” when others are mocking Christianity?</p>
<p>Station 7 Jesus cries out to God (Mark 15:34)</p> <p>When have you felt like crying out to God with words like these?</p>	<p>Station 8 Jesus dies (Mark 15:37)</p> <p>What do you want to ask God about Jesus’ death?</p>	