



Faith Adventures for Children Together



*Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.*

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:

<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

Psalm 118: 26-30 – Palm Sunday

Theme: Jesus in unexpected places – it's happening now!

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Matthew

Psalm 118

Psalm 118 is a hymn that was sung during the Passover Festival in Jerusalem. It is believed to have been written by King David, it spoke of his triumphal entry to Jerusalem after battle. It is the song of someone coming into God's temple and asking God to save them. The worshippers reply to each other that God's love endures forever and God is the one who saves. They sing about celebrating and welcoming their king by waving branches and shouting Hosanna which means "Save us". It is a reminder of God's faithfulness to the Israelites.

The song was handed down through generations and was sung during Passover remembering that God saved the Israelites and looking for God to send the new messiah, the new king. Being a hymn of Passover, it is likely that Jesus and the Disciples sang Psalm 118 on the Thursday night after the Last Supper before going out to the Mount of Olives. The story of Palm Sunday sees the Jewish people singing this Passover song and just at that point their new king, Jesus, enters and the song takes on a whole new meaning.



Together

How do I help my group to come together and get started with the theme?

Gathering prayer

Jesus, our friend

(use alternate index fingers to point and tap the middle of opposite palms)

Be with us today

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move up and down twice)

As we share together,

(two hands, palms up in front of you, move one forward and one back and alternate twice)

Pray together,

(hands together, palm against palm, as though praying)

Play together,

(hands to each side, palms up, make two small circles outwards)

And get to know you better,

(point up with one hand)

As children together in your family

(one hand out, palm down in front of you, move it sideways and up in three 'steps' as though to indicate children of three different heights)

AMEN

(Two thumbs up, and bring fists slowly together to meet in front of you)

OR

Thank you, God, for bringing us together today.

Help us to grow closer to you in all we do.

Help us to speak and to listen, to learn and to grow together,

Adventuring together with you wherever we may go.

Amen

In-person Game

Flap a donkey is a game you can play small-scale on a table or on a larger scale on the floor. Cut out two donkey shapes from scrap paper, one for each team. Give the first person in each team a rolled up sheet of paper – newspaper works well. The aim is to waft the paper or bat it against the floor or table top to create a draught which will move the paper donkey across the floor or table towards a finishing line. Which donkey will get there first?

Online game

Get everyone to answer the following questions on a piece of paper, then go around the group reading out one line each from their paper – the first person reading answer one, the second reading answer two, etc. Then play again, with a different person going first. What funny stories come out?

Who went to the celebration?

Who went with them?



What sort of celebration did they go to?

What did the first person wear?

What did the second person wear?

How did the first person celebrate?

How did the second person celebrate?

What did the first person say?

What did the second person say?

Why did they go home?

Experience

For this story we recommend using the **Contemporary English Version**
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+118&version=CEV>

Where can I find the story online?

What is Palm Sunday? – Crossroad Kids Club - <https://youtu.be/SvikD4NnFus>
 Lego Palm Sunday – Trent Kids - <https://youtu.be/t55U1J8YRFg>

Songs to support the story

Under fives: Everywhere I go by Kidspring Children's Ministry - https://youtu.be/f_tS-g6z710

Five to elevens: Forever by Dance Steps for Kids - <https://youtu.be/Xv9oWvfk47A>

Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A new story to share

The day our song came true

Have you ever wished for something for a very long time? Did you get what you wished for?

Picture the scene.

You are in Jerusalem around 30 CE. It's Passover and you and your family are entering the city to go to the temple and give thanks to God. You have brought things with you to give as offerings in the temple. I wonder what you have chosen to bring?

The city is full of people, dressed in their finest clothes and smiling and saying hello to each person they pass. There is a lot of excitement and buzz in the air. This is a wonderful festival; everyone is going to the temple and will sing songs and listen to the Torah being read. Today is a day to come together and remember the



times that God has been with us, the times when God has saved us. We especially remember when God sent Moses to lead us out of slavery in Egypt and take us to the promised land. God has saved us and will save us again.

The air is filled with singing and prayers. Some are new and some are old and familiar. Songs we sing at each of our festivals. Like Psalm 118, the Passover song.

It's loud and happy and we take turns to sing it to each other as we walk through the streets up to the temple. The song asks who will save me? And replies God will save us, only God.

We sing it to remember what God has done for us over the generations but we also sing it to remember that God has promised to send someone to save us once and for all. We look forward to that day.

This is a scene that takes place every year at this time, but this year everything is about to change.

As you are walking through Jerusalem to the temple, you sing the songs and wave branches from the trees like they were flags, you are enjoying the celebration. When suddenly you hear loud cheering and shouts of Hosanna coming from behind, back near the gate to the city. It's getting louder, a wave of sound and singing and shouting creeping nearer to where you are stood.

What's happening? You hear people running by shouting He is here! He is coming!

But who is here? Who is coming?

It must be someone very important to cause this much fuss on such a special day.

You strain your neck to see over the crowds, squinting your eyes to see the procession coming towards you. You can see the crowds shifting to either side of the street, making a path for the special guest to walk through, you hear them shouting and you can see them waving their branches and even throwing their cloaks on the floor as a carpet of colour. Who can it be?

Then you see him, not a king in a carriage, not an army marching, but a man, just a man, riding a small donkey, he is waving and smiling.

As he comes nearer you stop one of his companions and ask who he is, who is this man and why are we celebrating him coming?

You are told, this is Jesus, The Messiah, the one we have been waiting for, the one who has come to save us. Our song has been heard, God has answered our prayers, today in Jerusalem, riding a donkey, is the one we have been waiting for.

You grab a branch and you join in the song, singing, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna!

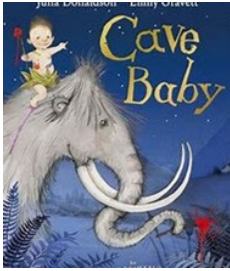
The procession continues past you and you follow on, shouting, singing, and dancing all the way up to the temple.

How wonderful! How surprising!

You take a breath as you watch the scene that day, It seems that this day has changed everything, it has certainly changed our song. One thing is for certain, you can't wait to see what this man Jesus, does next.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.



Cave Baby by Julia Donaldson and Emily Gravett

Cave Baby goes on an unexpected journey and makes new friends along the way.

<https://youtu.be/-3Md0E8uUKQ>

And here is a BSL signed version of the story - <https://youtu.be/feytJaamJFc>

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- Where do you see Jesus in your familiar celebrations such as birthdays, Hallowe'en, bonfire night, welcome homes?
- Why is this story part of the Christian tradition now – why are we still telling this story?

Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- I wonder where you expect to find Jesus?
- I wonder what it is like to be in a big crowd celebrating Jesus?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "what's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- musical instruments (there would have been lots of noise, cheering and clapping in the parade, use your musical instruments to explore the noisy part of the story)
- a palm leaf/ribbons (many people at the parade would have been waving palm leaves and laying them on the ground for Jesus to ride over, wave your ribbons or leaves while someone else walks past you, take it in turns)
- a party blower (Jesus arriving would have been a time of celebration, blow your party blower to explore celebration, how else could you celebrate?)
- a crown/tiara (people saw Jesus as their king, how does it feel to wear the crown?)
- and a tactile cross of wood or fabric (a cross shape reminds us of Jesus. Jesus/God loves us and it's always in the box because Jesus/God always loves us!)
- a set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to make pictures from the story as you tell it (e.g. stones, felt, twigs etc)

Express

Praying together: how can you involve the children actively in prayer?

Mexican wave prayer

Ask the children to sit in a line, facing forwards.

Choose three or four subjects to pray about. You could write a word or draw a picture, for each, as a prompt.

Each person thinks of one thing to pray about, for each category.

After a short opening prayer, start the wave! Each person shouts out their prayer as they wave. You can use the prompt cards to re-start the prayer wave with a new topic.

You could end your prayer with a final wave aaaaaa.....men!



If you are using this activity with younger children, why not use this simple rhyme to start off each wave.

Let's get **ready** and think what to say,
We're still and **steady**,
Come on, let's **pray**!

Spoken prayer

A prayer of thanks

This prayer uses the first part of verse 28 from Psalm 118, for everyone to join in with.

You are my God, and I will thank you.

The Psalm is a prayer of celebration, joy and movement. You can pray this prayer in one place or encourage the children to use their whole bodies to pray whilst sitting, standing, walking, then lying down.

In the quiet,

The sitting and listening,

You are my God, and I will thank you (Whisper)

In the busy,

The queueing and waiting,

You are my God, and I will thank you (Speak)

In the fun,

The laughter and chatter,

You are my God, and I will thank you (Shout)

While I rest,

All sleepy and cosy,

You are my God, and I will thank you (Whisper)

Amen

Responding together

Here are some suggested crafts and activities, and there is a colouring sheet at the end of this resource. You could also use small play toys and/or have a basket of resources available so children can choose their own way to respond. [See here for more suggestions.](#)

With an online group, plan whether to deliver any resources in advance or how you will encourage them to use what they've got to hand in their response.

However you do it, it is good for the adults to engage in the response too, and all chat together.

Moving Jesus

This activity reminds us of the excitement people felt as Jesus rode into Jerusalem, and the fact that he used a very ordinary, everyday, mode of transport instead of the majestic horse the people were expecting.

Put together a box of loose parts e.g. toilet rolls, sticks, tape, card, wheels, wooden clothes pegs, boxes, balls, string. You will need a figure to represent Jesus, e.g. a play figure or cardboard cut out figure.

What you do:

Jesus travelled on a donkey into Jerusalem, and the people waved palm branches and lay their cloaks on the ground. Place the figure of Jesus on the table, along with a box of loose parts. Now, in groups or individually, work out a way of getting Jesus from one end of the room to the other without the figure touching the floor.

The Jesus to reach the other end first wins.

Remember to cheer on the other Jesus models as they go.

We would love to see how you did it, please post your videos here https://bit.ly/FACT_FB

Celebration edible – truffle

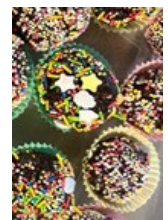
These little treats, remind us of the colourful road Jesus had to travel and the cheering and joy of the people seeing Jesus coming along the road.

You will need:

- 300g digestive biscuits
- 300 ml sweetened condensed milk
- 7 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- Coloured sprinkles
- Rolling pin
- Paper cases

What you do:

- Mix the condensed milk with the cocoa powder until the cocoa is dissolved and well combined. You maybe should taste the mixture to make sure you are happy with the sweetness or if it is chocolatey enough for you.
- Crush the digestive biscuits into fine crumbs. Put them in a Ziploc bag and crush them with a rolling pin until they're fine.
- Add $\frac{3}{4}$ of the biscuit crumbs to the mixture and mix well until it's all combined, the rest in a little at a time to get the right consistency.
- For easier shaping, you can put them in the fridge, for 30 minutes or so until it is firmer. Then roll about 1 tablespoon of mixture into a ball.
- Make them as big or small as you like, then roll the balls in the coloured sprinkles.
- Store in an airtight container (in the fridge if you wish) and enjoy anytime! Maybe give them to someone to celebrate Easter.





Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

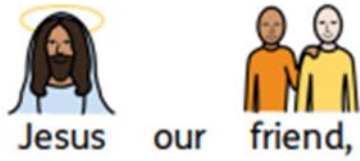
- When you are out and about this week, at school or at home or in the street, watch out for people whose actions, attitudes or words make you think of Jesus.
 - People were expecting a king but saw someone riding on a donkey. Jesus answered their prayers but not in the way they expected. He was humble. Try extra hard this week not to boast or to try and be the best or the first or the most important. Follow Jesus's example and be humble and kind.
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We hope you enjoyed exploring the story of the Palm Sunday with us.

Please let us know what you liked or what you would find useful by emailing lorrainewebb@urc.org.uk

Next week's resources on the theme of Easter Happenings will be on the Easter story from John's gospel.

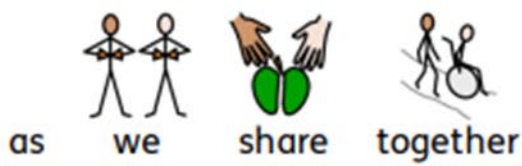




Jesus our friend,



be with us today



as we share together



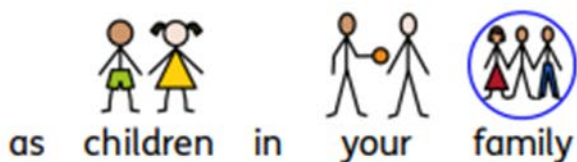
pray together



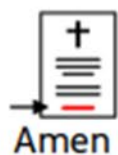
play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen



Right middle finger touches centre of other palm, repeat with left hand



Alternate hands back and forth

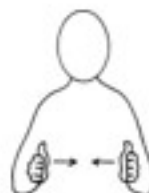




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