

Triumphal Entry

(Palm Sunday: Matthew 21:1-17)

Introduction

Do you spend time each day praying to Jesus and praising Him for Who He is? What are some creative ways you can praise the Lord? [Teacher, let the children respond.] Have you ever written Jesus a poem or drawn Him a picture or sang Him a song? He delights in whatever way you choose to honor Him.

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, You deserve our praises. You are an awesome God! You are greater than we can even imagine. You created the whole earth and everything in it. You hold all things together in order. You are full of kindness. Please open our hearts and minds this morning, Lord, so that we might know You more fully than we have ever known You before. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day.
(Psalm 71:8)*

Lesson

One week before Jesus' death on the cross, He and his disciples were walking from Jericho into Jerusalem. They were coming to celebrate Passover.

The Passover was a special time each year when the Jews remembered how God had protected them from death and set them free from slavery many years before. God had said that the first-born son in every family in Egypt would die, but He made a way for the Israelites to escape death. He told them to kill a lamb and paint their doorposts with the blood of the lamb. God passed over the houses that had lamb's blood on their doorways and didn't kill the first-born son. The blood protected the Israelites when the death angel passed

through Egypt. So, every year to this date, the Jews celebrate Passover. They have a great feast and celebration.

Jesus and His disciples were coming into Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. And, before this week ended, the Lord Jesus would give His blood on the cross to pay for all sin.

As they came near the city, Jesus stopped at a nearby village where He sent two of His men to borrow a donkey and its colt.

Matthew 21:1-5

As Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem, they came to the town of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives. Jesus sent two of them on ahead. (2) "Go into the village over there," he said. "As soon as you enter it, you will see a donkey tied there, with its colt beside it. Untie them and bring them to me. (3) If anyone asks what you are doing, just say, 'The Lord needs them,' and he will immediately let you take them." (4) This took place to fulfill the prophecy that said, (5) "Tell the people of Jerusalem, 'Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey's colt.'"

This was the fulfillment of a prophecy that was spoken of more than 500 years before Jesus was born. (Zechariah 9:9)

Matthew 21:6-7

The two disciples did as Jesus commanded. (7) They brought the donkey and the colt to him and threw their garments over the colt, and he sat on it.

The two disciples found the donkey and brought it to Jesus, Then, the disciples laid their robes over the donkey like a saddle.

When Jesus rode the donkey into the city, many people treated him just like a king. They formed a big parade to honor Him. Children and adults cheered and sang songs. They waved and shouted. The people cut branches off of palm trees and waved them like flags to honor Him. But the people really didn't understand what Jesus had come to Jerusalem to do.

You see, people had heard about Him. Many of them had seen Jesus perform miracles. They heard that He had given a blind man sight. They had watched a lame man walk! People cheered because he had

turned water into wine and fed 5,000 people with only two small fish and five loaves.

The people wanted to make Him their earthly king. They thought it would be great to have a king who could feed them and cure their diseases.

Matthew 21:8-9

Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. (9) Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD! Praise God in highest heaven!"

The people lined the road, shouting, "Hosanna" which means, "God save us now"! And they waved palm branches and threw their cloaks in front of the colt as it passed before them like laying out a red carpet.

Many people thought that Jesus was coming to claim His throne and save them from Rome's persecution. The people went wild. They were sure their freedom was at hand.

They did not understand that He would become their Savior though suffering death; they expected Him to become their king and "save" them by freeing them from Rome and doing miracles to supply food and heal their sick. They praised Him simply for what He could do for them. They did not realize Jesus is God.

We should praise the Lord Jesus for all the good things He does for us, but we should also praise Him just for who He is. The Bible tells us that Jesus is Lord of all. He is worthy to receive glory and honor from us, for He created all things and by His will He keeps everything in order. (Rev 4:11) And one day we will see Jesus come as our King. He will come with thousands of shining angels to take us home to heaven.

While we wait for that glorious day, Jesus deserves all our praise. Admire Him for all He has made; thank Him for all He does for you,

but also praise and glorify Him just for who He is — Lord of all. Don't be like the crowds gathered along the road to Jerusalem who were shouting their praise to Jesus just because of the wonderful miracles He had done.

Matthew 21:10-11

The entire city of Jerusalem was in an uproar as he entered. "Who is this?" they asked. (11) And the crowds replied, "It's Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Not everybody was glad to see Jesus coming into town. Early the next morning Jesus entered the temple where He caused quite an uproar.

Matthew 21:12-13

Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out all the people buying and selling animals for sacrifice. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. (13) He said to them, "The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer,' but you have turned it into a den of thieves!"

Jews came to Jerusalem from all over the Roman world during this week-long celebration to remember the great exodus from Egypt. They couldn't bring the animals they needed to do their sacrifices. So they had to buy the animals once they got to the temple.

Money changers and sellers set up booths just outside the temple. The money changers weren't always honest; they took advantage of the foreigners who didn't know the language. The salesmen sold the animals at very high prices. Getting ripped off like this right at the doorway to God's house made people angry and interfered with their attitude towards worshiping the Lord. This made Jesus very angry, so He went into the temple and chased out all the merchants and moneychangers and turned over all the tables.

Ask: Is anger is a sin? Was it wrong for Jesus to get angry? [Discuss the difference between *unrighteous* indignation and righteous indignation.]

Matthew 21:14

The blind and the lame came to him in the Temple, and he healed them.

After driving out the greedy people from the temple, Jesus healed many sick, but that made the Scribes and the Pharisees angry. [Teacher, in the passage below, the Scribes and Pharisees give us an example of *unrighteous indignation*.]

Seeing these amazing miracles made the children shout their praise to Jesus, but that made Jewish religious leaders even more angry.

Matthew 21:15-16

The leading priests and the teachers of religious law saw these wonderful miracles and heard even the children in the Temple shouting, "Praise God for the Son of David." But the leaders were indignant. (16) They asked Jesus, "Do you hear what these children are saying?" "Yes," Jesus replied. "Haven't you ever read the Scriptures? For they say, 'You have taught children and infants to give you praise.'"

The Jewish religious leaders were angry that Jesus healed the blind and lame because they were jealous of His popularity. But even the young children called out their praise to Jesus and He was pleased to hear their praise.

The praise of these children was natural and right, for Jesus is God the Son. The Lord Jesus deserves all our praise. We should freely praise Him as we see His glory in the world around us and His power in our lives, but we should praise Him not just for what He does, but also for who He is — the Lord of all.

Ask: What are some characteristics of the Lord Jesus that should cause us to praise Him? [Teacher, write the children's ideas on the board. Encourage them to discover some of God's attributes listed below.]

God's Inner Qualities:

[Teacher, use the highlighted verse as a sword drill.]

- *All-knowing:* God knows everything, past, present, and future. He knows all about you, even what you are thinking. He knows your deepest needs and desires, and He knows how to meet them. (Job 37:16; **Ps 139:1-4**).
- *All-powerful:* God can do anything He wants to do. His power is greater than we can imagine. He always uses it for our good. (**Job 42:2**; Rev 19:6).
- *All-present:* God is always present everywhere. He is with you all the time. He sees everything you do and hears everything you say. (Ps 139:7-12; Prov 5:21; **Prov 15:3**; Acts 17:28).
- *All-wise:* He made and understands all things. His plans for us are perfect. (Ps 104:24; Is 40:28; **Rom 11:33**).
- *Faithful:* God always does what He says He will do. You can trust His Word completely. (Lam 3:22, 23; **1 Cor 10:13**; 1 Thes 5:24).
- *Holy:* He is completely pure and perfect. He never sins and He cannot tolerate sin. All that He does is right and good. (**1 Sam 2:2**; Ps 99:5; Is 43:15).
- *Merciful:* God cares about us more deeply than we could understand. He sent His Son to die so that He can justly choose not to give us the punishment our sin deserves. (**Num 14:18**; Ps 130:3; Eph 2:4).
- *Sovereign:* He rules over all things in heaven and earth, including our lives. There is no power or authority greater than His. (Ps 22:28; **Ps 47:2**; Is 44:6; Is 66:1-2; Dan 4:34-35).
- *Unchanging:* He is always the same — pure and good, faithful in His love and care — and nothing can change who or what He is (**Mal 3:6**; James 1:17).

God wants us to know what He is really like. Each day as you spend time with the Lord, begin with a few moments of praise to Him. You can say “thank-You” prayers to Jesus for who He is or maybe sing a song to Him. The Bible says our mouths should be filled with His praise. Speak your praise not just privately to Jesus, but to others as well. That is what happened in the temple in Jerusalem. The children shouted out their praise to the Lord Jesus, giving Him the glory He deserves.

Closing Prayer

Father, You want us to know You for who You really are. I pray that You will give each of us a desire in our hearts to spend time alone with You each and every day, thinking about Your special inner qualities that make You the wonderful Father that You are. You want me to know Your love and to show it to others. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

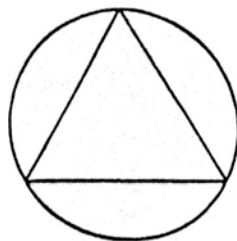
Craft Corner

Have the children write Jesus a poem, drawn Him a picture, or sing Him a song. Or, have them make cards for some of His attributes. Then they can hold them up as you spend time praying and praising Him.

Game Center

What is God Like? Matching Game

Prepare 16 yellow circles similar to the one sketched to the right.



On the back of the circles write the following messages — one message per circle, but use each message twice:

- GOD IS POWERFUL!
- GOD IS ALIVE!
- GOD LOVES YOU!
- GOD HATES SIN!
- GOD IS PATIENT!
- GOD DOES NOT CHANGE!
- GOD CANNOT LIE!
- GOD KNOWS EVERYTHING!

Each time a child correctly answers a question he gets to turn over two circles. If the messages on the back match, remove the pieces. If the messages are different, turn them back over, and the children will try to remember where they are and make future matches. It won't be long before even young children will have all eight statements about God memorized.

Or, use the following review questions in a game of your choice:

1. Where were Jesus and His disciples going the week before His death on the cross? (They were going to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.)
2. What is the celebration of Passover about? (When God passed over the Israelite's homes that had lamb's blood painted on the door posts and didn't kill the first born son.)
3. Just before coming into Jerusalem, what did Jesus send two of His disciples off to do? (To go into the village, find a donkey and bring it to Jesus.)
4. When Jesus rode into the city on a donkey, what did the people do and why? (They thought he was going to be anointed as King, so they waved palm branches and laid down their clothes for Him to walk over and shouted, "Hosanna in the highest.")
5. Why did they hope He was going to be their king? (They were under the Roman rule at that time and they wanted to be free of the persecution.)
6. What does "Hosanna" mean? (It means, "Save us now.")

7. When Jesus went into the temple, what did He do to cause a commotion, and why? (He drove out the sellers and the moneychangers because they were dishonest.)
8. After driving out the greedy people from the temple, what miraculous thing did Jesus do that made the Scribes and the Pharisees angry? (He healed many sick.)
9. Who was it in the temple that sang out their praise to Jesus and made the chief priests and scribes indignant? (The children.)
10. Besides the fact that Jesus is good to us, why does He deserve all our praise? (He is God.)
11. What are some characteristics of the Lord Jesus that should cause us to praise Him? (All-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, all-wise, faithful, holy, merciful, sovereign, unchanging, etc.)
12. What are some creative ways you can praise the Lord? (Write a poem, draw a picture, sing a song, etc.)

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