

He is Alive!

(John 20:1-9; Psalm 121)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Easter is an exciting time, isn't it? What are some of fun things you do to celebrate Easter? People like to dress up in their very best clothes. When I was a little girl, my mother always bought me new shoes, a pretty dress, and an Easter bonnet to wear. We would always have Easter baskets full of candy and Easter egg hunts all around the house. But, do you know, no one ever told me why we celebrate Easter!

Today, we are going to learn about the very first Easter Sunday and learn why it is such a special day.

Opening Prayer

Father, Easter is such a fun time, but sometimes we get swept away by all the toys and candy and Easter eggs and Easter bunnies. Please help us to understand the true meaning of Easter so that we won't miss the true blessing. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! (Luke 24:23)

Lesson

Who knows why we celebrate Christmas? That is a celebration of the birth of Jesus. God came from Heaven and was born as a baby and lived among humans. Why? Because He loves us so much that He wanted us to know what God is like. Jesus came to show us how to live our lives in a way that pleases God. He taught us how to love others with His kind of love, by forgiving one another and serving others.

When Jesus was here He did many miraculous things. He healed the sick, made the blind to see, and the lame to walk. He became very popular. Many people followed Him and believed that He was truly God, come to Earth as a human.

But the Pharisees were jealous of Jesus' popularity with the people. They wanted to get rid of Jesus and they made a plan to kill Him. Do you think that Jesus knew they were scheming to do away with Him? Of course, He did, He is God and God knows all things! This was all part of God's plan in the first place. He made a plan to come and die for us, way back before He even formed the Earth.

We are born wanting our own sinful way. No one had to teach you how to sin.

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Not a single person on earth is always good and never sins.

Think of times when you have not pleased God. Perhaps you have wished something bad would happen to someone who hurt you. Maybe you have lied to your teacher at school. Perhaps you have selfishly refused to share something with your brother or sister. The Bible says that our sin deserves punishment—separation from God forever.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

But Jesus came and took our punishment for us. He suffered for our sin so that we would not have to suffer.

When Jesus hung on the cross, He cried out, "*It is finished!*" He had shed His blood on the cross to satisfy God's anger against sin. Now, you can come to God and ask Him for forgiveness for your sins and because Jesus has already paid the penalty, God can justly say, "*You are forgiven.*" Jesus' death on the cross paid for your sins. It was like He put grace in the bank for you. It's waiting there for you to withdraw it. As soon as you come to Him and ask Him to forgive your debts, He can because your sins have already been paid for in full.

How can we believe that this is all true? Because Jesus didn't stay dead! And that's the Good News! This is really what gets us so excited about Easter. Do you know anyone else who has been able to raise themselves up from being dead? No! That is what proves that Jesus is God. Only God could have done such a thing!

Let's read about that first Easter morning together:

John 20:1

Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.

Mary, after spending an agonizing night of fear and sadness, was the first one at the tomb on that Sunday morning. In fact, she got there while it was still dark. And when she got there she found that the stone had already been rolled away! Grave stones weighed tons and she couldn't imagine who might have moved it. And when she looked inside, the tomb was empty!

Since Mary knew that the disciples would not have taken Jesus' body, she believed that grave robbers had stolen it. So, she ran to tell the disciples...

John 20:2

She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him!"

Peter and John ran to the tomb and found it empty except for the linen burial cloths in which Jesus had been wrapped.

John 20:3-7

Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also

noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.

I'm sure that Peter and John wondered what had happened to Jesus' body. For a while all they could imagine was that someone had stolen Jesus' body. But, the fact that the grave clothes were empty, as if Jesus had passed right through them, was the first sign that a robbery had not taken place. The headpiece was neatly folded and lying over to the side. A grave robber couldn't possibly have made off with Jesus' body and left the linens as if they were still shaped around it.

John 20:8-9

Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.

How do you think John reacted when he saw the empty grave clothes? It says he "saw and believed!" That means he knew that Jesus was alive. What a great experience for him! That's what God wants us to know on Easter morning. Why is it good to know that Jesus is alive? It means that Jesus overcame or overpowered death. He's alive!!! He is watching over you and protecting you. He hears our prayers because our God is a living God. We're not worshiping some dumb idol! And Jesus said He will always be with us. That's a reason to celebrate, isn't it?!

[Teacher, have cup cakes with "trick" candles on them. Tell the group you want to have a party to celebrate Easter. Light the candles and invite the kids to blow them out. Let the children keep trying to blow out the trick candles. Have a bowl of water handy to extinguish them.]

What happened to the candles? What were you thinking when you saw them start to burn again? How was that like what God did on that first Easter morning?

People thought they had gotten rid of Jesus by nailing Him to the cross, just as you thought you had blown out your candles. But God had other plans. Some of you didn't know you had special "trick"

candles on your cupcakes just as people didn't know God had a special plan for Easter. God brought Jesus back to life. And He's alive right now. You can't see Him, but He is right here with us this morning.

While you finish eating your cupcake, let me read Psalm 121 to you...

Psalm 121:1-8

I look up to the mountains—does my help come from there? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth! He will not let you stumble; the One who watches over you will not slumber. Indeed, He who watches over Israel never slumbers or sleeps. The LORD Himself watches over you! The LORD stands beside you as your protective shade. The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon at night. The LORD keeps you from all harm and watches over your life. The LORD keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.

This psalm tells us that God is always watching over us and keeping us safe.

Closing Prayer

Father, we wonder what Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John thought when they got to the empty tomb. Thank You for bringing Jesus back to life. We thank You that He lives forever. He loves us so much, and now He wants to be our Savior. Help us follow Him everyday. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Rock-Solid Reminders

Before this activity, set out smooth rocks and permanent markers. Ask each child to pick a rock. Have them write "God" on their rock and let them decorate them as they prefer.

Take your rock home and look at it every day. This rock will remind you of the empty tomb and the fact that Jesus is alive and is watching over you.

Game Center

Drama Activity

Don't miss acting out this lesson, it's so exciting! Bring pieces of fabric or towels, a robe for Jesus, bed sheets for the angels. Use your imagination for the props and costumes.

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

1. Why do we celebrate Christmas? (Jesus was born as a human.)
2. Why do we celebrate Easter? (Jesus rose from the dead.)
3. Why did Jesus come to Earth? (God wanted us to know Him. He wanted to take our punishment for sin so that we could come and live with Him.)
4. Why do we know that Jesus is God? (He did many miracles while He was here. He healed the sick, made the blind to see, and the lame to walk. Then He came back to life!)
5. Why did the Pharisees want to kill Jesus? (They were jealous of His popularity.)
6. When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb what did she find? (The stone had been rolled away.)
7. What did Peter and John find when they got to the tomb? (They saw the linen wrappings lying there, and also noticed the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings.)

8. What did Peter and John think happened to Jesus body when they saw that the tomb was empty? (They thought robbers had taken His body.)
9. What made Peter and John realize that Jesus was alive? (The grave clothes were all left as if Jesus had passed right through them.)
10. How did Peter and John react when they realized that Jesus was alive? (They must have been amazed and excited!)
11. Why is it good to know that Jesus is alive? (He is watching over us and protecting us. He hears our prayers.)
12. How did they put Jesus on the cross? (They nailed him there.)