

date: **4/9/17****Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19**
(Palm Sunday)

Jesus Is King

REMEMBER VERSE

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.
Psalm 145:8

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

I attend the 9:00 p.m. service at my church on Sunday nights. I love this service because there is a sense of freedom. Since the service is characterized by energetic college kids, it's not unusual for people to raise their hands, shout, or even dance.

Because we're so willing to uniquely worship God, our worship leaders sometimes suggest new or different postures of response to God. I'll never forget one Sunday. The pastor had given an incredible message that left us challenged and inspired, and as the worship leader came onstage, he prayed and began to lead us in song. Halfway through the first song, he stopped. "I think it would be great," he said, "if we got to our knees to worship Jesus, our King." Suddenly the room was silent. We looked around at one another, bewildered.

The space between the rows of seats at my church is tight! It was almost comical to consider a little more than a thousand of us squishing together to kneel between the rows. But slowly, one by one, everyone maneuvered to his knees. Even the worship band followed suit. I will be honest: It was uncomfortable. Yet something about the experience was powerful—one thousand people in one room, uncomfortable, inconvenienced, willing to deny their needs in order to honor Jesus as King.

To me, it was a physical expression of what our hearts and lives should look like. We are called to glorify Christ regardless of our situations. We are called to be the sort of people who submit to God even when it's inconvenient. We are to lift up Jesus, always, because He is our King.

Erika Abdelatif
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Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

The people of Israel had long awaited their coming Messiah. From the beginning to the end, the Old Testament records the history of God's people awaiting the arrival of their promised Savior. They envisioned a king who would come with a sword and save Israel from its enemies. Their hope for this sort of Messiah is evident in the way they welcomed Jesus on what we refer to as Palm Sunday or the triumphal entry. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, crowds waved palm branches over Him as He entered the city.

The palm branch was a symbol of Jewish patriotism. It represented victory for the Jewish people. Palms were used in decorating Jewish coins, buildings, and even synagogues. They were prominently displayed during many of the major feasts and festivals. Throughout the Old Testament and various Jewish texts, palm branches were used to symbolize Jewish pride, and Israelites would only cover the ground with them for honorable and worthy individuals. For them to lace Jesus' path with palm fronds while waving branches over Him as He passed implied that they perceived Him to be a king coming to rescue them. In fact, the people cried out, "Hosanna," which means "Save us" or "Rescue us." The people shouted it in celebration, as if to say, "Hooray—He is here to save us!"

In His first coming, Jesus didn't intend to be an earthly warrior king. He came to restore a broken relationship between mankind and God. Instead of bringing a sword, He brought a message of peace and humility for true salvation. And one day He'll return to earth as our conquering King. Jesus freed us from much more than earthly enslavement—He freed us from enslavement to sin. That is why, one day, people from every tribe and tongue will shout, "Jesus is King!"

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

How do you honor a king? In the movies, everyone bows in the presence of a king. Sometimes a servant or messenger will kneel or walk backward so as not to turn his back to the king. This gives the king the honor and respect he deserves. Subjects bow down in submission, recognizing the power and majesty of the king.

The Bible proclaims that Jesus is the King of Kings! We probably don't bow down before Jesus—simply for the sake of giving Him honor—often enough. Sometimes we forget His position of authority and rule over us because He is such a loving and generous King.

This week, try remembering that Jesus is King. Every morning, spend a few minutes bowing down before God. Instead of running into His throne room with requests, spend a few moments worshipping and praising Him for who He is and the fact that you're His daughter or son.

SMALL GROUP
SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day's portion of The Big God Story.

Option 1: Pin the Tail on the Donkey

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, He rode a donkey. To the Israelites, a donkey represented a king coming in peace (Zechariah 9:9). Play this classic children's game to get the kids curious about the part of The Big God Story they'll hear today.

SUPPLIES

- Donkey poster (see Resources)
- Yarn (4" per child)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Blindfold
- Optional: Jesus cutouts (see Resources)

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Donkey poster. Cut the yarn into four-inch pieces; make one piece for each child. Optional: Print and cut out the Jesus cutouts, making one for each child.

SET UP

Tape the Donkey poster to the wall.

RELATE

One at a time, blindfold each child and hand him a piece of yarn with a piece of tape stuck to one end. Then invite him to try to "pin" the "tail"—tape the piece of yarn—on the donkey. Add a challenging twist to the game by spinning around the children before releasing them to pin the tail on the donkey.

Optional: Take a different approach to this game by having each child try to pin a Jesus cutout to the back of the donkey as though He is riding the donkey.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Remember Verse animation (see Resources)

- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. Psalm 145:8

Connect

Question

What type of animal (real or imaginary) would you like to ride and why?


The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Matthew 21:1–11; John 12:12–19

Storytelling Technique: Images and Interactive Response

Jesus Is King

SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- [Timeline animation](#) (see Resources)
- [Images: Zephaniah 9:9, Sports Arena, Donkey, Royal Procession, Horse, Palm Branch](#) (see Resources)
- [Audio: Drumroll, Trumpet Fanfare](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Palm branches (1 per child; real, paper, or other material; see Resources for optional [Palm Branch cutout](#)) 
- Optional: scissors, Bible-times costume

PREPARE AHEAD

If using paper palm branches, print one per child, and cut them out. Invite a second storyteller to help with The Big God Story this week.

SET UP

Set up the palm branches near the front for handing out during storytelling. Optional: Have the leader reading the prophecy dress in a Bible-times costume.

RELATE

Tech: Cue Zechariah 9:9 image. Leader onstage (wearing optional Bible-times costume) reads Zechariah 9:9 in loud, declarative voice and then moves offstage.

Tech: Cue Drumroll audio. Storyteller starts from back of the room and runs to front while drumroll plays.

Storyteller arrives onstage in dramatic fashion. **Don't you love a big entrance? Well, Jesus knew how to make an entrance! And Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem was prophesied more than 500 years before He was even born!** Point to Zechariah 9:9 image. **But before we hear more, let's pause and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us today.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Jesus and His disciples were on their way to Jerusalem for Passover. Passover, one of the most important Jewish festivals, celebrated how God had delivered His people from slavery in Egypt. Hundreds of thousands of people traveled to Jerusalem to attend Passover. Along the journey there, Jesus had stopped in Bethany to visit friends. Here Mary worshipped Him by pouring perfume on His feet. She knew Him as a teacher and as a healer, and soon she and everyone would know Him as King.

Many of the people coming to the Passover festival in Jerusalem hoped that Jesus would be there. Imagine a crowd of people, as many as in a sports arena (Tech: Cue Sports Arena image), all hoping to see one person: Jesus. They had heard about how Jesus healed sick people, blind people, and paralyzed people—and how He'd even raised a man from the dead! Who remembers a miracle that Jesus did? Invite a couple of kids to share.

The Jewish people had been waiting since the beginning of The Big God Story for the promised Messiah. The Romans ruled God's people, and the people thought the Messiah would come to save them from their enemies. They expected a warrior king to ride in on a huge, powerful horse and beat the bad guys so they could be free again to live as God's people. They expected Jesus to be that warrior king.

As Jesus and His disciples came near Jerusalem, Jesus told them something. Let's turn to Matthew 21:2–3 to hear what Jesus said. Read verses aloud as kids follow along. Tech: Cue Donkey image. Jesus knew exactly where to find the donkeys and that they would be given to Him. He knew this because He's God and He knows everything, but He also knew the ancient prophecy in the Bible that predicted what would happen. Tech: Cue Zephaniah 9:9 image. Jesus knew that His choice to ride in on a donkey would fulfill this prophecy and would reveal Him as King.

The disciples found the donkeys just as Jesus had said they would. What happened next? Invite responses. Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 21:7. Crowds of people were waiting to see Jesus. Imagine that you're waiting for a king. What do you think you'd see when he arrived? Invite responses. Tech: Cue Royal Procession image. Good thoughts. You might imagine that the king would be surrounded by lots of marching soldiers or people riding in chariots. Maybe a trumpet would sound. Tech: Cue Trumpet Fanfare audio. Maybe the king would ride a big, beautiful, decorated horse like kings rode as they headed to battle. Tech: Cue Horse image.

Well, Jesus—the King of Kings—chose to enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey. Why do you think He chose a donkey? Encourage responses. Back in Bible times, donkeys symbolized humility and peace. Jesus rode on a donkey to show His people that He was indeed the true King—but He came in peace. He didn't come to destroy their enemies, the Romans, like the people hoped.

Let's read what the crowd did when they saw Him. Read Matthew 21:8 as everyone follows along. Tech: Cue Palm Branch image. Palm branches symbolized victory. The people shouted, "Hosanna!" which means "Save us!" Pass out palm branches and invite kids to act out the scene as you read John 12:13. As you read each phrase, encourage kids to repeat it.

Jesus is the King of Kings. He is the King over everything because He is God! The Israelites had expected for so long that the Messiah would be a warrior king, and they wanted Him to save them from the Romans. And Jesus did come to save them, but not from the Romans. He had a bigger plan. Jesus came to save people by dying on the cross for their sins and rising again. He came to save people from death! He came to bring them into relationship with God.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the King immortal. That means He lives forever (1 Timothy 1:17). Jesus is the King of glory. He is strong and wins every battle (Psalm 24:8). The armies of heaven follow Him (Revelation 19:14). Jesus is a righteous King. He makes right decisions that please God (Isaiah 32:1). And Jesus is a loving King. The powerful Ruler of all chose to free us from our sins by dying for us (Revelation 1:5). When we know Jesus as our King, we can cry out to Him, “Hosanna! Save us!” We can ask Him to help us bow down to who He is and what He wants to do in our lives. Share a personal story of a time you recognized Jesus as King in your life.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: Jesus Is King

Encourage the kids to open their Bibles and read the suggested passages.

Questions for Younger Kids

- Why did Jesus ride on a donkey? Matthew 21:1–5
- What did the people shout as Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Matthew 21:9
- What does *hosanna* mean?
- How can we show Jesus that He is our King?
- How can we worship our King?

Questions for Older Kids

- Why did Jesus ride on a donkey? Matthew 21:1–5; John 12:14–15
- Why did the people wave palm branches?
- What did the people expect the Messiah to do?
- What kind of king is Jesus?
- What does *hosanna* mean? Is there a place in your life where you feel like shouting, “Hosanna!” to Jesus?
- How can we show Jesus that He is our King?
- How can you recognize Jesus as King of your life?

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Open a Bible and read Matthew 21:9:

“Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Encourage the kids to crouch down. Then, as you read the verse a second time, invite them to jump up, raise their hands in the air, and shout, “Hosanna!” each time you read this word.

To end your time together, speak the following blessing over the kids:

May you trust Jesus to be King in your life. May you know that you can call out to Him and He will save you. May you know that the King of heaven and earth loves you and cares for you.