

LENT 2023

**Matthew 21:1-11****A Note to the Parents/Teachers**

Lent is the 40 days (not including Sundays) from Ash Wednesday to the Saturday before Easter. The Lenten season is a preparation for commemorating the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. From its start date on Ash Wednesday until its conclusion on Easter Sunday, Lent has been a customary time for fasting, giving, and prayer. Just as we thoughtfully prepare for events in our individual lives, such as weddings or birthdays, participating in Lent invites us to prepare our minds and hearts for glorifying and celebrating Jesus' life, death, and bodily resurrection.

- **Big Idea:** Humble King, Powerful Kingdom

Starter**Evidence of Grace**

Ask kids to share ways they've seen God at work lately. Anything, big or small, which is good is from God. Take time to thank God together.

Discussion:

- If you were a king or queen over your own kingdom, how would you rule your people? What kind of King or Queen would you be?

Sing Together

Story

In Matthew 21, we read about Jesus returning to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the main city in Israel where the temple of God was. This is where the Israelites would bring their sacrifices and worship YHWH. Jesus was coming back to Jerusalem because he was about to celebrate one of the Jewish festivals. Jesus knew what was going to happen in this city and what it would lead to. Jesus knew that he was about to suffer and die at the hands of the Jewish leaders.

He tells two of his disciples to go ahead of him into the city to get some things ready for his entrance into the city. He told the two disciples to go to the village ahead of them, and when they get there, they will immediately see a donkey tied up with her baby colt next to her. He told the disciples to unite the donkeys and bring them to Jesus. Jesus tells the disciples that if anyone asks why they are just taking the donkeys without asking, He said to tell them that the Lord needs them.

Jesus told his disciples to do this because He knew it was to fulfill a prophecy that had been told to the prophet Zechariah long before Jesus was born. The prophecy said, "Say to Daughter Zion, See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey." A very large crowd started to gather ahead of and around Jesus. As Jesus entered the city, people threw their clothes and jackets on the ground. Some were cutting branches off of the trees and laying them on the road ahead of Jesus. It was like they were making a royal red carpet for their king.

You see, Jesus entered the city as a king would. Kings, when they would return from victory in battle and enter the city, the whole city would gather at the main gates and line the streets to shout, praise, and rejoice with the king. The road that the king entered would be paved with royal carpet. Everyone would be shouting, "Praise to the king for his victory in battle! Our king is the best! Everyone worship the king!" It was a celebration of victory.

While normal kings would ride into a city celebration after a victory in battle on a tall horse with streets lined with royal carpets, Jesus rode in on a donkey, with streets lined with clothes and palm leaves. While kings and cities would celebrate conquering another kingdom, Jesus rode into Jerusalem not because he conquered a kingdom but because he was about to conquer the power of sin in all of creation. Jesus was the king that Israel had been waiting for, hoping for, and looking forward to. Jesus was the king that they hoped would set them free. Most people thought that the Messiah, Jesus, would free them from a human kingdom, Rome. But Jesus came to announce a God's kingdom not by conquering Rome, but by dying on a cross at the hands of Rome.

Everything about God's kingdom was not how people expected. Jesus modeled a humble way to live. To love people who are thought of the least in a city. He healed people who were thought to be blind, lame, or disabled because they sinned against God. He brought life to death, freedom to slaves and oppressed, healing to the broken and hurting, and humbly walked and talked with the people that were thought of as the least in the cities and towns. Jesus was a humble king. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were not the way humans expected God's kingdom to come on earth, but it was God's plan all along, because it displayed how God always wanted humans to rule and reign with God on His good creation.

[Dialogue Questions - you may use some or all]

- ▶ Why do you think Jesus rode in on a donkey instead of a big, tall, beautiful horse?
- ▶ What do you think the Jewish leaders thought when they saw Jesus fulfill the prophecy said to Zechariah?
- ▶ Why is God's kingdom so different from human kingdoms?
- ▶ How are we to live if we follow Jesus and are a part of God's kingdom people here on earth?
- ▶ What are some ways we are called to be God's kingdom people now? In school? At home?

Breakout Time

Pray:

God, I know that you are the one true living God who created all things. You created the earth and everything on the earth. You created me. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus so that I can be forgiven of worshipping other things. Forgive me for sometimes worshipping other things than you. I repent. Holy Spirit, please work in my heart to love God and love others in a way that points them to Jesus and your Kingdom. May our hearts be filled with love for you and for others in response to what you have done in and through your Son Jesus and the story you have invited us to now participate in. Help me think of my community this week and how I can love them well so they might know you better.

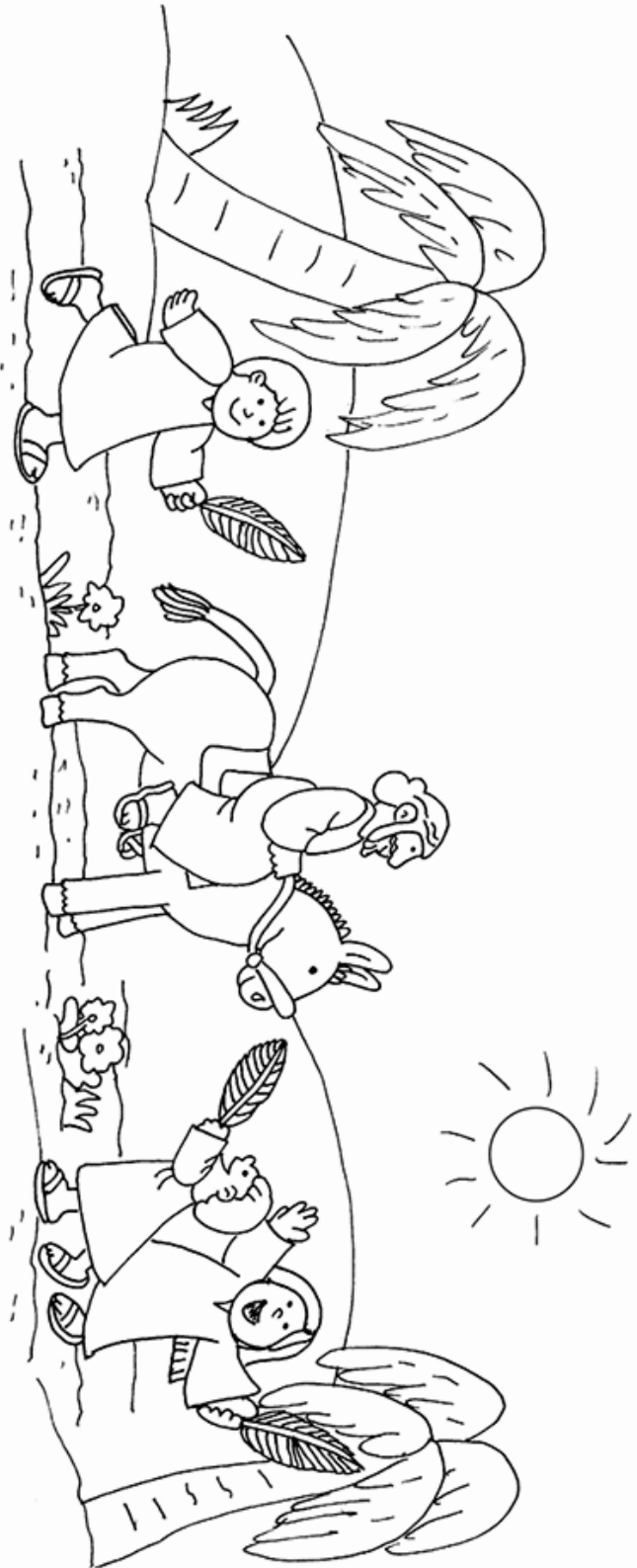
Craft:

The kids can color the picture below.

BLESS Activity

This week, ask your family how you can practice the Speak rhythm. Maybe as you go to school, go to the store with your parent, go to your sports game or after-school activity, or even in your own home and think about who you might be able to speak the good news that the kingdom of God has come to earth in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Triumphal Entry



HOSANNA!

BLESSED IS HE THAT COMES IN
THE NAME OF THE LORD!

HOSANNA IN THE HIGHEST!