



Holy Week (Matthew 21:1-11; 26:14-27:66)

Our purpose is not only to tell a story but to help kids really understand the story. We do that by engaging them—helping them wonder about what God is doing in the story and in their lives.

Before the story:

Opening: WONDER on the GO

We will repeat this opening activity every week to build a pattern in students of always looking for "God Sightings."

Reread Psalm 139:14: "I praise you, for I am wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well."

Ask students: Did you see anything wonderful this week? (Encourage them to think about nature, friends, family, or pets.)

Did you see someone do something kind or brave? These can be called "God Sightings."

If we keep our minds and eyes open, we can see many ways God shows Gods love every day!

Build background before the story

Ask students if they have ever had to do something they really didn't want to do? (take a test, go to Dr or dentist?) How did they feel before they went? Were they anxious, afraid, scared?

Explain: There are lots of things we have to do even as adults, that we really don't want to do. Jesus was human, just like us. In today's story, He knows something very hard is about to happen, and He doesn't want to do it! But He trusts God's plan and gets ready to do the hard thing anyway. He knows God, His Father, will be with Him!

Define terms: We can't assume students understand the meaning of words we frequently use. If they don't understand the meaning of a word, they can't understand the meaning of the story.

- **Communion** is a special meal we celebrate in church where we eat small pieces of bread and wine to remember that Jesus gave His body and blood for us. Sometimes we may hear **communion** called The Lord's Supper. When it happened with Jesus and His friends, we call it the Last Supper.
- **Holy Week** is when we remember all the things that happened to Jesus the week before He died. It was a journey for Him. Remembering helps us get ready for Easter. And it is a journey for us too; joyful, confusing, sad, and full of love.

After the Story:

Rethinking the Story-Wondering Questions

Try having the students close their eyes and think of the answers quietly inside their heads. If this is too hard, have the students whisper their answers so others can have their own thoughts. Allow silence. This is sacred reflection time.

Ask open-ended, imaginative questions. There are no wrong answers.

- I wonder what it feels like to ride a donkey.
- I wonder how Jesus felt when he saw everyone cheering and waving palm branches,
- I wonder what it felt like to be in the crowd and shout "Hosannah."
- I wonder what the Disciples thought when Jesus served them the Lord's Supper.
- I wonder why Jesus wanted to pray in the garden by Himself.
- I wonder what this story tells us about getting ready for Easter.

Younger kids might like to do a simple action journey:

- Wave your hands like palm branches.
- Pretend to eat a special meal.
- Fold your hands like you're praying in a garden.
- Make a sad face.
- Sit very still like you're waiting.

Explain: Holy Week is a journey of feelings—happy, frightened, sad, quiet. In this story we can see all the emotions Jesus felt. Even when things felt sad or scary, Jesus trusted God. He knew that God would always be with Him. When we feel those same emotions, we can trust God to be with us also.

Craft - Holy Week Paper Chain

Materials needed: Colored paper strips (9"x12" colored paper cut lengthwise into 3 strips), copy of Holy Week events printout, markers, tape, glue.

Have students cut apart the Holy Week event strips (next 2 pages).

Glue each strip onto a wider strip of colored paper (as shown here). Starting with the palm branches, glue the strip into a loop. Continue by looping each day of the week until you have created a chain of 8 loops.



Encourage students to take the paper chain home to share with their families. Each day, take off a loop and read and talk about what Jesus might be feeling on that day.

Activity - Holy Week Rhyme (These are the same as the Holy Week events strips from the craft activity.)

Sunday - Palm Branches wave as the King arrives.

Monday - Jesus turns over tables and clears the temple.

Tuesday - Jesus preaches on a nearby mountain.

Wednesday - Judas betrays Jesus and is now known as a spy.

Thursday - A special meal so Jesus would not be forgotten.

Friday - Jesus died on the cross, and the world darkened.

Saturday - Jesus lay in the tomb.

Sunday - Jesus rises from the grave, breaking up darkness and gloom.

Alleluia!

Closing: Repeat the prayer from the story video.

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for walking through Holy Week with love. Thank you for being with us in every feeling we have. Help us follow you with hope in our hearts.

Amen



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Palm Branches wave as the King arrives Sunday.

Jesus turns over tables and clears the temple on Monday.

On Wednesday, Judas betrayed Him and is now known as a spy.

On Tuesday, Jesus preached on a nearby mountain.

A special meal for Thursday so He would not be forgotten.

Friday is the cross, Jesus died, the world darkened.

Saturday is sad as Jesus lay in the tomb.

On Sunday, He rose up breaking darkness and gloom.