

Teen Ministry Palm Sunday

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Celebrating and Exploring Palm Sunday

Intention:

To present to the teens information about Palm Sunday and also explore “humility” which Jesus demonstrated.

Opening Prayer:

“It is not I, but the Father within that does the work”. As we release our personal ego, that part of us that identifies with our appearance, achievements and possessions, the self that competes with others or may feel hurt if it doesn’t get what it wants, we open the door to our communication with God. We stand in humility; we stand in awe of God’s wisdom and unconditional love. As a tree requires a strong root to grow tall, we need the strength of humility to reach our greatest heights. This strength is our foundation for living and helps us step forth in faith. We have unlimited potential to create but it is rooted in the understanding of the perimeters of our personal power. Thank you God, Thank you Father for your infinite presence and power working in and through us.

Check-in and Sharing

Invite teens to share one thing about themselves for which they are grateful to God. It could be a special talent or interest or a personal characteristic that makes life more enjoyable, like a sense of humor. Explain that humility is not about denying our gifts or what is special about us, but rather, about acknowledging the divine source of our gifts. Ask the teens to go around the circle and complete the following sentence, “I thank God for.....”

Introduction to Palm Sunday

The last week of the life of Jesus is often called “Holy Week” and it starts with Palm Sunday. Many of the dramatic events that occurred this week demonstrated who Jesus was and what he believed. This week was so important that three of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke devote a full third of each gospel to reporting this week. The Gospel of John dedicates its entire last half.

Jerusalem was a city for all believers, Jews, Muslims, and Christians. The Temple in Jerusalem was a place of worship in Jesus’ lifetime, he studied with the priests and elders there when he was twelve years old and he celebrated many Feasts of the Passover there. Jerusalem which had a normal population of about 50,000 had at least tripled in size because of the influx of pilgrims celebrating the Jewish Holiday Passover.

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey rather than a horse which signifies the peaceful nature and humility of his entry. Great crowds of people lined the streets waving palm branches to welcome him. The people shouted “Hosanna” and laid their cloaks and palm branches in His Path. It was a custom to lay palm branches on the path for kings entering the city. People are expecting a worldly and physical king and surrender themselves to his authority by taking their cloaks off and laying it on the ground. The Palm branches signify the expectation of a military victory of their king over the occupying Romans. Jesus is entering Jerusalem to bring Peace and forgiveness – a Spiritual King. Later in the week many of the people in that cheering crowd would be among those shouting that Jesus should be executed.

The “conspiracy” against Jesus had been building for at least three years, and the sources record seven instances of official plotting against him, two efforts at arrest and three assassination attempts before this time. This intrigue was no spur of the moment idea. A formal decision to arrest Jesus had in fact been made several months earlier. The Jewish religions officials were afraid that if Jesus were to continue performing his signs, he would win over the people and the Romans would come in and destroy the Temple. According to legal custom at that time, a court crier had to announce publicly or post an official “wanted” handbill in the larger towns of Judea about 40 days prior to a trial. Small wonder that there was some debate over whether Jesus would dare appear in Jerusalem for the Passover.

There were political reasons for dealing with Jesus. There had been a dozen uprisings in Palestine in the previous 100 years; most of them subdued by Roman force. Another Messianic (savior) rebellion under Jesus would only shatter the balance of authority, break Rome's patience and might lead to direct occupation by Roman legions.

Religiously, Jesus was a dangerous item. The people were hailing the Teacher from Galilee as something more than a man. Personally, the Pharisees had been challenged by Jesus in public debate and humiliated so they would be only too happy to conspire with the scribes, elders and chief priests. There were economic motives for opposing Jesus as well. Right after Jesus entered Jerusalem, he went to the Temple and saw the commercialization, he drove out all who were sell and buying, turning over the tables of the moneychangers. "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers". This caused a major disruption in business of which many were not happy about. There were many reasons for dealing with Jesus.

Pontius Pilate was afraid that so many Jews gathered together from all of Palestine might start riots against the Roman government. The Jewish council of elders played on Pilate's fears, they were afraid that Jesus would start a religious revolution against them. They thought that if the people would follow his ways of teaching and healing they would no longer be in charge of the Temple.

The Exploration (questions for discussion)

1. What do you think the crowds felt and thought when they saw Jesus enter Jerusalem?
2. Do you think the people were surprised when they saw Jesus on a donkey rather than a horse?
3. What do you think Jesus felt and thought as he entered Jerusalem?
4. Metaphysically, Jesus cleansing the temple represents the clearing of error thoughts and limiting beliefs, making room for our inner divinity to express. What kind of thoughts, fears, or beliefs can limit us from expressing who we really are?
5. The moneychangers represent activities that are only for personal pleasure or gain and dishonor who we are as children of God. What kind of activities do people engage in today that are like this?"
6. What does it mean to act according to what you believe is right regardless of other people's opinions?

Exploring the "Humility" that Jesus demonstrated

Jesus rode on a donkey to demonstrate humility. To express greatness in our lives is to learn to be humble. Sir Isaac Newton said at the end of his life "I feel like a little child playing by the seashore while the great ocean of Truth lies undiscovered before me."

We are going to see how well we identify with "Humility". Break up into groups of four and answer the following questions. Take one question at a time and have everyone answer. (Each group should have the set of questions)

Humility is Love of God, Love of Others and Love and Appreciation of Self

- What I like about myself is.....
- I recognize that my talents and abilities are.....
- I am able to reach out and help others by
- I place great value on friends and family because
- Something I do each day to bring my awareness to God is.....
- I feel closest to God when

Humility is being in "Awe"

Awe means an overwhelming feeling of reverence, admiration, wonder. "I am in awe as I look at the magnificence of God's creation, the Grand Canyon". "I am in awe of the beauty of nature".

- What is something that you are in "awe" of.....

Humility is a quiet inner Joy

- Do you think this quiet inner joy is the result of something or someone? Or is it a joy that is just there?
- Do you have any other examples of “humility”?

Humility is being able to admit when you make a mistake, willing to seek advice, and willing to try again.

- Does this describe you?
- Do you have the willingness to do all three?
- What do you think you might need to work on?

Jesus said to be careful of the opposite of humility, which is arrogance – the belief you are better than someone else- holier than thou attitude.

- Have you experienced this in your life either yourself or someone else?

Discuss the following statements:

- Humility is knowing God is infinitely beyond human comprehension and understanding
- One of the major lessons to learn while on earth is we will not be in heaven until heaven is in us.
- Some of the most respected and successful people acknowledge their greatness came not from their personal self but from a higher power.

“The Inner Christ” Mandalas (activity if there is time)

A mandala can be described as a sacred circle. It is an ancient symbol that has been used by people in many cultures throughout the world. In this activity, invite the teens to create individual mandalas to express the spiritual self. There is no right or wrong way to do this. You can create a large circle on a sheet of paper and have teens fill in or there are some books that have a variety of mandalas already that the teens can color. Have enough markers available with a variety of colors. You might want to play meditation music in this process. You could also do a short meditation first to get everyone centered.

Master Mind Prayer Process (activity if there is time)

(Jack Boland) The whole creation responds to praise and thanksgiving. Remember that what we expect to receive, we must also give. God never puts anything in a closed hand or a closed mind or a closed life; but when we open ourselves up to the excitement and joy, we become the channel through which the Spirit of Life expresses. When we are willing to give more than we desire to receive, we will receive more than we have ever known that we could receive. It’s an incredible Universe....And you are God’s most incredible creation!!

On separate sheet is the Master Mind Prayer Process that could be done with all the teens. Everyone would say each statement together. After “I Ask”, each person would state their request). Make copies of the prayer process so that each person would have a copy.

Closing Prayer Activity

Place a heart in the center of the room. Have all members of the group stand around the room in an approximate circle but closer to the walls. Face the center. Look at the heart in the center of the room and ask them to imagine that the heart represents God. Now begin to walk slowly toward God (the center) noticing what happens in our relationship to each other. Let them come together in a close circle with arms around each other. While standing in the circle, ask: “What happens as we get closer to God-awareness? (We get closer to each other). And in turn, what happens when we get closer to each other? (Get closer to God.)

Closing Prayer: Divine Spirit, we come into the circle, this sacred space and sacred presence of your love, knowing full well that only love can draw and hold us in peace and harmony. Every fear falls away as we enter into your radiate energy of love.