

Palm Sunday

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

Jesus came as a servant so we would not be afraid to come to him.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn why Jesus humbled himself and became a man.

KEY PASSAGE:

Matthew 21:1-11, The Triumphal Entry

INTRO

I have a serious question I want to ask you this morning. How many times have you seen a statue of a man on a donkey? Not very often, if at all, I would imagine! You don't see a lot of famous people seated on donkeys. When famous people get turned into statues, or have their portrait painted, they almost always end up on a horse.

Horses are powerful animals. They used to be war animals, ridden for centuries by soldiers and generals and kings. The Egyptians of the Old Testament, the Romans of the New Testament, and the knights of the Middle Ages rode horses into combat. Even in recent centuries, men like George Washington, Napoleon, Robert E. Lee, and Ulysses S. Grant rode horses as they led their troops into battle.

Horses are not only faster and more powerful than donkeys, they also look cooler than donkeys. When we see someone on a horse, we know they mean business. Even today's mounted cops look tough and serious sitting atop their police horses.

Horses are symbol of royalty. Kings and queens rode horses. Horses are also a symbol of war, ridden by generals and their top officers and cavalry.

Jesus was a king. He was also a conqueror who had come to deliver his people from sin. So what did Jesus choose to ride when he entered Jerusalem a week before Easter? He chose... a donkey!

READ MATTHEW 21:1-11

MAIN POINT

Jesus received a royal welcome as he entered the city. People laid their cloaks on the road for Jesus to pass over.

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Those who didn't have cloaks pulled branches from palm trees to lay them in the road. They waved palm branches and shouted, "Hosanna!" And, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

It's the kind of welcome Jesus' ancestor, King David, received when he returned home from war. But Jesus wasn't sitting on a war horse. He was sitting on a simple, common donkey, a beast of burden used by farmers to do their grunt work.

Jesus sent a powerful message when he chose to ride a donkey. It was a message that he lived out every day of his life. Yes, he is a king. Yes, he is the Son of God. But Jesus didn't come to be a distant ruler high up on a throne. He came to serve. He came to reach out to even the most humble of people. Jesus rode a donkey, and not a horse, so that we would not be afraid. He wanted us to see his love, and feel comfortable running to his side.

DRIVE IT HOME

We live in an age of superstars and celebrities. We're used to seeing movies stars, rock stars, and athletes dressed in outfits that cost more than our wardrobes. We see them ride everywhere in luxury cars, jet planes, and limousines. We assume that everyone who is rich and powerful travels only by the most expensive and luxurious way possible.

Imagine if Jesus came today. Imagine all the heads that would turn when Jesus arrives, not in a limo or in a jet, but in a beat up old Chevy. What would people say about that?

Jesus could have chosen a horse if he had wanted. As a matter of fact, he could have been born into the palace of the king, if that was his plan. But setting himself up as an earthly monarch was never the plan. Jesus wanted to be our king, but he also wanted to be our friend. He went to common people like fishermen and tax collectors. He yelled at his disciples when they tried to shoo children away and said, "Let the children come to me!" Jesus chose a donkey so he could remind us, one last time, that everyone is welcome. He wanted us to see that he loves us so we would not be afraid to run to him.

Jesus set a demanding example for us. He expects all of us to love others and serve them the way he did. When we learn to love like Jesus did, he can use us to show other people his love the same way he showed the people of Jerusalem. Jesus needs us to be servants, to love others and to reach out to everyone, so that his kingdom can continue to grow.

Jesus didn't come to take a throne or ride on a horse. He came to be a servant. He rode into town on a lowly donkey to show us how much he wants to be with us. Jesus loves you. He loved you enough to die for you. Don't be afraid to invite him into your heart today. Let Jesus be your Savior, and let him be your friend.

LARGE GROUP LESSON

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank you for Jesus and the way Jesus loves us.

In Jesus' name,

Amen