

Our Sabbath Scripture Stories



F A M I L I E S R E C L A I M I N G S U N D A Y

Read aloud: Isaiah 50:4-7
 Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel: **Matthew 21:1-11 (Processional Gospel)**
 Matthew 26:14—27:66

Dad called everyone together this Palm Sunday morning and made an announcement. "Okay, Kids ... " he began. "This morning, I am going to break from tradition with our Gospel reading."

"Huh?" they all wondered. For years, Dad had read the Gospel reading before Mass to familiarize his family with the verses and to answer any questions beforehand.

"This morning, I have decided not to read the Gospel for you ahead of time ... but we will all discuss what you are going to hear when you get to Mass this morning."

"That's okay, Dad," Mary Clare said. "It is one of the longest readings in the liturgical year. And, it's really nice to hear it read with different voices doing different parts."

"That's kind of what I thought, Mary Clare," Dad said.

Mom agreed. "This reading is so rich and is so important for us to really know. So, the first thing I want you all to do is to make sure you bring your Bibles today to follow along with the reading. Try not to leave them behind, accidentally, in the van, or on the counter."

"Secondly," Dad continued, "I want you to pay close attention to the mood shift. Who remembers what happens at the beginning of the Palm Sunday reading?"

"I do!" 8-year-old Lucy said. "That's the part when we all get to wave our palm branches. It's a real celebration!"

"That's right, Lucy!" Dad said. "The reading begins with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. People are laying down their coats for Him to walk over, and waving palm branches. They are shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

"What does 'Hosanna' mean, Daddy?" little Hillary asked.

"It means, 'God save us!' in Hebrew, Hillary," Dad answered her. "And when they shouted, 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord,' they were quoting Psalm 118 to

Jesus. It was used as a declaration that, indeed, this was someone entrusted with the mission of God."

"How about palm branches?" Vincent asked. "Why palm branches?"

"Well, the waving of palm branches was used in Israel as a symbol. They were part of Jewish celebrations, and they symbolized 'future glory' or 'better days are just ahead.' "

"Then why do they put Jesus to death?" Hillary asked again.

"Wonderful question, Hillary!" Dad said. "You would think that, after entering Jerusalem so jubilantly, everything would stay wonderful. But Jesus' mission in life was not to merely make people comfortable, but to speak the truth of God. After entering into Jerusalem, Jesus drove out the money-changers from the temple, angered the proud chief priests and elders, ordered the fig tree to be barren, and miraculously healed the blind and the lame. The chief priests came and asked Him, 'By whose authority do you do all these things?' (See Matthew 26:62-64) And Jesus does not give them a direct answer. This makes all of them very nervous, and they decide to arrest Him after the Passover, which was a national celebration."

Mom went on, "During this time, Judas Iscariot goes over to the chief priests and asks them, 'What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?' (Matthew 26:15a) They answer Judas that they will pay him 30 pieces of silver. So, Judas strikes a bargain and betrays Jesus for the money."

Dad concluded, "We will then hear about how Jesus was beaten and mocked with a crown of thorns for being 'King of the Jews.' (Matthew 27:11b) He is nailed to the cross and dies. The last part of the reading for today will be the posting of the guard outside the tomb of Jesus, for He had promised that, 'After three days I will be raised up' " (Matthew 27:63)

"So now, Family," Mom quietly said, "let's gather our Bibles and head off for Mass. We are entering into the holiest week of the year."

