



Ask you children this question-- "What if the president came to our town or a famous person--how would we honor them? If we had a parade, what would their float look like?"

Read Matthew 21 and Luke 19: 28-40.

You can also find the story of the "Triumphant Entry" in many children's Bibles as well. Our favorite is The Child's Story Bible by Catherine F. Vos.

Most of us are familiar with this story as we commemorate it every year for Palm Sunday. It's a great place to begin the days leading up to Easter because it reveals Jesus' kingship and authority, yet how very "different" He was from the other kings of Israel.

After reading the Bible story, talk about the similarities and differences between the parade thrown for Jesus and a modern day parade.

Application--

Jesus was a King but a servant King. The Son of God, the Rescuer of the world, rode on the back of a young donkey foal. Instead of flaunting gold and riches and stature, He was flaunting grace and freedom for Jerusalem. The people's hearts cried out, "Hosanna!" Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

Even when Jesus was rebuked by the Pharisees for the noise, Jesus

says, *"if [the people] keep quiet, the very stones will cry out."*

500 years earlier, the prophet Zechariah said this was going to happen. Zechariah 9:9--

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

God always keeps His word. What He said would come true DID come true.

Put it into practice:

Let the kids hop on your back, and ride them around the house like a donkey. Lay towels out for the red carpet. Grab some small tree branches from outside and act out the story.

Let them tell you the story back in their own words, and ask one simple question--*"What does this teach you about Jesus?"*

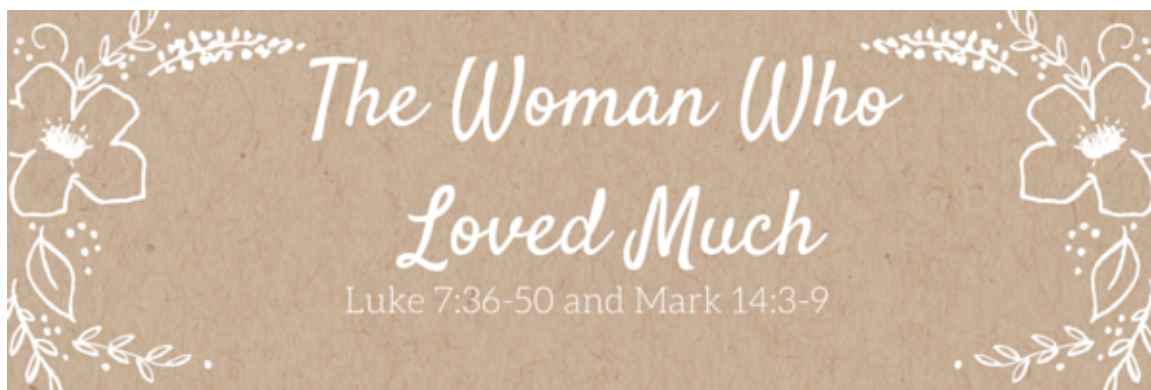
Prayer:

Say a prayer of thanks that Jesus is YOUR servant king.

Music:

"The King of Glory Comes," an Israeli folk song.

"Shout Hosanna!" by the Donut Man.



Ask your children--**"What item of yours do you think would be the greatest gift you could give someone?"** Encourage them to think of something that would probably be SUPER hard to give away because it is so special and their favorite.

Even though it would be REALLY hard to give your favorite things away, there was a woman who gave away her most prized possession to Jesus.

Read Luke 7:36-50 and Mark 14:3-9 or read "Washed with Tears" from The Jesus Storybook Bible.

Put it into practice:

Act out the story. Bring out all of your special smelly lotions and massage your children's feet and ankles. Kiss their feet. Pretend to cry! After they have had a turn being Jesus, let them treat you to a foot massage!

Application:

Ask your children why this woman would do something like this? LOVE!

Help your kids to think of a time when they have disobeyed Mommy or Daddy and been in trouble. Talk about how good it feels to be forgiven, to get a hug from Mommy or Daddy, and an "I love you."

When we are forgiven, it moves us to love the giver of that

forgiveness. We are so thankful.

This is a great opportunity to jump into a conversation about SIN, and how we all are sinners. It's important to help our kids see their need for forgiveness. This seems a long, hard road for me because I have kids who seem to think they do nothing wrong!! But I just keep praying and talking with them about it. None of us can appreciate the complete forgiveness that comes through Jesus unless we understand the depth of our sin. The woman in Bethany understood that, and I keep praying my kids will too.

Luke 7:47 "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

By the time you finish up, the smell of the lotion will be lingering...a very present reminder of God's forgiveness and this woman's act of worship.

2 Corinthians 2:14 "Give thanks to God! He always leads us in the winners' parade because we belong to Christ. Through us, God spreads the knowledge of Christ everywhere like perfume."

A natural response to forgiveness is overflowing love. When we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts because we have trusted Jesus to forgive our sins, we can't help but love others too!

Prayer:

Thank God for his amazing forgiveness. Pray specifically for ways your family can love Jesus and others this Easter season.

Music:

"How Deep the Father's Love for Us" by Nichole Nordemann.

"In Christ Alone" by Keith and Kristyn Getty.



(I actually broke this devotional up into two days with my kids--one day for washing feet, and the other to share the last supper.)

Part One. As a family, read John 13: 1-17.

This is the story of Jesus washing His disciples' feet. Our Jesus, the Son of God, full of authority and power given by His Father, bended low to set an example of how to serve.

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you."

John 13:15

Put it into practice:

Ever since my oldest was itty bitty, the Lord has moved me during this story to wash my family's feet. I know that my children do not really understand the significance of what I am doing. Yet just as Jesus told Peter, *"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand (John 13:7),"* I too pray that God will use this experience every Easter to one day help them understand to what extent Jesus loves them.

For now my kids think it is fun for mommy to wash their stinky feet, but this time to me has become very special.

Application:

We all know it is NOT easy to love and serve our kids. It is one of the greatest sacrifices in life to give up our rights each day to be a mom. So washing my children's feet has become a time for me to reflect on the depths of love God has for me, and renew my commitment to depend on God to love and serve my family another year.

This is why Jesus came. To pay the payment for our sins, but even more to give us the "ability" and "power" through the Holy Spirit to love as He does. I always pray for my kids too while I am washing their feet thanking the Lord for them and blessing them with "life-giving" words (and often through tears). It's amazing how on bended knee in humility love overflows.

Part 2. Read Matthew 26:20-30.

Put it into practice:

Head outside to have a "Last Supper" picnic! Pick up some fresh French bread and grape juice on the way to share together.

"Take and eat; this is my body...Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." Matthew 26:28

Application:

Ask your children, "Why was Jesus going to die?"

In the Old Testament, blood was a payment for sin. The Israelites would "sacrifice" an animal to receive forgiveness.

Share Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Tell your kids that they NEED Jesus to go to heaven.

Don't shy away from the truth that sin separates them from God and that they (we) deserve to be punished. Jesus was the payment for their sin. Shout out the good news that Jesus is the gift of eternal life when they believe!

Prayer:

Thank Jesus that He was the payment for your sins. Pray for your children to believe in Him and any unbelieving friends and family members in your life.

I love how the Scriptures tell us that Jesus ended the Last Supper with His friends by singing a hymn. Do the same.

Music:

"Crown Him With Many Crowns" by Matthew Bridges.

"Amen" by Seeds Family Worship.



We have reached a turning point in the story of Jesus.

We are now entering the time of Jesus' suffering, and it is hard to read and hard to talk about. It's sad. But it is necessary. It is the reason He came, it is the gospel, and the crux on which our hope for salvation hangs. And it's okay to feel sad.

I always remind my kids as we head into the story of the cross of the very beginning--when sin came into the world and separated all of us from God.

I remind them that Jesus is the promise to make all of our hearts "right with God" again. I tell them that Jesus, being God's son, has the power to stop and overcome His enemies at any time.

Although he has the authority and power to stop those who hurt Him, he doesn't because He LOVES us. To make a way for all of us to be close to God, to go to heaven, Jesus knew He had to pay for our sins.

Death is the only way, and Jesus' love for us is SO strong that He suffered and died knowing one day WE could know God like He does. One day we can live in Heaven with Him and God too. LOVE is why He goes through these sad things.

"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am. I want them to see my glory, the glory you have given me. You gave it to me because you loved me before the world was created. Father, you are holy. The world does not

know you, but I know you. Those you have given me know you have sent me. I have shown you to them. And I will continue to show you to them. Then the love you have for me will be in them. I myself will be in them." John 17: 24-26

This is one of those times where Olaf comes in handy and His definition of love from the movie "Frozen."

Love is putting someone else's needs above your own.

Jesus is the ultimate HERO of LOVE.

So I encourage you friend, DON'T be afraid of going "there" with your kids and talking about the sad stuff. What a privilege you have to be the one to share the gospel with them.

Read Luke 22: 39-54 and John 18:1-12. (Or read "A Dark Night in the Garden" from the Jesus Storybook Bible.)

Ask your children--Why do you think Jesus went to the garden to pray?

Application:

This is a great time to talk about prayer with your children. Prayer is talking to God. Simple as that. Jesus, knowing the hour had come for Him to soon die, wanted to talk about it with His Father.

Ask your kids, **"Could you imagine how hard that would be to do?"** We can go to our Heavenly Father about anything and everything--all our thoughts, fears, worries, struggles, and joys. He wants to hear them all, and He strengthens us.

"An angel from heaven appeared to Jesus and gave him strength (Luke 22:47)."

God never asks us to do a job that He will not give us the strength

and courage to do.

The Bible says Jesus was praying so hard in the garden that His sweat was like drops of blood. Prayer is a way for us to tell God we trust Him and want to obey (especially when it's hard).

Jesus did this very thing in the garden. *"Father, if you are willing, take this cup of suffering away from me. But do what you want, not what I want."*

Why did He ask his friends (the disciples) to pray too?

Jesus asked the disciples to pray three different times (in the Mark 14 account) so they would not fall into temptation. The disciples were very sad because they knew Jesus was going to be arrested and die soon. They got so sleepy that instead of praying, they fell asleep.

"Watch and pray. Then you won't fall into sin when you are tempted. The spirit is willing. But the body is weak." Mark 14: 38

Jesus knew that soldiers were coming soon to arrest Him. He knew that it would be easy for the disciples to be afraid. After Jesus was arrested, *"everyone left Him and ran away (Mark 14:50)."*

Prayer helps us power up with God! God knows that we can't do His work in our own strength. Even if we try really hard our strength will never match with God's power. But when we pray and call on His name to help us, we can do anything!!

Put it into Practice:

Take the kids for a walk near your house or a nice quiet peaceful spot for a prayer walk.

Use the acrostic ACTS to pray. **Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication.** Pick 4 trees where you can stop and pray.

Prayer:

At the first tree spend some time adoring Jesus. "Jesus, I love you because...."

At the second tree for confession, first find a spot where you can sit quietly and talk to God about anything you have done that hurt Him or hurt others. When you finished your quiet reflection, join hands again and confess them aloud. "God, I'm sorry for...."

At the third tree spend some time thanking God. "God, I thank you for..."

Finally, spend some time in supplication. This is a big word for our kids but lead them in prayer with this prompt, "I want to pray for..." and encourage them to pray for anything or anyone they want.

Close by praying for your own hearts--that God would strengthen you to do as Jesus did, to say "*Do as you want, not what I want*" with the plans He has for you.

Optional: Pick up some items in nature to remember your prayer walk (rock, stick, flower, leaf), and set them out at home to remember to pray.

Music:

"Fairest Lord Jesus" by Christy Nockels

"Victory in Jesus" by Michael W. Smith



*As a family, read **Matthew 27:15-65, John 19:16-42, Luke 23:32-43** or read from your favorite Story Bible (such as "The Sun Stops Shining"—Jesus Storybook Bible).*

My beloved pastor once used the illustration of a zebra stuck in the mud as an illustration of what our sin does to us. We are helpless. We try with all of our effort to get out of that mud, but there is no way to get out unless someone comes along and rescues us. Jesus does this for you and me. He lifts us out of the mud (Psalm 40) and sets our feet upon the rock. He is our salvation.

When finished, let your children tell you what they remember from the story. There is so much to talk about with the crucifixion, but let them lead with what they remember.

Ask, **"How are you feeling after hearing this story?"** Let them express their emotions. They may be sad.

It can be hard to explain sin, especially to young children. Gently lead them to a time where you discuss the bad choices we all make. Share some of your mistakes, and invite them to share some of their own. (This would be a great time to gather some rocks, write each of your sins on them, and save them for the "unEaster" basket or resurrection garden I will share with you soon.)

Application:

My beloved pastor once used the illustration of a zebra stuck in the

mud as an illustration of what our sin does to us. We are helpless. We try with all of our effort to get out of that mud, but there is no way to get out unless someone comes along and rescues us. Jesus does this for you and me. He lifts us out of the mud (Psalm 40) and sets our feet upon the rock. He is our salvation.

Share this illustration with your family and read the following verses.

"But the servant was pierced because we had sinned. He was crushed because we had done what was evil. He was punished to make us whole again. His wounds have healed us." Isaiah 53:5

"But here is how God has shown his love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

This is the perfect time to share the gospel with your children.

Tell your kids Jesus loves them and wants to be friends with them. He wants to rescue them. He died for that very reason. Psalm 40-- "he turned to me and heard my cry." He hears our cry! Invite them to "cry out" to Jesus when they want to be saved.

Encourage them to let you know when they are ready. Pray in the meantime for God to knock on their hearts and that they would hear and open the door of their hearts to Him.

Put it into Practice:

My kids love science and they are always begging me to do experiments. [This is a very simple experiment to help you understand what happens when Jesus forgives our sins.](#)

First, take a clear glass or jar.

- Fill it halfway full with water.
- Add some food coloring (red is appropriate to represent sin). We even talked about our different sins and added a drop at a time

as we said our sins.

- Add 1 cup bleach to the colored water.
- Wait a couple of minutes and you will see that the water turns clear again! (*"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Isaiah 1:18*)
- Even if you add more food coloring to the mixture, it will not be able to change the color!

Prayer:

Thank the Lord for His death for each of you. Thank Him for His forgiveness. Pray with your children to accept His free gift of eternal life!

Music:

"Jesus Loves Me" by Go Fish.

"Jesus Paid it All" by Fernando Ortega.



Woohoo! We have made it to the very last and best part of the Easter story! Up from the grave He arose!

Why is it such a big deal that Jesus rose from the grave? Other than the obvious, of course...the miracle of being dead and then alive...but what did this miracle accomplish?

I believe two major things. One, that Jesus truly was the Son of God. Everything that Jesus said was going to happen– happened. His resurrection proved His promises were good and true. And that gives us great confidence.

"For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

And two, Jesus' resurrection provides victory over sin and the power to live a godly life.

"But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." Romans 8:10-11

Why should it be a big deal to our kids?

The resurrection is the fairy tale ending of the Easter story! Our kids love a good ending to a story and we have one. It's so good it is unbelievable! For so long God's people had been waiting, some are still waiting, for a Messiah to rescue them.

But this is the moment we can tell our kids the good news. The whole foundation on which faith is established--Jesus rose from the dead and lives in Heaven. When we believe in Him, we are made "righteous" and can live with Him forever. He gives us a helper, the Holy Spirit, to live in our hearts and help us obey God.

Read Matthew 28:1-10, 28:16-20 or John 20:1-23.



photo courtesy of neighbor food

Put it into Practice:

After you have read the story, make Resurrection rolls.

Ingredients: crescent rolls, large marshmallows (or Peeps for a colorful effect), melted butter, cinnamon and sugar.

Step 1.) Take your large marshmallow, and tell your kids that it represents Jesus after He died for all of our sins.

Step 2.) Dip Jesus (marshmallow) in melted butter, then in cinnamon and sugar mix. Read John 19:38–42. According to Jewish burial customs, the body was covered in a mixture of myrrh, aloes, and spices then wrapped in strips of linen.

Step 3.) Roll Jesus (marshmallow) inside crescent roll (strips of linen).

Step 4.) Place Him inside the tomb (the oven). Cook according to package instructions for crescent rolls.

Step 5.) Let one of your children stand guard at the oven and pretend to be a soldier. When the rolls are close to being finished, YOU or your child pretend to be the angel who rolled the stone away (the oven door).

Step 6.) Take out crescent rolls and Jesus (marshmallow) will have risen (disappeared)!



Trust me, your kids will be really AMAZED!! And they are so yummy too. While you snack on your Resurrection rolls, use this time to talk with your kids about the story.

Application:

Ask, **"What do you remember from the story?"** Let them even act it out if they want to! My kids love this story and they fight over who gets to be the angel who rolled the stone away. Focus on HOW wonderful it is that Jesus rose from the grave and WHY--(see above).

*"He is not here; he has **risen**, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay." Matthew 28:6*

End with reading the Great Commission. **"Why did Jesus say these words before He ascended into heaven?"** Jesus was leaving this earth, and He was, in a sense, passing on the job. Of course we cannot do anything for Him apart from Him, but He was commanding His followers to continue the work.

Tell your kids how people for hundreds of years since Jesus left this earth have been sharing His story...and that is how you heard the good news. And that is why you are now telling them the good news.

If we don't tell His story, others will not have the joy of knowing Jesus.

We don't do it alone. Jesus tells us that He is with us always until the end of time!

Prayer:

Praise Jesus for being faithful to keep His promise! He is the Savior of the world! Thank Him for giving you the Holy Spirit as a helper. Ask Him to help you share the good news with others.

Music:

“1,2,3, Jesus is Alive” by Yancy Not Nancy.

“Christ Arose” from Favorite VBS Songs 2012.

Thank you for joining us in these devotions and sharing the joy and hope of Easter with your families!

Keep checking in at jessetreeproject.com for more ideas and pictures to help you along the way. We are so thankful for you!