

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of April 5, 2020

Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Matthew 27:11-54

*(NOTE: For younger children, this story may be too long for you to read from a Bible. We suggest reading the story of Christ's Passion from your favorite story Bible. Two of our favorites are the [Spark Story Bible](#) and [A Child's First Bible](#).)*

**REFLECT:** This part of Jesus' story is very sad. Jesus was punished for showing people how to live a better way. The leaders didn't understand. They were frightened by Jesus and that made them angry. Sometimes when we are afraid or angry, we might hit or say mean things. Even when this happens God loves us. God loves us so much that he sent Jesus to be with us. Jesus experienced the worst part of how people can treat each other. It's ok to feel sad that Jesus died. Remember, this is not the end of the story. The story continues on towards Easter. Easter, when God makes Jesus alive again! We retell the story of how even death cannot prevent God's love from rising to life.

**RESPOND:** This is a hard story for those that are so young. Death is a difficult concept to introduce in an age appropriate way. Nevertheless, it is all around us. Many adults, filled with good intentions, gloss over or even omit the crucifixion of Jesus. However, we can not fully explain the Resurrection if there is no crucifixion. When talking about this story, don't focus energy on the suffering of Christ. It is enough that he died. Follow any statement about Christ's death with "but then something amazing happens... God made Jesus alive again." The cross is not the end of the story! Do not shy away about answering questions about death. Children even so young pick up everything, even our anxiety about death. Say a prayer and take a deep breath. Some questions to talk about this story might be:

- How does this story make you feel?
- Why do you think this story is important?
- Do you think this is the end of Jesus' story? Why or why not?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served in a variety of Christian Formation roles. Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development in the classroom and in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. She has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. In addition to her ministry at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** Matthew 26:14-27:66

**REFLECT:** Have you had a birthday party? When you enter the room, people are so happy to see you. They turn down the lights, bring out the cake, and sing happy birthday to you. All eyes are on you as you blow out the candles and make a wish. That's probably the feeling Jesus had at the start of today. Jesus rides into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey while people cheering and clapping. All eyes are fixed on him. But things quickly go from great to terrible. Jesus is arrested. Jesus is killed.

We hear this story on the day that we call Palm Sunday or Passion Sunday. It is the Sunday before Easter. It is a lot of story to tell and sometimes hard to tell in one service at church. It also has a lot of parts that are not easy or nice to listen to. But it's best to listen to it all. Because if you only hear one or a few parts, then you might miss the whole point of the story: Easter. Jesus dies, but God miraculously brings Jesus back to life. Through the way that Jesus lived and interacted with people, God shows us how to live and love. Through the way that Jesus died and was brought back to life, God promises us that death is not the end of our story either.

**RESPOND:** Find a Holy Week service to watch, either from your church or another church. There are many services that are livestreamed or available for watch online. Holy Week services help slow down the story and focus on particular points in the story. This makes Easter Sunday and the Easter story that more meaningful.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PATRICK KANGRGA



Originally from Arkansas, Patrick Christopher Kangrga began in ministry by serving two years as a member of the Episcopal Service Corps in Maryland and in Massachusetts. After this he began a lay-professional journey with positions at parish and diocesan levels in New York and New Jersey. Most recently he has served as the Associate for Youth Ministries at Trinity Church in Menlo Park, California. He has primarily served youth with a short stint into ministry with children.

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## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Matthew 21:1-11

**REFLECT:** Throughout this holy season of Lent we have journeyed with the Gospel of John. Today we turn to the Gospel of Matthew as we enter Jerusalem with Jesus at the beginning of Holy Week. In this reading we are presented with a simple question, “Who is this?” This is the central question for us during Holy Week: who is Jesus and what does his life, crucifixion, and resurrection mean in our lives? Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a donkey and being addressed as a king and prophet, with the crowds spreading branches of trees on the ground before him. However, we know how this story will end. The entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem is just the beginning of what for us in the Christian faith is the ultimate story of love and sacrifice. Jesus is hailed as Hosanna, the one who comes in the name of the Lord, but the crowds will also be the first ones to shout “crucify him!”

Palm Sunday reminds us that the celebration of the resurrection is near but that first we must experience the totality of Holy Week to fully rejoice when we arrive at Easter. “Who is this?” Who is this man Jesus, for whom we cry Hosanna but also to crucify him? Who is this man who welcomes everyone to the table? Who takes water from a shamed Samaritan woman, gives sight to a blind man, and raises Lazarus from the dead? Who is this man who we believe is resurrection and life? Who is stronger than death? We understand who Jesus is by walking the journey of Holy Week from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday.

**RESPOND:** Walk through the days of Holy Week together – what is the purpose of each day and what do remember/experience on each day? What is your favorite or the most moving part of Holy Week for you? Who is Jesus to you? Each day, write down your reflections on the day in your journal.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATE HUSTON



Kate Huston serves as the Director of Young and Young Adults and the Program Director for the IONA School of Formation in the Diocese of Oklahoma. Kate has worked in formation ministry for over 15 years and currently serves on the Forma Council. Before moving into full-time formation ministry, Kate had a faculty position in Political Science and continues to teach courses as an adjunct professor. Kate has a daughter, Brigid (6), and they love to read, watch the Great British Baking Show, and walk their 90-pound furball, Sully the Great Pyrenees.

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## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Philippians 2:5-11

**REFLECT:** Where did God exalt Jesus? Was it in Jesus' life and ministry? Was it on that day when palm branches were spread before Jesus as he rode into town on a donkey? Was it on that day when he was found missing in the tomb?

No, God highly exalted Jesus at the moment when he was most humiliated, when he was suffering a cruel and unwarranted death. It was on that cross that Jesus was glorified because it was there that he fulfilled God's word and promise for the salvation of you and I. It is on the cross where we find forgiveness, and through the cross we are made free. It is there where Christ is glorified. This is made especially clear in Matthew 27:54, "Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!'" (NRSV) It was not in the raising that convinced the centurion of Jesus' identity, but rather it was in the dying. It is in the passion we truly see Christ's glory. It is a story we should hear over and over again.

**RESPOND:** Open your Bible to Matthew 26-27 and read the entire passion story. Spend time each day during Holy Week reading the story over and over again, pondering who Jesus is and what he has done, joining in Jesus' suffering by walking with him from the palms to the passion to the tomb.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PEGGY HOPPE



Peggy Hoppes is a writer, artist, photographer and crafter; her creativity reflects her faith. She is married with two grown children. She began writing "A WORD FOR TODAY," a devotional, in August 1999 which can be found at [www.awordfortoday.org](http://www.awordfortoday.org). Peggy teaches a Bible class at her church and has led workshops. She has published several books. Peggy shares her gifts to build up the church, to help Christians grow as disciples with living faith, and to be a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

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