



big deal!

## Palm Sunday

What's the big deal about Palm Sunday?

Jesus was riding a donkey as he entered the city, why did it matter?

To answer these questions we need to think about what life was like in first century Palestine. Life was pretty tough in that time and place. Rome was a brutal oppressor and used horses to show how powerful their government was. Horses were a symbol of success in war, especially when the King, or Emperor was riding it and Rome used them to increase fear in the people.

Jewish people knew their story and they were waiting for a different kind of king. They knew that this new king, their Messiah, would enter Jerusalem riding a donkey, which was a symbol of peace. The crowd went wild when they saw Jesus and shouted "Hosanna", which means, "Help", or "Save us". They threw their coats and palm branches on the road in front of him to show their support and welcome and to show honour. The general population of the time didn't own very much, but what they did have, they used to show their excitement. It was the equivalent of a red carpet and many were filled with anticipation of what would happen next.

2

**Scripture • Zechariah 9: 9-10** (The Message)

*A Humble King Riding a Donkey*

*"Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!*

*Raise your voice, Daughter Jerusalem!*

*Your king is coming!*

*a good king who makes all things right,*

*a humble king riding a donkey,*

*a mere colt of a donkey.*

*I've had it with war—no more chariots in Ephraim,*

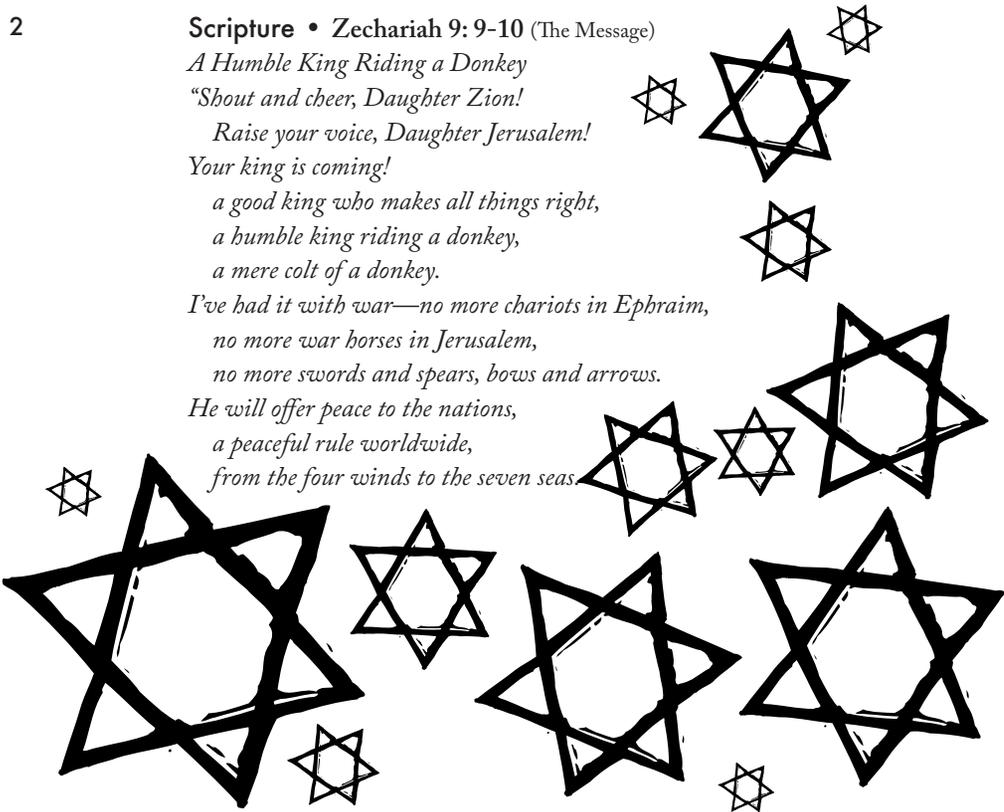
*no more war horses in Jerusalem,*

*no more swords and spears, bows and arrows.*

*He will offer peace to the nations,*

*a peaceful rule worldwide,*

*from the four winds to the seven seas.*



what's new?

## Easter Sunday

What's new?

Jesus was resurrected from the dead and the world was made different. There was something new under the sun. The world was infused with wonder and hope. Now freedom and life, not slavery and death, had the last word.

Today we stand with Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb. So often in grief, we are confused. Mary arrives and is surprised by what she finds. She thinks the body has been removed and she asks a man who she thinks is the gardener where Jesus' body is (don't you find that interesting since God's original creation was a Garden?). With one word, she recognizes Him; He says her name.

Immediately she is overcome with elation and instructed to go find others and tell them He's alive.

Like Mary, He is calling our name. Let's go and tell others all we have seen and heard. Let's share with them this New Life.

**Scripture • John 20 11-18** (The Message)

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she knelt to look into the tomb and saw two angels sitting there, dressed in white, one at the head, the other at the foot of where Jesus' body had been laid. They said to her, "Woman, why do you weep?"

"They took my Master," she said, "and I don't know where they put him." After she said this, she turned away and saw Jesus standing there. But she didn't recognize him.

Jesus spoke to her, "Woman, why do you weep? Who are you looking for?"

She, thinking that he was the gardener, said, "Sir, if you took him, tell me where you put him so I can care for him."

Jesus said, "Mary."

Turning to face him, she said in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" meaning "Teacher!"

Jesus said, "Don't cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God.'"

Mary Magdalene went, telling the news to the disciples: "I saw the Master!" And she told them everything he said to her.

**Saturday**

**What would you give up?**

There is a story about a young boy whose sister had a rare disease and needed a blood transfusion to live. Since they shared the same blood type, the boy decided he would give his blood to his sister. As he watched the blood flow out of his arm, he finally asked the doctor, “When do I die?”

The young boy thought he had to give all his blood for his sister to live and was willing to make that sacrifice out of love for his sister.

That is not a true story, but what Jesus did for us is true.

When I’m tired or grumpy, I have trouble sharing my home or my lunch, and yet Jesus gave me everything so that I might live.

**Scripture • Philippians 2: 5-8** (The Message)

*Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.*



**Monday**

**What kind of stories does your family share with you?**

**Where are you from?**

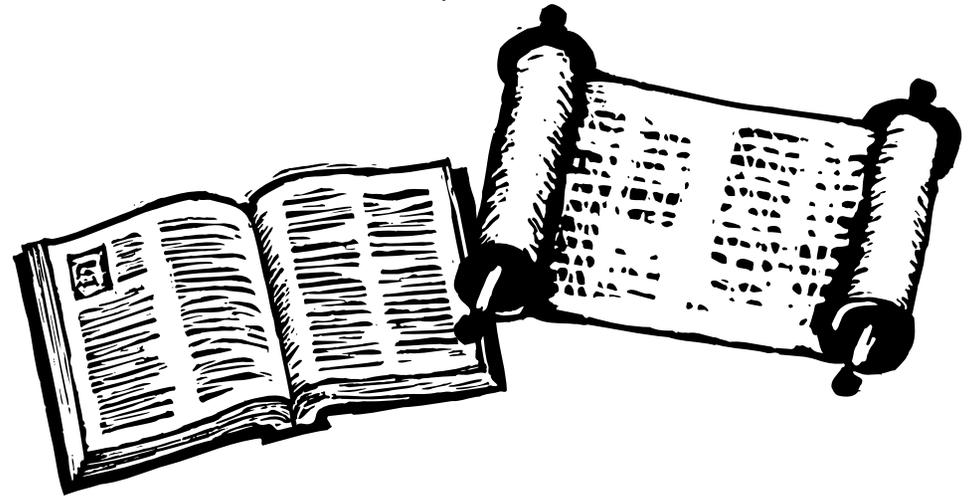
**What happened to get to where you are?**

It’s important to ask questions so that, as we listen to the answers, we understand our history and make the story our own. In ancient times, the Jewish people knew their story. It was a story of delivery from being slaves in Egypt and brought to a new life in a new place. They told this story to one another and their families every year in a special festival called the Passover, so that they would remember that God is not some distant power, but He is interested in His creation and loves His people.

In the week before Jesus died, Jewish people everywhere were making the trip to Jerusalem to celebrate the eight day Passover with friends and family. The city was crowded and busy. Aunts and uncles, cousins and distant relatives were coming to visit so that they could remember their shared story and history with one another and hope for this coming King and deliverance from their current oppression.

**Scripture • Exodus 3: 7-8** (The Message)

*God said, “I’ve taken a good, long look at the affliction of my people in Egypt. I’ve heard their cries for deliverance from their slave masters; I know all about their pain. And now I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country and bring them to a good land with wide-open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey.”*



free?

## Tuesday

### How free are we?

Freedom is more than the ability to walk around and do whatever we want. Many people walk around this planet with everything they need and yet, they live in a prison with invisible walls. They may live for what others think of them. Or they say only what others want to hear them say. During Passion week, remembering what Jesus did for us, are we able to see ourselves as though God personally, sees you, hears you and knows you and will deliver you from the “slavery” of what others think?

#### Scripture • Exodus 6: 6-9 (The Message)

*I am God. I will bring you out from under the cruel hard labour of Egypt. I will rescue you from slavery. I will redeem you, intervening with great acts of judgement I'll take you as my own people and I'll be God to you. You'll know that I am God, your God, who brings you out from under the cruel hard labour of Egypt. I'll bring you into the land that I promised to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and give it to you as your own country. I AM God.*

## Wednesday

### What is bitter, or very difficult in your life right now?

During the Seder meal, (that is the final Passover meal in the celebration for Jewish people) they remember the story of difficulty and the bitterness they experienced in Egypt by eating bitter herbs. They also eat sweet foods to remember the sweetness of freedom that God gave them. Then they put them together and eat the bitter with the sweet. Sometimes we separate our good times and bad times. We don't like to remember the trying times. But the truth is that adversity (difficult times), with Jesus' help, can lead to victory. Anything that tastes bitter in your life right now is preparing you for sweet blessings in the future.

#### Scripture • Psalm 136: 23-26 (The Message)

*God remembered us when we were down,  
His love never quits.  
Rescued us from the trampling boot,  
His love never quits.  
Takes care of everyone in time of need.  
His love never quits.  
Thank God, who did it all!  
His love never quits!*



4 bitter!

love?

## Thursday

### Does God love me?

At Easter sometimes the message we hear is that humans are sinners, Jesus died as a sacrifice, paying for our sins and then three days later, Jesus came to life again so that His followers can go to heaven when they die, too. The trouble with this is thinking that God is mad at us because of our sins. But the truth is that God's love for us is constant. God is mad, but He is mad at the enemy for deceiving us with lies. Yes, it's true that we sin, but that does not diminish His love for us. Jesus died so that the powers of the enemy which had locked up the world in corruption and death would be overthrown. We, too, are free from the enemy. Jesus loved us that much—that he would die for us so that we can be free.

#### Scripture • Isaiah 65: 17-19a (The Message)

*“Pay close attention now:*

*I'm creating new heavens and a new earth.  
All the earlier troubles, chaos, and pain  
are things of the past, to be forgotten.  
Look ahead with joy.*

*Anticipate what I'm creating:  
I'll create Jerusalem as sheer joy,  
create my people as pure delight.  
I'll take joy in Jerusalem,  
take delight in my people.*

*(You could also read Romans 8: 31-39)*

## Good Friday

### Why is it called “Good” Friday?

Although this event and day is dark and dismal, this is Christ's greatest gift to us. Jesus did die, but he was not defeated. He did not let go of His trust of God, His heavenly Father. Remembering the readings from this week, we know that God was breaking the powers that hold the world trapped in slavery. But He wants to bring us to the new land, a good place where we are free. On Good Friday it's like God says to humankind, “I made you, but I lost you. Now at great cost, I have bought you back. You are mine forever.”

#### Scripture • Luke 23: 44-46 (The Message)

*By now it was noon. The whole earth became dark, the darkness lasting three hours—a total blackout. The Temple curtain split right down the middle. Jesus called loudly, “Father, I place my life in your hands!” Then he breathed his last.*

bad Friday!