



PALM SUNDAY AND EASTER

Youth /Adult Bible Study

REPRODUCIBLE STUDY PAGES



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Preparing the Lesson

Date: _____

Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–40

Key Point

Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem on His way to the cross so that our journey to heaven and life eternal would be made certain.

Law/Gospel

Because of my sin, Jesus had to suffer and die. **Because of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, my sin is no more, and I will live in heaven with Him forever.**

Context

The triumphal entry occurred on the Sunday before Good Friday (John 12:1, 12), which is why Palm Sunday marks the first day of Holy Week. John alone mentions palm branches (12:13).

Jesus' arrival at Jerusalem culminated a great journey begun at an earlier point in His ministry (see Luke 9:1). Before this journey began, Jesus predicted that He would be rejected by the Jewish leaders, die, and rise on the third day (Luke 9:21–22, 44–45).

The feast of Passover was approaching, so Jerusalem and its surroundings would have been crowded and chaotic. Jesus was staying in the Bethany area, two miles east of Jerusalem. Most people near the city would have been walking, so a person on a donkey would have been noticed.

The people who hailed Jesus as King were His disciples (Luke 19:37). Those who rejected Him in this scene were Pharisees (Luke 19:39). Those who crucified Him later were not likely the same people who hailed Him as King at the triumphal entry.

Commentary

The evangelists' descriptions of the triumphal entry portray Jesus in two interconnected roles: (1) as the promised King who would reign forever on the throne of King David (see 2 Samuel 7:12–17; Zechariah 9:9); and (2) as the long-expected Christ, or Messiah, who would come on behalf of the Lord to save His people (see Psalm 118:26, one of the many texts that predict the Messiah's coming).

Jesus is portrayed as a king when He sits upon the colt of a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 that Israel's King would come to Jerusalem "humble and mounted on a donkey." The colt had never been ridden; it was consecrated for the Lord's holy purposes. Jesus' riding was out of character since He had previously walked everywhere. King Solomon had ridden a mule for his enthronement (1 Kings 1:38–40). By riding the colt into Jerusalem, Jesus publicly announced to His disciples that He was a king. Jerusalem is "the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35).

The people roll out the red carpet for Jesus, placing garments and branches before Him, acknowledging His kingship (see 2 Kings 9:13). Jesus' followers shout words from Psalm 118:25–26, "Hosanna!" and "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" In the Old Testament, *hosanna* meant "Save now!" but by Jesus' time it had evolved into a shout of praise, like "Alleluia!"

Jesus' followers apparently ignored the part of Zechariah 9:9 that predicted the King would be "humble." They praised God for the mighty works Jesus had done (Luke 19:37) but made no mention of Jesus' teaching. Had they forgotten that He predicted His own death and resurrection? They would soon realize that He would only show power and glory after suffering and dying to achieve their salvation. His kingship would be shown on the cross as He wore a crown of thorns with the words "King of the Jews" above His head.

It offended the Pharisees that Jesus' disciples were ascribing to Him kingly and messianic words, but He refused to rebuke them. The Pharisees respected Jesus as a teacher (Luke 19:39), but Jesus wants people to know Him as King, Messiah, and Lord over all creation (19:40).

Palm Sunday

Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–40

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray Lord of all, You have established Your throne in heaven, and Your kingdom rules over all. On this Sunday, when we recognize Your triumphal entry, may we join with the saints of all time and space in honoring Your name. We confess that it is for our sins that You had to set Your face toward the cross, but we thank You for Your determination to bring us all into Your heavenly kingdom. Give us Your Holy Spirit so that we may lead godly lives as members of Your kingdom and bring others into Your kingdom. To You be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Ask 1. Why did Jesus come to Jerusalem at this time? Read Luke 19:28–29.

Jesus went *up* to Jerusalem. “He drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, *at the mount* that is called Olivet” (v. 29, emphasis added). The words give us a context where the event in the text occurs. Yet, “in drawing nigh unto the mount of Olives in our text, Jesus was really drawing nigh unto the mount of Golgotha. Passion Week begins with a mountain and ends with a mountain” (*Gospel Handles*, p. 76, © 2001 CPH). The simple opening words describing the mount can remind us why Jesus came—to be crucified for us and for our salvation.

Ask 2. Read Luke 19:30. What is a donkey’s role? How does that remind us of what Jesus came to do for us?

Donkeys are beasts of burden. They are working animals, used mainly as draft or pack animals, pulling or carrying heavy loads. The simple act of riding a donkey reminds us why Jesus came—to carry our burdens to the cross and to carry away every single sin for every single person.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Ask 3. Is Jesus’ triumphal entry fit for a king? Read Psalm 147:10. How is the life and death of Jesus a pattern for our own lives? Discuss how being first is important in your life. Is wanting to be first wrong?

The horse was a royal symbol of power and elegance because only kings and warlords could afford them. Our King, Jesus, rides in on a donkey. Jesus’ entire life and death is a pattern for our own lives. Recall events in Jesus’ life that illustrate His humility (e.g., the act of incarnation itself, eating with sinners and tax col-

lectors, washing the disciples' feet). Read Philippians 2:1–11 to explore Christ's humility. What conversation happened just before the triumphal entry? Read Mark 10:35–45.

Discuss certain context when being first can be wrong (e.g., marriage, family, the workplace, school). Encourage participants to recognize and confess their sinful pride. We can rejoice in the humble service of Jesus and follow His example.

Say 4. We associate the Palm Sunday account with rejoicing. Shouts of "Hosanna!" ring throughout our churches. Is there another kind of rejoicing associated with Palm Sunday and Holy Week? Read Luke 19:10.

In the Zacchaeus account, which occurred before the triumphal entry, Jesus sums up the whole reason He became incarnate and was on His way to Jerusalem: "to seek and to save the lost" (19:10). This is a major theme in the Book of Luke, and Jesus' last week was no different.

When Jesus got to Jerusalem, He had compassion on her and mourned over the lost (19:41–44). He knew that, spiritually, many in Jerusalem were still following their own ways and failed to listen to Him—the Savior who had come. Jesus knew that, physically, Jerusalem would be destroyed. Perhaps some in your group are distraught over a lost loved one. Be sure to address that concern in prayer. Then continue by sharing how Jesus comes to us to save us for eternity.

If the lost one saddens Jesus, what makes Him happy? Read about the lost in Luke 15:7, 10, 23–24. The Lord rejoices when the lost are found—when people believe that Jesus is the Promised One, who came to save them from their sins.

Ask 5. Read Mark 11:11. What did Jesus do *after* His triumphal entry? What does this, along with the triumphal entry, reveal about Jesus' nature?

It was late in the evening, and Jesus was likely exhausted from the day's events, but He "looked around at everything" (11:11). In some regards, we are reminded of a king returning to his home and his castle, inspecting his land. Was Jesus pleased? No! What a frustrating end to His spectacular entry into the city. Though all-knowing, Jesus was also fully human, and He felt righteous anger because His name was not being hallowed and His Word was not being kept pure. The next day, Jesus would go back to the temple and drive out the money-changers.

Luke 19:41–44 tells us that Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He was sad that the people had not received His Word. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, but many were still lost, didn't understand the Gospel, and didn't know that Jesus is our Savior, the Messiah.

Jesus is both true God and true man, feeling the raw emotions of anger and sadness, yet remaining perfect in His response. He is true God, deserving of all respect; His name must be respected and kept holy. If time permits, review what it means to keep the Second Commandment.

Say 6. We often jump from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday when we celebrate Holy Week. But what happened in between? Read Luke 20:41–44 and Luke 21:2–38.

Jesus makes it clear He is the Messiah, the Son of God and David's Son, who has fulfilled the prophecies. In Luke 20:42–43, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1, a coronation psalm. "Jesus poses the psalm as a riddle, which the teachers of the Law cannot answer because they don't recognize Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, the Son of God" (God's Abiding Word: *Luke: The Way of Salvation*, p. 48, © 2003 CPH).

Jesus' last week is full of some of the same unbelief He experienced throughout His ministry. The church leaders challenge His authority. They still don't "get" it. "Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem is filled with His great teaching and the failed attempts of the leaders in Jerusalem to trap Him. His kingship is not to be of this world or concerned with earthly riches. He leads us to treasure His teachings and their eternal benefits" (*Luke*, p. 46, © 2003 CPH).

And just as Jesus triumphantly entered into Jerusalem to fulfill God's plan of salvation and win for us the victory over sin, death, and the devil, He will return, bringing full deliverance from evil.

3 Share (10 minutes)

Ask 7. Are there any elements of the Divine Service that remind you of Palm Sunday?

Many Lutheran churches use a processional cross, which is a cross (often a crucifix, a cross with a representation of Jesus' body on it) mounted on a staff and carried. It is used when the pastor and attendants process in at the beginning of the service and recess out at the end, and it is sometimes carried out to the graveside for the service of the burial of the dead. Most often, the processional cross is used during the Gospel procession, when the pastor and attendants carry the Bible into the middle of the nave for the reading of the Gospel. The processional cross can remind us of Christ our King's triumphal procession into Jerusalem. Jesus came to save us from our sins—the Gospel displayed!

What do you think is the significance behind using a crucifix for a processional cross?

People assert that the crosses we use in the sanctuary should be empty because of the empty tomb of Easter. "Jesus isn't on the cross anymore; He's risen!" The resurrection is certainly essential: "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). But Paul also boldly said, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). A crucifix helps us see with our eyes the message of 1 Corinthians 11:26 and Revelation 5:12.

We can't play the crucifixion and the resurrection off against each other; both are essential. Take time to consider how the design of certain objects used in worship have a deeper meaning, and meditate on how they point us to our Savior, the King triumphant over sin, death, and the devil.

4 Send (5 minutes)

For the **Making Connections** section, encourage any adults with children in Sunday School to review their children's leaflets together at home. Also encourage all participants to use the Second Article of the Apostles' Creed in their personal or family devotions this week, and work on learning it by heart.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, ask if anyone in the class has any jewelry, paintings, woodcuts, or icons that depict Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection—the purpose for His entrance into Jerusalem at the beginning of Holy Week.

Consider closing the class by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Seasonal Lesson Student Page

Palm Sunday (Mark 11:1–11; Luke 19:28–40)

- ① Why did Jesus come to Jerusalem at this time? Read Luke 19:28–29.
- ② Read Luke 19:30. What is a donkey's role? How does that remind us of what Jesus came to do for us?
- ③ Is Jesus' triumphal entry fit for a king? Read Psalm 147:10. How is the life and death of Jesus a pattern for our own lives? Discuss how being first is important in your life. Is wanting to be first wrong?
- ④ We associate the Palm Sunday account with rejoicing. Shouts of "Hosanna!" ring throughout our churches. Is there another kind of rejoicing associated with Palm Sunday and Holy Week? Read Luke 19:10.
- ⑤ Read Mark 11:11. What did Jesus do *after* His triumphal entry? What does this, along with the triumphal entry, reveal about Jesus' nature?
- ⑥ We often jump from Palm Sunday to Maundy Thursday when we celebrate Holy Week. But what happened in between? Read Luke 20:41–44 and Luke 21:2–38.
- ⑦ Are there any elements of the Divine Service that remind you of Palm Sunday? What do you think is the significance behind using a crucifix for a processional cross?

Seasonal Lesson Student Page

Through the Week

Making Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over each child's leaflet together, sharing with each other what you learned about today's Bible story.

This week's lesson reminds us that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost through His death and resurrection. As we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray that God's kingdom would come. Read the Second Petition of the Apostles' Creed and its meaning in the Small Catechism this week. Consider how we live as members of His kingdom and also how God might bring many others into His kingdom of grace.

Personal Reflection

The crowds rightly shouted praises to Jesus' name. They called Him "the King who comes in the name of the Lord" (Luke 19:38). The people seemed to be Jesus' disciples, who recognized Him as the promised Messiah whom the prophet Zechariah described generations earlier. They believed He was the King, from the line of David.

What do you believe? Who do you proclaim Jesus to be through your words and actions? What are ways you keep God's name holy? What are ways you profane God's name?

This week, read the First Petition of the Lord's Prayer in the Small Catechism, consider how God's name is holy in itself, and pray that it would be kept holy in your life also.

Preparing the Lesson

Date: _____

Easter

Mark 15:1–16:8

Key Point

Jesus' death and resurrection grants us eternal life in heaven with Him.

Law/Gospel

The cost of my sin is death. **Jesus died for me and rose again in payment for my sin, fulfilling God's demands and securing my forgiveness and eternal life with Him in heaven.**

Context

Our Holy Week was for the Jews the week of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In Jerusalem, it was standing room only. Because the Jews were under Roman rule, the death penalty could be pronounced only by a Roman official—thus Pilate's involvement.

Jesus is executed on Friday but rapidly removed from the cross because of the approaching Sabbath. He rests in the tomb the few remaining hours of Friday, then Saturday (the Sabbath), and then rises sometime on the third day, Sunday. Sunday, therefore, becomes the day for Christians, replacing the Sabbath of the old covenant.

Commentary

Nothing happened to Jesus by chance. It was all predicted and foreshadowed in the sermons of Moses and the prophets. The enmity between the seed of Satan and the Seed of Eve culminates in this death scene, where the hellish snake sinks his fangs into the heel of the woman's Seed, while simultaneously that heel comes crashing down on the serpentine skull (Genesis 3:15). Death is slain, as is Jesus, the slayer Himself.

As Isaac carried the wood of sacrifice on his back, so this promised Son carries the wood of crucifixion on which He will be offered in the stead of all of us Isaacs (Genesis 22). Here is the Suffering Servant, whom Isaiah foresaw "stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted . . . pierced for our transgressions . . . crushed for our iniquities; . . . with His wounds we are healed" (53:4–5). As He Himself chanted in Psalm 22, Christ is forsaken by His Father because He became the sinner—indeed, sin itself—on the accursed tree. He is buried in the heart of the earth, as Jonah was buried in the belly of the fish, for three days and three nights. Yet His body is preserved, and He saw no decay (Acts 2:26–27), as David had prophesied (Psalm 16:9–10).

Even as Daniel was protected from the lions' jaws behind the sealed stone, so the roaring lion of hell could do no more damage to Jesus behind that sealed tomb. Both emerge alive, triumphant over their enemies. As Jonah was vomited forth from the fish to preach repentance to Nineveh, so Jesus is cast from the earth, alive again, to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all the world via His disciples. All is sketched beforehand in the Scriptures so that we might see this as the plan of the Father from Genesis onward.

Good Friday is the best of days and the worst of days. It is the worst because it reveals the gravity of our sin and the divine wrath sin arouses—a wrath so immense that only the sacrifice of God's Son could quench its flames. But more important, it is the best of days, for on it, the Father reveals His heart to us. How much God loves us is forever portrayed in the crucifixion and resurrection of His Son. He demonstrates the extent of His great love for us. He stopped at nothing—even sacrificing His own Son—to assure that we could live with Him in heaven eternally.

Easter

Mark 15:1–16:8

1 Start (5 minutes)

Pray Lord God, heavenly Father, on this joyous Sunday of the resurrection, we have not forgotten Good Friday and all that Your Son suffered and died for on that day. We confess that our sin is what called down Your wrath upon Jesus, and we thank You for having mercy upon us by sending Him and by raising Him from the dead. Give us boldness to proclaim His saving work to others and teach us to live in Baptism, each day dying to sin and rising to newness of life; through the same Jesus Christ, our crucified and risen Lord. Amen.

Read the Bible story in **Mark 15:1–16:8**. Have participants take turns, or ask a volunteer to read the entire text.

Ask 1. **Since this is Easter, the day of the resurrection, why even talk about Christ's suffering and death today? Answer that query on the basis of 1 Corinthians 2:1–5; Revelation 5:12; and Romans 4:25. Do you have a story of how God worked something beautiful out of tragedy? Share now.**

Another way of translating Mark 16:6 has the angel saying to the frightened women, "You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified One." Our Lord and God will always be the one who loves us so much that He suffered and died for us. Even in heaven, the saints sing to "the Lamb who was slain" (Revelation 5:12). Paul preached nothing to the Corinthians "except Jesus Christ and Him crucified," which is a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:2, 4).

This does not mean that Paul failed to preach the resurrection, because preaching Jesus Christ cannot be done without reference to the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15). Yet even on Easter Sunday, a focus on the cross does not diminish the significance of the resurrection, but is a necessary complement. Paul wrote that Jesus "was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Take away one or the other, and heaven would be closed to us sinners!

Allow some time for participants to share how God turned a bad situation into something good. Would they only share the second half of the story? No! That wouldn't paint a true picture of what happened or provide context for what makes the ending so wonderful. The sorrow of the Law is what makes the Gospel so amazing. Similarly, we share the story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection as one story.

2 Study (15 minutes)

Ask 2. How does Jesus' "cry of dereliction" in Mark 15:34 serve as a key to understanding the ultimate significance of the entire Passion account? Read Isaiah 53:6–10 for insight.

Jesus' cry in Mark 15:34 is a direct quotation from Psalm 22:1, written by David. Yet, while David *felt* as though God had forsaken (abandoned) him, Jesus, who is both truly man and truly God the Son, actually *was* abandoned to hell by God the Father, and He received the furious outpouring of God's wrath against our sin. Jesus went through this agony to spare us from God's wrath and from being separated from Him forever, as we deserve (Isaiah 53:6, 10; 2 Corinthians 5:21)! How this all happens to the perfect, holy God-man, Jesus Christ, is truly mysterious: God suffered, bled, and died for His creatures! What great love the Father and His Son have for us sinners!

Say 3. Discuss any current cases in the news, where a sentence has been handed down for a crime. Do you think the punishment fits the crime? Jesus taught, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). What is our punishment for not living a perfect life? See Romans 6:23. Did Jesus live out that teaching? See 1 Peter 2:22 and Hebrews 4:14–16. What is at stake in this question?

God promises eternal life to those who obey His Law perfectly (Luke 10:24–28). In 1 Peter 2:22, Peter writes that Jesus committed no sins and His lips were always pure, thus fulfilling His active obedience to His Father's will. Jesus faced all the temptations we face but conquered the devil by never sinning (Hebrews 4:15).

The cost of our sin is death. But thankfully, because of Jesus' perfect life and saving death—and because of our Baptism into His death and resurrection—God forgives our sins and credits Christ's righteousness to us so that we can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Ask 4. Share a defining moment in your life. Is there a day or event that changed your life, where everything you do since then has a new perspective (e.g., heart attack, other time you faced death, marriage, birth of a child)? What's your "reality check"? According to 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, where does the news of Easter Sunday rank among all the things we will ever be told of in this life? What do verses 14–20 say would happen if Christ's bodily resurrection from the tomb were just a myth?

Easter Sunday greets us with the Good News from the angel to the women: "[Jesus] has risen; He is not here" (Mark 16:6). The empty tomb proclaims Christ's resurrection! The Gospel of Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection is "of first importance" (1 Corinthians 15:3). One of the reasons it is a good practice to say the Creed at morning and evening prayer time is because it reminds us of what really matters each day.

The resurrection should change our outlook on everything! According to 1 Corinthians 15:14–21, if the man Jesus did not come back to life and emerge from the tomb, never to die again, then (1) the preaching of the Gospel is pointless; (2) our Christian faith is futile; (3) we are putting false words in God’s mouth; (4) we are still dead in our sins—condemned to hell; (5) our loved ones who have died in the faith are in hell; and (6) Christians are the most deluded, foolish people for hoping for a future resurrection from the dead. But in fact, Jesus lives, so all of the preceding hypothetical statements are not so, and we can turn each of them into its opposite. With the resurrection, God turns everything around, doesn’t He?

Ask 5. Read Mark 16:7. What comfort can you find in the knowledge that Jesus is “going before you”? Where have you heard that language before?

How precious to know that Jesus cares about all of us. The words of the angel—“tell His disciples”—show that the Good News is for all believers as a whole. But that the angel also included the phrase “and Peter” shows that the Gospel has a personal application. We see Jesus’ great care and compassion for each person as He makes His first appearances after His resurrection (Mark 16:9–13), meeting them where they are.

What is the first thing Jesus does when He rises from the dead? He is busy spreading the Good News of His crucifixion and resurrection, “going before you to Galilee” (v. 7). Jesus is always ahead of us. It is He who equips us, and it is He who fights our battles for us (Joshua 23:10). See Deuteronomy 1:30; 9:30; and 31:8, and also Isaiah 45:2 and 52:12. Jesus promised to be with His disciples (Matthew 26:32; Mark 14:28), and He is faithful.

The women brought spices to the tomb very early, “when the *sun* had risen,” (v. 2, emphasis added). They were honoring God through their service, but little did they know that they were going very early, when the *Son* had risen. Chronology can call attention to theology.

3 Share (10 minutes)

Ask 6. How does Mark 16:6–8, the angel’s message to the women and their reaction, parallel our own experience amid the changes and uncertainties of life? In what situations have you or others you know doubted God’s presence? What worldly things can veil our vision of God’s eternal promises? What kind of encouragement are we given in 2 Corinthians 4:13–18 and John 20:29–31?

Like the women in Mark 16:6–8, we have heard the message that “Christ is risen!” and have believed it, but we long to see Jesus face-to-face, and our faith is assaulted by His apparent absence. We know where to find Him—in His Word and Sacraments—but when we are frightened by death and eternal judgment, our sinful flesh doubts the promise that He is risen. In such times of fear and doubting, our lips are reluctant to proclaim the Good News to others.

But the Gospel comes to the rescue! In 2 Corinthians 4:13–18, Paul—to whom the risen Lord appeared—testifies that Christ is risen and will not forsake us, which emboldens us to believe and speak the Gospel to friends and family who live in fear of death and God’s judgment. Things unseen—but revealed to us by God—are of far greater importance than things seen by our eyes, which are transient.

Jesus confirms that “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7) by calling “blessed” those who believe in Him on the basis of the Word of God without seeing Him (John 20:29). When the things that are seen cause doubt in our hearts about things unseen, let us flee to the Holy Scriptures for comfort that we “have life in His name” (John 20:30–31).

Say 7. Simon of Cyrene was just a passerby on the day of Christ’s crucifixion, but God made him the bearer of Christ’s cross (Mark 15:21). What does bearing the cross mean for Christians today? See Mark 8:34–38; 1 Peter 2:21–25; and Galatians 2:20–21.

We assume Simon of Cyrene, the original crossbearer, became a Christian because his sons, Alexander and Rufus, seem to have been disciples known by the congregation(s) to which Mark was writing his Gospel.

Bearing the cross means to find true life in Christ alone, as one of our thematic passages today says: “He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised” (2 Corinthians 5:15). It involves self-denial and following Jesus’ Word (Mark 8:34), losing our lives for the sake of the Gospel (v. 35), renouncing the desire to gain wealth for the sake of wealth (v. 36), turning from all forms of trying to save ourselves (v. 37), and confessing faith in Christ, unashamed by His crucified humility (v. 38).

Bearing the cross involves following Christ’s example of patiently suffering injustice and cruelty for the sake of the Gospel without fighting back (1 Peter 2:21–23). But above all, bearing the cross means living in the joy and confidence that comes from knowing that Christ “bore our sins in His body on the tree” so that we “have been healed” and now live under the care of the Good Shepherd (vv. 24–25).

Bearing the cross is not difficult, for it comes to us in Baptism, when we are “crucified with Christ” so that we die to ourselves, Christ lives in us, and we live by faith in Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). It means that by God’s grace, we are set free from the burden of trying to merit eternal life by obedience or good works (v. 21).

Now the only burden that remains for us is to follow this invitation from Christ: “Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28–30).

4 Send (5 minutes)

For the **Making Connections** section, encourage any adults with children in Sunday School to review their children's leaflets together at home. Also encourage the class to use the Second and Third Articles of the Apostles' Creed in their personal or family devotions this week and work on learning them by heart.

For the **Personal Reflection** section, ask if anyone in the class has any special memories of the last days of a loved one's life before he or she died. See if they would be willing to write down a few thoughts about how it was obvious he or she had faith in Christ and had hope of the resurrection from the dead, and then share the story with the class.

Reflect on Christ's suffering and our own. When we are suffering, "Why?" and "How long?" are questions that cannot be addressed casually to other people, but they can and should be addressed to God. Our Lord invites us to place these laments before Him.

Share these lists of psalms with the class:

"How long?" Psalms: 6; 13; 35; 74; 79; 80; 89; 90; 94; 119:81–88

"Why?" Psalms: 10; 22; 42; 43; 44; 74; 88

Seasonal Lesson Student Page

Easter (Mark 15:1–16:8)

- ① Since this is Easter, the day of the resurrection, why even talk about Christ's suffering and death today? Answer that query on the basis of 1 Corinthians 2:1–5; Revelation 5:12; and Romans 4:25. Do you have a story of how God worked something beautiful out of tragedy? Share now.
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- ④ Share a defining moment in your life. Is there a day or event that changed your life, where everything you do since then has a new perspective (e.g., heart attack, other time you faced death, marriage, birth of a child)? What's your "reality check"? According to 1 Corinthians 15:3–5, where does the news of Easter Sunday rank among all the things we will ever be told of in this life? What do verses 14–20 say would happen if Christ's bodily resurrection from the tomb were just a myth?
- ⑤ Read Mark 16:7. What comfort can you find in the knowledge that Jesus is "going before you"? Where have you heard that language before?
- ⑥ How does Mark 16:6–8, the angel's message to the women and their reaction, parallel our own experience amid the changes and uncertainties of life? In what situations have you or others you know doubted God's presence? What worldly things can veil our vision of God's eternal promises? What kind of encouragement are we given in 2 Corinthians 4:13–18 and John 20:29–31?
- ⑦ Simon of Cyrene was just a passerby on the day of Christ's crucifixion, but God made him the bearer of Christ's cross (Mark 15:21). What does bearing the cross mean for Christians today? See Mark 8:34–38; 1 Peter 2:21–25; and Galatians 2:20–21.

Seasonal Lesson Student Page

Through the Week

Making Connections

If you have children in Sunday School, go over each child's leaflet together, sharing with each other what you learned about today's Bible story.

As we put the penitential forty days of Lent behind us, we resurrect our alleluias to give voice to our glad praises of Jesus.

An ancient greeting and response during the Easter season is "Christ is risen!" "He is risen indeed! Alleluia!" Try this exchange with your family to remind them that it is Easter.

In the explanation of the Second Article of the Creed in the Small Catechism, Dr. Luther beautifully takes what Christ has done and applies it to each of us. Recite this section of the catechism in devotions this week. Ponder how the truth of the resurrection can change our perspective on day-to-day life.

Personal Reflection

Our suffering never approaches the intensity of Christ's on the cross, but there are days when we feel as Paul did: "We were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself" (2 Corinthians 1:8). On our darkest days, the resurrection shines brightly into our benighted world, offering a ray of inextinguishable hope.

Yet future resurrection is not God's only promise to us. He invites us to pray: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15). Jesus did just that on the cross. We learned of the saving significance of Jesus' cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). Yet these words can also be taken as an example. Actually, they were first prayed by King David (Psalm 22:1).

Throughout history, God had shown that He faithfully delivered His people when they cried out to Him (Psalm 22:3–5). By calling out, "My God, my God," they showed true faith; they realized in their helplessness that their only hope was in God. This is why placing trust in the quality of our own faith is actually idolatry of the worst sort.

As sinners, we can have no hope in ourselves. Our faith must be directed to the only place we can receive help: our Savior, God in Christ Jesus. In fact, we, too, may pray Psalm 22:1 in the depth of woe. When we feel forsaken by God, we pray only to "my God, my God." It is a godly lament that does not curse God but trusts in Him.