

*Luke 19:28-42*

## **Aim of Lesson**

To show the humility of Jesus and his steadfastness of purpose.

## **Background study**

2 Kings 9:13; Psalm 118:22-29; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-9.

## **Suggested outline of lesson**

In order to help the children to gain a realistic mental picture of this scene, it might be useful to begin by showing them photographs of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives as well as artists' impressions of Herod's temple and the landscape in Jesus' day. Point out the dry, stony road, winding over the hill from Jericho and Bethany, down the western slope, across the brook Kidron and up to the city.

Describe vividly the groups of pilgrims making their way along the road to the city. The travellers would be in a happy mood as they looked forward to this highlight of the year, the serious but joyful feast of the passover. There would be much singing of psalms, the sharing of news and happy laughter as friendships were renewed and praise to God expressed. When this time of year came round, most Jews did their utmost to get to Jerusalem for the celebration of the feast, and it was natural that Jesus and his friends would wish to be there. The disciples were doubtful about Jesus going up to Jerusalem, because they knew that their master's life was in danger. But Jesus knew he had to go, and that momentous events at that time would bring about the culmination of his ministry. The disciples sensed his mood of determination and set out with him from Jericho for the last part of the journey to the capital.

They travelled on foot, as they usually did. Upon arriving at Bethphage, however, the disciples were surprised to be given some unusual instructions. They had no knowledge of any prior arrangements having been made, but when they followed the instructions to collect the colt (young ass) everything worked out as Jesus had said it would. The bewilderment of the disciples turned to excitement when they saw that Jesus intended to enter Jerusalem riding on the colt. By riding an ass, and not a war-horse, Jesus was demonstrating that his mission was one of peace. Many of the people who saw Jesus ride by would have recalled to mind the words of Zechariah. Let the children find this verse for themselves and read it aloud. Tell them that because the people recognized that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God, they also knew that he was the promised king. They had been waiting for him to make himself known to the nation and to claim the throne of Israel, for he was the rightful heir. When they saw Jesus riding in majesty towards the city, they assumed that the moment had come. In their excitement they cheered him and praised God and called to the crowds around them to acknowledge him.

Convey the atmosphere of rejoicing that accompanied Jesus on his way. Many recognized him and greeted him gladly. There were those who recalled the prophecy and were overjoyed to see it being fulfilled before their eyes. Filled with religious fervour they expressed their praise in the words of Psalm 118. Many more were caught up in the exhilaration of the moment and added their voices to the clamour. It may be helpful at this point to ask the children whether they have experienced the thrill of witnessing a procession involving a visiting celebrity, and their remembered excitement could be used to fire their imaginations. Children would have been waving and shouting, eager to get a better view, and helping to spread palm branches and coats to form a carpet along the road.

Contrast this euphoria with the heaviness of heart that Jesus felt. He was fully aware that their adulation would be short-lived. They misunderstood his present mission and were soon to be disillusioned. Jesus knew that he was about to face his greatest ordeal; his people would reject him and put him cruelly to death. He was saddened, too, because he foresaw that the judgement of God would fall upon his beloved city and upon his misguided people. He took little pleasure, therefore, in the cheering crowd, and was moved to tears at the sight of the city of Jerusalem and its magnificent temple, doomed to destruction. This was to be the city of the great king, the centre of the kingdom of peace, but its leading men were about to cause the death of God's anointed. Jesus understood, however, what his disciples had yet to learn, that what was to follow was God's will and was necessary in order to bring about salvation and the everlasting kingdom, which had been prophesied.

The Pharisees' reaction was predictable. They were very worried by this demonstration of loyalty and affection towards Jesus. It seemed to them as if "the whole world" was following Jesus, the man they hated and feared and had planned to arrest. Feeling inadequate to deal with the situation, they appealed to Jesus to use his influence to stop the demonstration. They must have been even more frustrated by Jesus' reply.

Although Jesus did nothing to curb the disciples' excitement, there was no air of victory about him. His ride was not that of a conquering hero but that of a meek and lowly man of peace. His disciples could not, at this time, comprehend the true significance of this incident. Little did they know how much the events of the next few days were to test their allegiance to their king and widen their understanding.

## **Relevance to the children's lives**

Would you like to have been in that happy crowd, which cheered Jesus and shouted "Hosanna" as he rode into Jerusalem? Why would you be glad for Jesus to be king? What does the Bible tell us about the day when Jesus will be king? On that day, we shall be able to welcome him with joy.

## Worksheets

The solution to the puzzle is:

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## Prayer

Dear Lord God, we pray that your kingdom will soon come, when we will be able to shout with joy and welcome Jesus as our king. Amen.

## Memory verse

"The crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:9).