

Who is this man?

A Lenten Journey through Holy Week for Children's Time

"Wait!" we were about to say, "Not THAT candle. Surely there is a mistake, that light cannot be extinguished." This is not how the story ends! Before we could protest, the candle was re-lit with words of mystery and comfort. "The light shines in the darkness. The darkness cannot extinguish the light." Then, exhaled breath, movement, light. Together, we entered Holy Week.

This was a [reflection](#) on the Lenten not-just-for-children's time series we created last year. I feel strongly that children's time shouldn't just be for children. What if children's time became seamless part of the congregation's worship that appeals to multiple styles of learning and experiencing God?

Through the stories of Holy Week, we are invited to wonder, "Who is Jesus?" The guiding questions, "Who is this man? Who is Jesus" are found in Sonja M. Stewart's books *Young Children and Worship* and *Following Jesus*.

Each week of Lent, a new passage is shared, and the facets of Jesus' identity continue to unfold through interactions with those who were in Jerusalem during the last week of Jesus' life.

By the end of the six weeks of stories, "children's time" gets rather long. We've chosen to allow for this time because it is not often that people hear the events of Holy Week told continuously. For people who may not come to Holy Week services, hearing the stories told in this way provides important context for the mystery of Resurrection, the joy of Easter.

While this guide provides Bible passages and paraphrases, telling the stories from memory rather than reading them is more engaging. This series can easily be done with one person telling all the stories. For a richer, multi-generational experience, invite different storytellers for each week. Have families with children assist with making and placing the symbols. Ask youth to snuff out the candles. Invite the congregation to say the last line of week 6 in unison. Prepare for Holy Week together in this journey through Lent.

Note: All Bible passages are from the Common English Bible (CEB).

Sunday before Lent:

Today we are going to get ready for Lent. Lent is the time of 40 days plus six Sundays that we get ready for Easter. During Lent we use the church color for getting ready. What is the church's color for getting ready? Purple! Yes.

Share your church's ways of getting ready for Lent. These are ours:

There are three things to do today to get ready for Lent:

1. After church we will make pretzels. Cross your arms like this- what shape is it? Yes! A long time ago people used to fold their arms in prayer like this. They also didn't eat eggs or butter during Lent, so they made a special treat that doesn't use eggs or butter that is shaped like arms folded in prayer to remember to be prayerful during Lent.
2. Wednesday is the first day of Lent, called Ash Wednesday. Everyone, even kids, can come to this worship service. We take last year's palm leaves and burn them to make the ashes. Last Sunday one of you said, we are all made of matter! That is right. All living things are made of the same stuff. On Ash Wednesday we put ashes on our forehead or hands to remember that we, and all things, are made of the same dust. Do you want to see the ashes? *(Let children take a peek at the container of ashes.)*
3. The last thing we do for Lent is put away a very special word. When we are really happy, joyful and excited in church we say the word Alleluia! Shout it with me! Alleluia!! During Lent we do not say Alleluia in church. That way, when we use it again, it will be extra special. So, everyone help me, we are going to pack up the Alleluias in this box. *(kids find the alleluias, written on paper, hidden in the room).* Before I shut the lid, let's give one more huge Alleluia!!

Gracious God, Help us prepare our hearts, minds and bodies for the serious season of Lent, knowing that the joy of Easter is not far away.

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Supplies needed:

6 purple candles to be lit at the beginning of worship

Long piece of purple felt

Felt symbol for each week, to be laid on the long purple felt on the floor in front of the children. Alternatively, symbols could be added to a banner.

Candle snuffer

Felt Symbol Examples:



Intro

Purple is the color of Lent, the time we get ready for the mystery of Easter. Today is the _____ Sunday of Lent. Each week we will blow out one more candle to mark the Sundays of Lent. Each Sunday we will hear something that happened during Holy Week, the last week of Jesus' life.

During Passover, the people of God go to the holy city of Jerusalem. When Jesus went to Jerusalem for the last time, things were different. People wondered, **“Who is this man?”**

Week 1: Palm Leaf Symbol

Matthew 21: 1-11

At the beginning of Holy Week, when Jesus came to gates of Jerusalem, he said to his disciples, “Go into the village over there. As soon as you enter it, you will find tied up there a colt that no one has ridden. Untie it and bring it here...

[The disciples] went and found a colt tied to a gate outside on the street, and they untied it... They brought the colt to Jesus and threw their clothes upon it, and he sat on it. Many people spread out their clothes on the road while others spread branches cut from the fields. Those in front of him and those following were shouting, “*Hosanna! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessings on the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest!*” Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple.”

We extinguish the first candle and remember that some people saw Jesus as a king.

Week 2: Money Bag Symbol

Matthew 21: 12-16

On the second day of Holy Week, Jesus visited the temple. While he was there he saw people exchanging money and selling things. He pushed over the tables and told them to leave. He said to them,

“Hasn’t it been written, *My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you’ve turned it into a hideout for crooks.*”

People who were blind and lame came to Jesus in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, “*Hosanna to the Son of David!*” they were angry.

We extinguish the second candle and remember that some people saw that Jesus brings justice.

Week 3: Heart Symbol

Matthew 22: 34-40

On the third day of Holy Week, Jesus was teaching in the temple, when an expert asked, "Of all the commandments, of all the ten best ways to live, which is the most important?"

Jesus answered, "The most important commandment is this: 'Our God is one. Love God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind and with all your strength.'" The second is this "Love your neighbor as yourself"

We extinguish the third candle and remember that some people saw Jesus as a teacher of love.

March 26, Week 4: Flask of Oil Symbol

Matthew 26:6-13

On the fourth day of Holy Week, just before Passover,

When Jesus was at Bethany visiting the house of Simon, who had a skin disease, a woman came to him with a vase made of alabaster containing very expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' head while he was sitting at dinner. Now when the disciples saw it they were angry and said, "Why this waste? This perfume could have been sold for a lot of money and given to the poor."

But Jesus knew what they were thinking. He said, "Why do you make trouble for the woman? She's done a good thing for me. You always have the poor with you, but you won't always have me. By pouring this perfume over my body she's prepared me to be buried. I tell you the truth that wherever in the whole world this good news is announced, what she's done will also be told in memory of her."

We extinguished the fourth candle and remember that some people saw that Jesus was holy/divine.

Week 5: Bread and Cup Symbol

Matthew 26:26-30

Every year Jesus celebrated the feast of Passover with his family and friends in Jerusalem.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body." He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from this, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many so that their sins may be forgiven.

Then, later, they went out to the garden to pray. While they were there, the people who didn't like Jesus had him arrested.

We extinguish the fifth candle and that the disciples saw Jesus share the Passover meal in a new way.

Week 6: Cross & Black Square Felt Symbols

Matthew 27

The next day, Jesus was put on trial, before Pilate, the governor. A great crowd was there. Pilate questioned Jesus. "I find no reason to kill this man," he said. But the crowd shouted until Pilate agreed. Jesus was hung on the cross outside of Jerusalem.

Place cross symbol on felt. Dim lights, if possible.

We extinguish the sixth candle and remember the crowd that shouted, not knowing who Jesus was.

When Jesus died the world was dark. The curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Those who were guarding Jesus said, "This was certainly God's son."

Many women were watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to serve him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

That evening a man named Joseph came. He was a rich man from Arimathea who had become a disciple of Jesus... Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen

cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had carved out of the rock. After he rolled a large stone at the door of the tomb, he went away.

*Place the black square on the felt. Extinguish the Christ candle. Pause for a moment. While it may be tempting to end here and save the surprise for Easter, **don't**. This is a hard story for children and they need to know that this is not the end. Though Easter is a great mystery, we see that God is more powerful than death. This is Good News for every Sunday, even during Lent.*

Jesus died. This is a dark, sad thing. **But, this is not the end of the story.** Next Sunday is Easter Sunday. We will remember the mystery that Jesus died, but somehow was alive with them, with the women waiting at the tomb, and even now, with us.

Relight the Christ candle saying:

The light shines in the darkness. The darkness does not extinguish the light.