

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



THE FIRST PALM SUNDAY

📖 Mark 11:1-11 Jesus enters Jerusalem as a king

🎯 Aim: To know the surprising way Jesus arrived in Jerusalem

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt, he surprised a lot of people. In today's session we will explore the surprising story of Palm Sunday. We'll think about the reaction of the people on that special day and look at the different ways the story is told in the Gospels.

Each child will need:

- Palm Sunday handout
- A large clean pebble
- Paints, acrylic paint and fine paint brushes or acrylic markers to decorate the pebbles
- An acrylic sealer, varnish or spray (optional)
- Pens/pencils
- Memory verse wristband

You will need:

- To enlarge the memory verse poster, for display
- 'Thank you, Lord' poster

Start It

💬 Say: In today's Bible story Jesus took everyone by surprise.

Ask:

- Do you like surprises? If so, why / why not?
- What makes something a surprise?

💬 Say: Choose a member of your family or one of your friends. Think about how you would surprise them. When you have thought carefully, how would you fill in the blanks in this sentence?

'I would choose to surprise by

Give each child the opportunity to share the name of the person they would choose to surprise and discuss how that person would react.

Sing It

💬 Say: The people reacted to Jesus' surprise by singing songs of praise. Now it's your turn to do the same.

'Hosanna rock' by Yancy & Little Praise Party (2 mins 19 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVwhdqDrfz8

Tell It

Say: So far, we have had a few clues about the surprising behaviour of Jesus. Now we are going to discover something else that Jesus did to surprise everyone. It is a surprise that we remember every year on Palm Sunday. Watch the clip to find out more.

Video

God's story: Palm Sunday by Crossroad's Kids' Club (2 mins 47 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITmbTuutBgg

Ask: Before he went into Jerusalem, Jesus asked his disciples to do something surprising. What was it?

Read:

'Jesus and his followers were coming closer to Jerusalem. They came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. There Jesus sent two of his followers. He said to them, "Go to the town you see there. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here to me. If anyone asks you why you are doing this, tell him, 'The Master needs the colt. He will send it back soon.'"

'The followers went into the town. They found a colt tied in the street near the door of a house, and they untied it. Some people were standing there and asked, "What are you doing? Why are you untying that colt?" The followers answered the way Jesus told them to answer. And the people let them take the colt.'

— (Mark 11:1-6 ICB)

Ask:

- How would you have reacted if Jesus had asked you to do this?
- How would you feel if someone came and took something of yours and said, 'The master needs it'?
- How did the people in the story react? In what way was it surprising?
- The clip asks the question: would you be willing to obey Jesus, even if he asked you to do something you didn't understand? What is your response?

Read:

'The followers brought the colt to Jesus. They put their coats on the colt, and Jesus sat on it. Many people spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches in the fields and spread the branches on the road. Some of the people were walking ahead of Jesus. Others were following him. All of them were shouting,

"Praise God!

God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!

God bless the kingdom of our father David!

That kingdom is coming!

Praise to God in heaven!"

'Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple. When he had looked at everything, and since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the 12 apostles.'

— (Mark 11:7-11 ICB)

Say: In Mark's Gospel the people shouted out words from Psalm 118, but the story is told slightly differently in each of the Gospels.

Give the children a copy of the Palm Sunday handout which shares the story from each of the four Gospels. Discuss the differences and similarities between the different versions. Children may wish to annotate the handouts.

Say: Just because the versions are different, it doesn't mean they aren't telling the truth about what happened that day. In fact, it would seem suspicious if they were all exactly the same!

Ask:

- Think of an event that your family or group of friends attended. How would their versions of the same event differ?

- The Gospel accounts of Palm Sunday focus on different parts of the story, but what do they all have in common?
- What was surprising about Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem?

If you want to quickly recap the main parts of the story, then replay the *God's Story: Palm Sunday* clip from 2 mins 17 secs mins to the end.

Action It

Ask:

- What surprising thing did Jesus say the rocks and stones would do?
- What do you think he meant?

Say: There was nothing that the enemies of Jesus could do to stop the praises and worship of the people. Jesus knew that all of God's creation was made to praise him.

Say: Today we are going to make our own praise rocks for you to take home. These will help remind you to praise God every day and give thanks for all the amazing things he does for you.

Pebble praise

Give each child a large pebble and either paint or acrylic markers to decorate the stones. The children can generate their own praise words to decorate their pebbles or use the ideas and Bible verses listed below.

Praise words: Hosanna, Glory, Hallelujah, praise, exalt, adore, worship, hope

Praise Bible verses: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; John 4:24; Hebrews 13:15; Isaiah 25:1; Psalm 42:11; Psalm 9:2

Pray It

Say: In our story today, the people shouted words of praise from Psalm 118. Our memory verse for this month is taken from the same psalm. The verses give us the words we need to praise God every day. Let's have a look at them together.

'You are my God, and I will thank you.

You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.

Thank the Lord because he is good.

His love continues for ever.'

— (Psalm 118:28-29 *ICB*)

Display a large copy of the memory verse in the room and read through the psalm together. Give each child a Bible verse wristband.

Ask: What is the psalmist thankful for?

Say: We're going to use our memory verse to help us say a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Think about what you are thankful for.

Display the following prayer and give each child an opportunity to say it and add their prayer of thanksgiving.

Thank you Lord for ...

Your love continues for ever.

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

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SESSION 01

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FOR ME

TOGETHER



Pray

We can often be so busy asking God to answer prayers that we forget to say thank you. Use our memory verse for this month to help you say a prayer of praise and thanksgiving every day this week.

**Thank you Lord for ...
Your love continues for ever.
Amen.**



Explore

Did you enjoy painting the rocks this week?

Watch the clip and see if someone at home will try one of these amazing rock painting ideas with you.

30 Best Rock Painting Ideas - Easy Stone Painting Ideas Very Beautiful Amazing Craft by Style of Life

www.youtube.com/watch?v=aG4ZxPcFxso



Song for the week

'Hosanna rock' by Yancy & Little Praise Party

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVwhdqDrfz8



Memory verse

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KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!



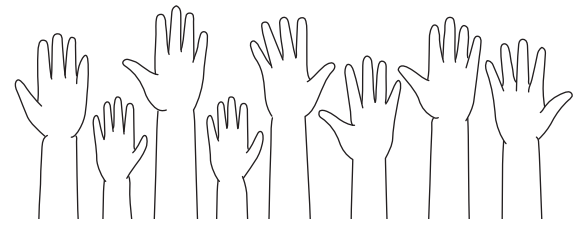
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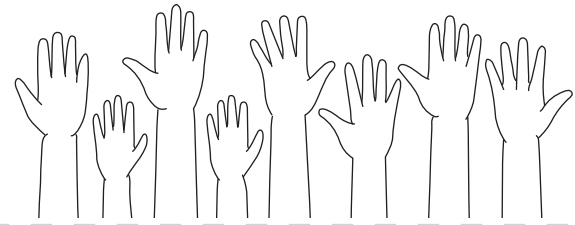
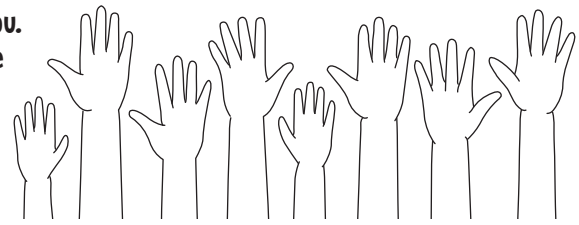
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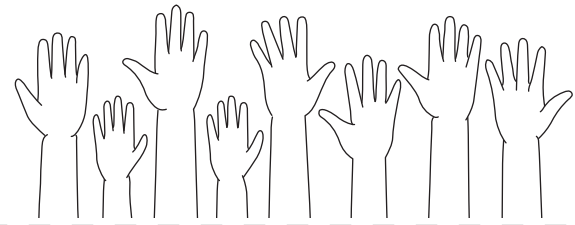
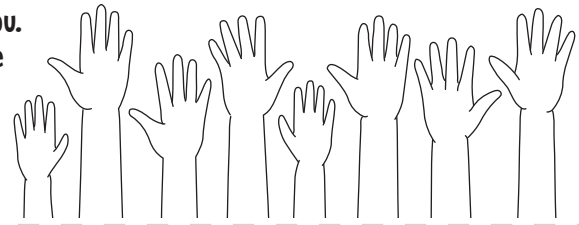
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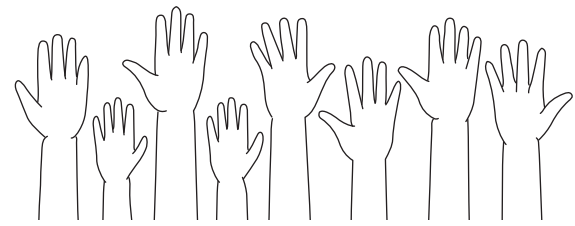
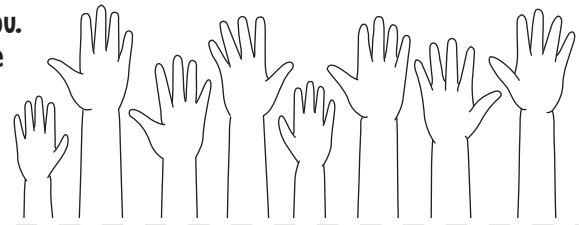
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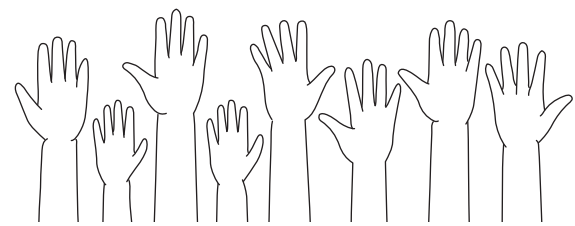
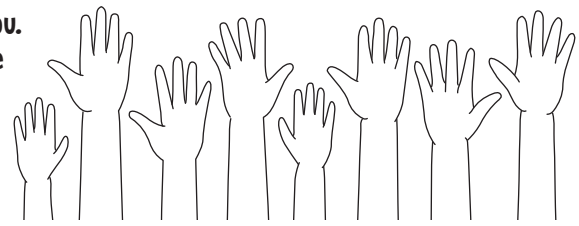
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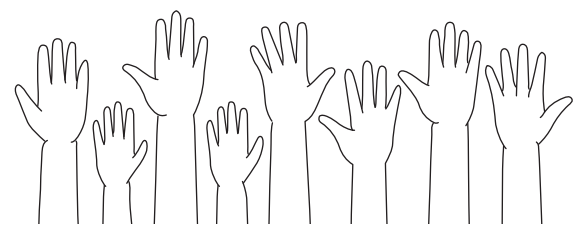
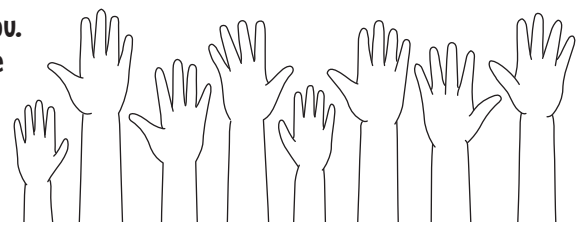
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Matthew's version

'Jesus and his followers were coming closer to Jerusalem. But first they stopped at Bethphage at the hill called the Mount of Olives. From there Jesus sent two of his followers into the town. He said to them, "Go to the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will find a donkey tied there with its colt. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone asks you why you are taking the donkeys, tell him, 'The Master needs them. He will send them back soon.'" This was to make clear the full meaning of what the prophet said:

"Tell the people of Jerusalem,
'Your king is coming to you.
He is gentle and riding on a donkey.
He is on the colt of a donkey.'"

'The followers went and did what Jesus told them to do. They brought the donkey and the colt to Jesus. They laid their coats on the donkeys, and Jesus sat on them. Many people spread their coats on the road before Jesus. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. Some of the people were walking ahead of Jesus. Others were walking behind him. All the people were shouting,

"Praise to the Son of David!
God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Praise to God in heaven!"

'Then Jesus went into Jerusalem. The city was filled with excitement. The people asked, "Who is this man?"

'The crowd answered, "This man is Jesus. He is the prophet from the town of Nazareth in Galilee."
(Matthew 21:1-11 ICB)

Mark's version

'Jesus and his followers were coming closer to Jerusalem. They came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. There Jesus sent two of his followers. He said to them, "Go to the town you see there. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here to me. If anyone asks you why you are doing this, tell him, 'The Master needs the colt. He will send it back soon.'"

'The followers went into the town. They found a colt tied in the street near the door of a house, and they untied it. Some people were standing there and asked, "What are you doing? Why are you untying that colt?" The followers answered the way Jesus told them to answer. And the people let them take the colt.

'The followers brought the colt to Jesus. They put their coats on the colt, and Jesus sat on it. Many people spread their coats on the road. Others cut branches in the fields and spread the branches on the road. Some of the people were walking ahead of Jesus. Others were following him. All of them were shouting,

"Praise God!

God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

God bless the kingdom of our father David!

That kingdom is coming!

Praise to God in heaven!"

'Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple. When he had looked at everything, and since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the 12 apostles.'

(Mark 11:1-11 ICB)

Luke's version

'After Jesus said this, he went on toward Jerusalem. Jesus came near Bethphage and Bethany, towns near the hill called the Mount of Olives. Then he sent out two of his followers. He said, "Go into the town you can see there. When you enter it, you will find a colt tied there. No one has ever ridden this colt. Untie it, and bring it here to me. If anyone asks you why you are taking it, say, 'The Master needs it.'"

'The two followers went into town. They found the colt just as Jesus told them. The followers untied it, but the owners of the colt came out. They asked the followers, "Why are you untying our colt?"

'The followers answered, "The Master needs it." So they brought it to Jesus. They threw their coats on the colt's back and put Jesus on it. As Jesus rode toward Jerusalem, the followers spread their coats on the road before him. Jesus was coming close to Jerusalem. He was already near the bottom of the Mount of Olives. The whole crowd of followers was very happy. They began shouting praise to God for all the powerful works they had seen. They said,

"God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord! There is peace in heaven and glory to God!"

'Some of the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Teacher, tell your followers not to say these things!"

'But Jesus answered, "I tell you, if my followers don't say these things, then the stones will cry out."

'Jesus came near Jerusalem. He saw the city and began to cry for it. Jesus said to Jerusalem, "I wish you knew today what would bring you peace! But you can't know it, because it is hidden from you. A time is coming when your enemies will build a wall around you and will hold you in on all sides. They will destroy you and all your people. Not one stone of your buildings will be left on another. All this will happen because you did not know the time when God came to save you."

(Luke 19: 28-44 ICB)



John's version

'The next day a great crowd in Jerusalem heard that Jesus was coming there. These were the people who had come to the Passover Feast. They took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Jesus. They shouted,

"Praise God!
God bless the One who comes in the name of the Lord!
God bless the King of Israel!"

'Jesus found a colt and sat on it. This was as the Scripture says,

"Don't be afraid, people of Jerusalem!
Your king is coming.
He is sitting on the colt of a donkey."

'The followers of Jesus did not understand this at first. But after Jesus was raised to glory, they remembered that this had been written about him. And they remembered that they had done these things to him.'

(John 12:12-16 *ICB*)



Thank you Lord for ...

Your love continues
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Explore It FOR LEADERS



THE FIRST EASTER

📖 John 19:38-42; Matthew 28:1-10 Jesus rises from death

🎯 AIM: To discover four important people in the Easter story

In today's session we take time to think about characters who don't normally get much of a mention when we consider the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We will think about the change in Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus and the way they served Jesus. We will also consider the important role women played in the story of Jesus as we discover more about Mary Magdalene and 'the other Mary'.

Each child will need:

- Pens/pencils and paper
- Bible Clues handout
- A Bible, a book, app or online version (or one per pair/group)
- Prayer questions (the sheet can be cut into strips)

Start It

💬 Say: Nowadays many people think of chocolate when they hear the word Easter, rather than thinking of the story of Jesus. Watch this clip showing the huge Easter eggs made at Bettys, a tearoom in Harrogate which is famous for its cakes.

Video

How we make our giant imperial Easter eggs by Bettys1919 (1 min 20 secs)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3_FIGH1hv8Y

💬 Say: Imagine you are an Easter egg designer at Bettys and you have been asked to design a chocolate egg that shows people the true story of Easter. Have a go at creating your Easter egg design and share it with the rest of the group.

Sing It

💬 Say: This song was introduced in our *Explore It* sessions last month and reminds us of the amazing story of Jesus.

'Jesus song' by Saddleback Kids (2 mins 45 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn84AYtFUSM

💬 Say: Continuing our time of praise, let's share our memory verse together.

Memory verse

**'You are my God, and I will thank you.
You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.
Thank the Lord because he is good.
His love continues for ever.'**

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

Tell It

Say: In the last session we joined Jesus as he rode on a donkey into Jerusalem. Jesus continued to teach the people, but the religious leaders did not like what he was saying and doing. They plotted to kill Jesus. Let's watch the clip to find out what happened.

Video

Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (Easter 2020) by The Gospel Project for Kids (3 mins 25 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=X69BRjpALSE

Say: In this retelling of the Easter story there are a few characters who don't even get a mention; but in the Bible, we find them playing an important part in the story of Jesus.

Read:

'Later, a man named Joseph from Arimathea asked Pilate if he could take the body of Jesus. (Joseph was a secret follower of Jesus, because he was afraid of the Jews.) Pilate gave his permission. So Joseph came and took Jesus' body away. Nicodemus went with Joseph. Nicodemus was the man who earlier had come to Jesus at night. He brought about 75 pounds of spices. This was a mixture of myrrh and aloes. These two men took Jesus' body and wrapped it with the spices in pieces of linen cloth. (This is how the Jews bury people.) In the place where Jesus was killed, there was a garden. In the garden was a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. The men laid Jesus in that tomb because it was near, and the Jews were preparing to start their Sabbath day.'

— (John 19:38-42 ICB)

Ask: Which two characters do you spot in the story that you haven't met before?

Say: Later in the session you are going to have the chance to find out more about them, but for now, let's meet the two Marys.

Read:

'The day after the Sabbath day was the first day of the week. At dawn on the first day, Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary went to look at the tomb.

'At that time there was a strong earthquake. An angel of the Lord came down from heaven. The angel went to the tomb and rolled the stone away from the entrance. Then he sat on the stone. He was shining as bright as lightning. His clothes were white as snow. The soldiers guarding the tomb were very frightened of the angel. They shook with fear and then became like dead men.

'The angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus, the one who was killed on the cross. But he is not here. He has risen from death as he said he would. Come and see the place where his body was. And go quickly and tell his followers. Say to them: 'Jesus has risen from death. He is going into Galilee. He will be there before you. You will see him there.'" Then the angel said, "Now I have told you."

'The women left the tomb quickly. They were afraid, but they were also very happy. They ran to tell Jesus' followers what had happened. Suddenly, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings." The women came up to Jesus, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Don't be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go on to Galilee. They will see me there."

— (Matthew 28:1-10 ICB)

Ask:

→ What surprising things happened in this story?

→ Which two Marys did you meet?

Say: Along with the angels, fainting soldiers and supernatural events, another surprising thing happened. It was not usual for women to be included in any official records. In New Testament times they weren't even permitted to give evidence in court. It was a huge surprise that Matthew shared that the women were the first to see Jesus risen from the dead.

Ask: What do Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary all have in common?

Say: All four characters loved Jesus and cared for him in his darkest moments. They played an important part in the story of Jesus.

Action It

Bible detectives

Say: You are going to be Bible detectives and look for clues about these characters, to learn more about them.

Give each child a copy of the Bible Clues handout. The main aim of this activity is for the children to spend time exploring an unfamiliar character from the Easter story. Question prompts and Bible references are provided for each character. They can work individually, in groups, or work with a leader to focus on one character and feed back to the rest of the group.

As there will not be enough time in the session to explore all four characters in depth, ask the children to take their handouts home as the *Explore It For Me* activity encourages the children to continue their search for clues.

Ask: What surprising discoveries have you made about these lesser-known characters?

Say: Whether our role is big or small, we all have an important part to play in the story of Jesus.

Pray It

As part of the Easter sessions there is an opportunity for the children to reflect on what Jesus' death and resurrection means to them. Give each child the prayer questions, a strip of paper with these two questions on it:

- In what way does Jesus coming back to life make a difference to how you see your own life?
- How could you be an important character in the story of Jesus?

Give the children time to respond to the questions. You can use the song link below as background music during this activity.

Video

'Thank you Jesus for the blood' (Live) by Charity Gayle (5 mins 26 secs)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhU-Omwg2rU

Discuss the children's responses and then pray with the group.

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Explore

As part of this week's session, you started to explore characters from the Easter story that don't normally get much of a mention. Using the Bible Clues handout from the session, choose another character to explore in more depth.



Make

See if someone at home will help you to make your own chocolate Easter egg. Have a look at the clip to help you create an Easter egg masterpiece.

How to make homemade chocolate Easter eggs DIY Recipe! by Blue Peter

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBjtU9RHwEA



Song for the week

'Jesus Song' by Saddleback Kids

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn84AYtFUSM



Memory verse

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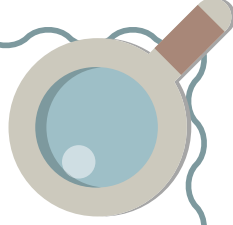
Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!



Joseph of Arimathea

(John 19:38-42)

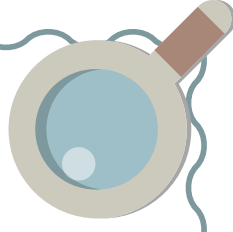
- How does Luke describe Joseph of Arimathea? (Luke 23:50-51)
- What do we find out about Joseph in Mark 15:43?
- Did Joseph of Arimathea find it easy to follow Jesus? Have a look at John 19:38 to find out.
- What three words would you use to sum up the character of Joseph of Arimathea?
- What important part did Joseph of Arimathea play in the story of Jesus?



Nicodemus

(John 19:38-42)

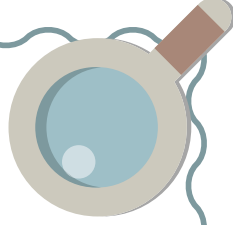
- What happened when Nicodemus first met Jesus? (John 3:1-21)
- How did Nicodemus react when the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus? (John 7:43-53)
- When they first met, Nicodemus talked with Jesus in secret. How had his belief in Jesus changed by John 19:38-42?
- What three words would you use to sum up the character of Nicodemus?
- What important part did Nicodemus play in the story of Jesus?



Mary Magdalene

(Matthew 28:1-10)

- What do we find out about Mary Magdalene in Luke 8:1-3?
- What was Mary Magdalene doing at the time that Jesus was crucified? (Mark 15: 40-41)
- How do you think Mary Magdalene felt when she discovered that Jesus was alive? (Matthew 28:8)
- What three words would you use to sum up the character of Mary Magdalene?
- What important part did Mary Magdalene play in the story of Jesus?

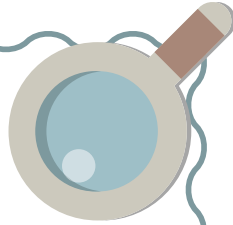


The Other Mary

(Matthew 28:1-10)

Mary was a very common name in New Testament times. There are many different Marys mentioned in the resurrection story.

- How would you feel if you were described as the 'other Mary' in the story?
- Most Bible teachers believe that the 'other Mary' was the mother of James and John.
- Do you think it matters whether we know exactly who she is? If not, why not?
 - Do you think Mary would mind that we are not sure who she is? If not, why not?
 - What important part did 'the other Mary' play in the story of Jesus?



In what way does Jesus coming back to life make a difference to how you see your own life?



How could you be an important character in the story of Jesus?

In what way does Jesus coming back to life make a difference to how you see your own life?



How could you be an important character in the story of Jesus?

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How could you be an important character in the story of Jesus?

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How could you be an important character in the story of Jesus?

Explore It

FOR LEADERS



JESUS AND 'DOUBTING THOMAS'

 **John 20:19-29 Jesus appears to his followers and to Thomas**

 **AIM: To be honest about our doubts**

In our story today we find the disciples alone, afraid and unsure about the future. Jesus appeared to them bringing words of peace, but Thomas missed the moment. He struggled to believe Jesus had risen from the dead. Today we explore what it means to doubt and how we can claim God's peace when things feel uncertain.

Each child will need:


→ Memory verse colouring-in poster and pens/pencils

You will need:

→ A container

→ Questions handout

Start It

 **Say:** In the TV programme *Would I Lie to You?* contestants have to convince the opposite team that they are telling the truth. They must answer questions about their story and the opposing team then talks through what they believe and discuss doubts they have about what they have heard. For our starter today we're going to listen to one of the stories and decide whether it is the truth or a lie.

Watch the first part of the story and discuss whether they think it is the truth or a lie. Encourage the children to think about the parts of the story that make them doubt that it is true. Ask each child to share whether they think it is true or false and then decide on a group answer together. You can choose whether you want to show the part where the opposing team discusses their answer or skip to the part where they share their decision.

Watch the end of the clip to discover if Greg was telling the truth. Discuss the outcome and remind the children not to play 'snorkel parka, music practice room' at school!

0:00-3:14: Listen to Greg's Story

3:15-3:53: The team discuss their answer (optional)

3:54-4:28: Greg's answer is revealed

The clip has been reviewed to check it is appropriate for the age group, but please be aware of any pop-ups or ads that may appear if shown directly from YouTube. It may be advisable to download the clip in advance.

Video

Would I lie to you: David Mitchell and Richard Osman take part in Greg Davies' made up game! by *Would I Lie to You?* (4 mins 28 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Akee4fJgAMA

Sing It

Say: In our story today the disciples are afraid. Having watched Jesus die on the cross, he then appeared to them, bringing words of peace. Our song for today reminds us that each one of us can feel the peace of Jesus.

'Peace Like a River' kids worship motions with lyrics by CJ and Friends (1 min 40 secs)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6085sLXCMs

Tell It

Say: A couple of weeks ago we joined Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem as the crowd shouted words of praise. Last week we heard how the shouts of praise turned to cries of 'Crucify him!'. We watched as Jesus died on the cross and was buried in the tomb. Today we find out what happened next in the Gospel of John.

Say: At this point in the story the disciples were all gathered together in one room, and they were afraid.

Ask:

- What do you think they were scared of?
- How would you have felt if you were a disciple at that time?

Say: Let's find out what happened next in the Gospel of John.

Read:

Jesus appears to his followers

'It was the first day of the week. That evening Jesus' followers were together. The doors were locked, because they were afraid of the Jews. Then Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. His followers were very happy when they saw the Lord.

'Then Jesus said again, "Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, I now send you." After he said this, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you don't forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus appears to Thomas

'Thomas (called Didymus) was not with the followers when Jesus came. Thomas was one of the twelve. The other followers told Thomas, "We saw the Lord."

'But Thomas said, "I will not believe it until I see the nail marks in his hands. And I will not believe until I put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side."

'A week later the followers were in the house again. Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came in and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand here in my side. Stop doubting and believe."

'Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

'Then Jesus told him, "You believe because you see me. Those who believe without seeing me will be truly happy."

— (John 20:19-29 ICB)

Cut out the questions from the Questions handout, fold them up and place them in a container. Ask a child to remove a question and read it out for the rest of the group. Discuss the answer together and then move on to a different child to select another question.

Say: Jesus said to **all** the disciples, including Thomas, 'Peace be with you!' Rather than being angry with Thomas, Jesus wanted to reassure him and strengthen his faith. It's OK for us to have doubts, but Jesus is the only one who can bring us peace when they surface.

Action It

Say: We can all understand why Thomas found it difficult to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead and why he struggled with doubts. Having said that, we also need to remember all the time Thomas had spent with Jesus. He had seen Jesus heal the sick, teach the people, and perform miracles.

Say: Sometimes when we are afraid or filled with doubt, we forget all the amazing things God has done in our lives. We forget all the reminders around us of his goodness. Today we are going to use our memory verse to remind us who God is and to help us when we doubt that he is with us.

Memory verse poster

Give each child a memory verse colouring-in poster. The children can colour in and decorate the decorative memory verse, then decorate the rest of the sheet with reminders of God's goodness. Perhaps they could draw pictures that represent times God has answered their prayers or recreate scenes in nature that remind them that God is with us. When they have completed their pictures, they can share them with the rest of the group and then practise the memory verse together.

Memory verse

**'You are my God, and I will thank you.
You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.
Thank the Lord because he is good.
His love continues for ever.'**

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

Pray It

Say: In today's story the disciples were filled with fear and doubt, but Jesus brought a surprising message. After watching Jesus taken away and killed on the cross, they must have been afraid the same might happen to them, but Jesus said, 'Peace be with you!' The surprising thing was that nothing had changed in their situation. Following Jesus was still a risky business, but they knew Jesus was with them and they felt his peace.

Say: We are now going to have a time of peace and quiet where you can bring your doubts and fears to Jesus. Find a quiet place to rest or lie down and spend time with Jesus as you listen to the music.

Video

'It is well with my soul' by Audrey Assad (4 mins 10 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zY5o9mP22V0

Although a YouTube clip is provided for this activity, the children do not need to see the screen as the focus is on listening to the music. When the song finishes, close the session in prayer.

On a separate note, just for leaders, the singer Audrey Assad is currently on her own journey of doubt and, despite her successful recording career, is unsure whether she would even describe herself as a Christian any more. Although this may not be a discussion point for your group, we wanted to share the reason behind choosing this particular song and singer.

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

APRIL
SESSION 03

JESUS AND 'DOUBTING THOMAS'

 John 20:19-29 Jesus appears to his followers and to Thomas

© AIM: To be honest about our doubts

FOR ME

TOGETHER



Explore

When we feel afraid or are doubting Jesus is with us, we can be reassured by his words of peace. Dive into your Bible and see if you can find five Scripture verses that talk about God's peace.



Play

In this week's session we watched a clip from the TV show *Would I Lie to You?* Ask the people at home to write down a statement and play the game together to find out if it is 'true' or 'false'.



Song for the week

'Peace like a River' kids worship motions with lyrics by CJ and Friends

www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6085sLXCMs



Memory verse

**'You are my God, and I will thank you.
You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.
Thank the Lord because he is good.
His love continues for ever.'**

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

KIDS ALIVE! ONLINE

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/kidsalive>

Kids Alive! The UK's only weekly Christian comic – is filled with jokes, competitions, Bible-based cartoons and much more... and is now available to read online!



The disciples were afraid until they saw Jesus. How does having Jesus in your life help you when you feel afraid?

Do you sometimes feel like God isn't there? If so, what kinds of things remind you that he is?

How important is forgiveness to Jesus? Do you find it easy to forgive others? Explain your answer.

Thomas found it difficult to believe what his friends were saying about Jesus. What parts of believing in Jesus do you struggle to believe or understand?

Do you understand why Thomas found it difficult to believe that Jesus was alive? How would you have felt if you had heard the news?

Thomas is often known as 'Doubting Thomas'. How would you feel if you had a negative nickname based on one moment where you were struggling and made the wrong choice? In what ways do you think the nickname is fair or unfair?

At the end of the story Jesus said to Thomas, 'You believe because you see me. Those who believe me without seeing me will be truly happy.' What do you think Jesus meant?

Do you think Jesus was angry with Thomas? Is there anything in our story today that tells us how Jesus wanted Thomas to feel about his doubts?

Explore It

APRIL 2023 – SESSION 3 QUESTIONS



Youth and
Children's
Ministries

*'You are my God,
and I will thank you.*

*You are my God,
and I will praise your
greatness.*

*Thank the Lord
because he is good.*

His love continues forever.'

Psalm 118:28-29



Youth and
Children's
Ministries

Explore It

April 2023 session 3

Explore It FOR LEADERS



THE STRANGER ON THE BEACH

John 21:1-14 Jesus appears to seven followers

AIM: To learn about Jesus' surprise on the beach

In today's story the disciples returned to what they knew best. They gathered together and went fishing! As morning came, they had nothing to show for all their hard work – and then someone on the beach took them by surprise. In this session we'll find out who that was, and find interesting ways to retell the story.

Each child will need:

- An A5 piece of paper and pens/pencils
- John 21 handout
- Spare paper (optional) – see Tell It section
- Resources to create thanksgiving fish (dependent on which activity you choose) – see Pray It section

You will need:

- Pens and a flip chart or large sheet of paper

Start It

Say: In today's story the disciples share a delicious breakfast with Jesus on the beach. Have a think about your dream breakfast. Don't say the answers out loud but think about these questions.

- What would you have to eat?
- Where would the breakfast take place?
- Who would you invite to share breakfast with you?

Give each child a piece of A5 paper and ask them to draw or write down their dream breakfast. They may need to move away from the other members of the group so that they can't see each other's ideas. When they have finished recording their ideas, collect them in and then read them out one by one. See if the group can guess which dream breakfast belongs to which child.

Sing It

Say: As we move on to the next part of our story, we find the disciples gathered ready to go fishing. By now, they had seen Jesus alive and were still getting used to this amazing news. Our song for today reminds us that, just like the disciples, we can be excited that Jesus is alive.

'Jesus is Alive' by Kids Ablaze Inc (2 mins 21 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzxN0D3voo0

Tell It

Say: Last month we read the story of Jesus when he called the disciples to be fishers of men. As we find them gathered on the beach in today's story, so much had changed. They had followed Jesus, listened to his teaching, and witnessed him dying on a cross. They had been surprised by his appearance in the upper room and were still trying to understand what was going on. We find them today back where they started, at the beach, trying to catch some fish.

Video

Breakfast on the beach – A Resurrection Story of Jesus by Bible Blocks (3 mins 8 mins)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=18KsIGbKqsl

Give each child a copy of John 21:1-14 (ICB). Jot down the key events of the story on a flip chart and discuss the following questions.

Discuss:

- How do you think the disciples felt when they didn't catch any fish?
- The disciples had seen Jesus and heard his voice many times but did not recognise him. In what way does this surprise you?
- What happened that helped the disciples to recognise Jesus?

Say: We watched a clip where the story of the breakfast on the beach was told through animated wooden characters. There are lots of different ways to tell stories.

Ask the children to think of the many different ways they could retell the story of the breakfast on the beach. Can they think of any surprising ways to tell the story? The children can work on their own or in small groups to plan or create an alternative way to tell the story. Provide paper in case they wish to write down ideas. Link this activity with the *Explore It For Me* task, where the children can try out their story-telling ideas at home.

Action It

Say: As the disciples gathered with Jesus on the beach their hearts were full of love for Jesus.

Ask: What do you think they were thankful for?

Say: Our memory verse for this month reminds us of the importance of saying words of thanksgiving and praise to God. Let's share it together.

Memory verse

**'You are my God, and I will thank you.
You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.
Thank the Lord because he is good.
His love continues for ever.'**

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

Say: Today we are going to create a net full of thanksgiving fish to remind us of the breakfast on the beach and the way Jesus showed love to the disciples.

Thanksgiving fish

Create a display of thanksgiving fish to fill a net. There are a number of ways this can be created depending on the resources you have. Here are two ideas to get you started:

- Create a wall display using netting and showing the beach and the water. Ask the children to cut fish out of coloured card and write something they are thankful for on each fish.
- Do this individually by giving each child a net bag and ask them to cut out mini-fish to write on. They could write words of thanksgiving on each fish or take some blank fish home to use throughout the week.

Pray It

Using the ideas from the Action It activity, lead a time of praise and thanksgiving with the children. Encourage each child to share something they are thankful for, and then join together to sing 'Grateful' by Elevation Worship.

Video

'Grateful' official lyric video by Elevation Worship (4 mins 6 secs)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7eVr-OUYkQ

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

APRIL
SESSION 04

THE STRANGER ON THE BEACH

 John 21:1-14 Jesus appears to seven followers

© AIM: To learn about Jesus' surprise on the beach

FOR ME



Create

In today's session you thought of lots of creative ways to retell the story of Jesus at the beach with his disciples (John 21:1-14). Try out one of the ideas and create your own retelling of the story.

TOGETHER



Give

Is there anyone at home who deserves their dream breakfast? Find out what it is and then surprise them one morning. You may need to ask someone else at home to help out.



Song for the week

'Jesus is alive' by Kids Ablaze Inc

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzxNOD3voo0



Memory verse

'You are my God, and I will thank you.

You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.

Thank the Lord because he is good.

His love continues for ever.'

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

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Jesus appears to seven followers

'Later, Jesus showed himself to his followers by Lake Galilee. This is how it happened: Some of the followers were together. They were Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the two sons of Zebedee, and two other followers. Simon Peter said, "I am going out to fish."

'The other followers said, "We will go with you." So they went out and got into the boat. They fished that night but caught nothing.

'Early the next morning Jesus stood on the shore. But the followers did not know that it was Jesus. Then he said to them, "Friends, have you caught any fish?"

'They answered, "No."

'He said, "Throw your net into the water on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they did this. They caught so many fish that they could not pull the net back into the boat.

'The follower whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Peter heard him say this, he wrapped his coat around himself. (Peter had taken his clothes off.) Then he jumped into the water. The other followers went to shore in the boat, dragging the net full of fish. They were not very far from shore, only about 100 yards. When the followers stepped out of the boat and onto the shore, they saw a fire of hot coals. There were fish on the fire, and there was bread.

'Then Jesus said, "Bring some of the fish that you caught."

'Simon Peter went into the boat and pulled the net to the shore. It was full of big fish. There were 153. Even though there were so many, the net did not tear. Jesus said to them, "Come and eat." None of the followers dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them. He also gave them the fish.

'This was now the third time Jesus showed himself to his followers after he was raised from death.'

(John 21:1-14 ICB)

Explore It FOR LEADERS



THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

📖 **Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:9-11** Jesus talks to his followers

🎯 **AIM: To enter into surprising stories more deeply through drama**

In our final session this month, Jesus gathered with his disciples for the last time before he was taken up to Heaven. He gave important instructions to his followers and made a promise that filled his disciples with hope for the future. Today the children have an opportunity to bring Scripture to life through drama.

Each child will need:

- Ascension Bible verses handout
- Prayer handout

Start It

💬 **Say:** In today's session Jesus leads the disciples to a mountain. To help you imagine the scene, have a go at this Mountain quiz together.

Quiz

Summer of adventure: mountain quiz by Beano.com
www.beano.com/posts/summer-of-adventure-mountain-quiz

Ask: What one fascinating fact did you discover about mountains that you didn't know before?

Sing It

💬 **Say:** In today's story the disciples spent time worshipping Jesus. We are going to do the same by sharing our memory verse together.

Memory verse

**'You are my God, and I will thank you.
You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.
Thank the Lord because he is good.
His love continues for ever.**

— (Psalm 118:28-29 *ICB*)

💬 **Say:** Now that we have been reminded of the importance of praising God and giving thanks, let's join together and sing a song of worship.

'Lord I Lift your Name on High' by Hometown Nazareth (2 mins 13 secs)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9VERJSESCo

Tell It

💬 **Say:** We are going to watch a clip that recaps the story of Jesus so far and tells us what happens next.

Video

Jesus' ascension – God's masterpiece, God is with us by Saddleback Kids (2 mins 58 secs)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcFw8pLBSIo

Say: We are going to look at some parts of this story in a bit more detail. To do this we will need to turn to Scripture.

Give each child a copy of the Ascension Bible verses handout.

Read:

'The 11 followers went to Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshipped him. But some of them did not believe that it was really Jesus. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world.'"

– (Matthew 28:16-20 ICB)

Discuss:

- What was the first thing that the disciples did when they saw Jesus?
- Why do you think some of the disciples still struggled to believe that Jesus was alive?
- How do you think you would have felt if you had been there?
- What did Jesus ask his disciples to do?
- What promise did he make to them?

Say: To find out the next part of the story, we're going to jump to Acts 1:9-11.

Read:

'After he said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up. A cloud hid him from their sight. As he was going, they were looking into the sky. Suddenly, two men wearing white clothes stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky? You saw Jesus taken away from you into heaven. He will come back in the same way you saw him go.'"

– (Acts 1:9-11 ICB)

Ask:

- What do you find surprising about this story?
- Who do you think the two men wearing white were?

Say: Show me what your face would have looked like if you had been there (give the children time to react). This is a pretty amazing story and would have been a dramatic scene to witness. Jesus returned to Heaven but promised the disciples that he would always be with them. That same promise applies to us today.

Action It

Explain to the group that this weekend children from around the United Kingdom and Ireland gather to take part in The Salvation Army's Musical Theatre Day. For the Action It activity, the children have the opportunity to create a short piece of drama retelling today's story.

If there are children who are reluctant to join in with the acting, then they can plan their own version to be shown on the big screen. They can think about where they would set this scene and who they would cast as their main characters. If there is time, then they could create a script as well.

Give the children time to complete the activity and then share your creations together.

Pray It

Say: In our story Jesus gathered the disciples together, gave them special tasks to perform, and made a promise he would always keep. Let's remind ourselves what Jesus said in Matthew 28.

Read:

'Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world.'"

— (Matthew 28:18-20 *ICB*)

Say: Unlike many others in the Church, The Salvation Army does not hold special services where we baptise using water. Instead, it is good to know that Jesus still comes to us through his Holy Spirit and baptises us in this way too. It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can make followers of Jesus and teach the world all about him.

Say: To bring this session to a close we are going to read this prayer together.

Give each child a copy of the prayer and read it together. Encourage the children to take the prayer home as it links to the *Explore It For Me* activity.

Read:

Dear Jesus,

We have learned so much from you in our *Explore It* sessions this month. Thank you for dying on the cross to save us. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, help us to do what you have asked us to do and tell the world about your story. Thank you for your promise that you will always be with us.

Amen.

Explore It

Remember to send home the *Explore It Ideas* for children and families.

Explore It

IDEAS

Here are some ideas for you to explore at home.

APRIL
SESSION 05

THE ASCENSION INTO HEAVEN

 **Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:9-11** Jesus talks to his followers

 **AIM: To enter into surprising stories more deeply through drama**

FOR ME

TOGETHER



Pray

In this week's session you were given a prayer that we shared together. Take time to read through this prayer every day over the following week. Ask God to give you the courage to tell others about Jesus. Remember that Jesus has promised that he will always be with you.



Create

Ask someone at home to help you follow the instructions to make a paper mountain. Maybe they could have a go at making one themselves. Your mountain will remind you that no matter what you face, Jesus has promised he will always be with you.

Origami mountain by Origami Picture Book
www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVf8KC-V7D4



Song for the week

'Lord I Lift your Name on High' by
Hometown Nazareth

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9VERJSECo



Memory verse

'You are my God, and I will thank you.

You are my God, and I will praise your greatness.

Thank the Lord because he is good.

His love continues for ever.'

— (Psalm 118:28-29 ICB)

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'The 11 followers went to Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. On the mountain they saw Jesus and worshiped him. But some of them did not believe that it was really Jesus. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptise them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world."'
(Matthew 28:16-20 ICB)

'After he said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up. A cloud hid him from their sight. As he was going, they were looking into the sky. Suddenly, two men wearing white clothes stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky? You saw Jesus taken away from you into heaven. He will come back in the same way you saw him go."'
(Acts 1:9-11 ICB)

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Amen.

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Amen.