

Family Service

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[0 : 0 0] Okay, guys, what happens in one week's time? Let me ask that question in a different way. Have you got school tomorrow? Who's got school tomorrow? Yes. And then how many days of school do you have before you have holidays? Four. That's lucky. I thought it was five. So it's just four. You've got it. Is that right? Four? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

And then it's holiday time. Easter holidays. That was my next question. Oh, really? You jumped in without me asking the question, but very good. Yes, Easter holidays. Easter eggs for the bunny. You're buying Easter eggs for the bunny. That was the next thing I had on my bit of paper. I don't know why. I don't need a bit of paper. You could just do it for me. I was going to ask, what's Easter about? And I was going to say, Easter eggs and bunnies.

Anyways, I'll tell you something that happened to me yesterday, okay? I was in Asda, and I saw something amazing. Three Easter eggs for two pounds. Now, that is a good deal. Three Easter eggs for two pounds. That is a crazy deal. But Easter isn't really about Easter eggs and bunnies, is it? It's about what Jesus did for us. Ah, you see, some people knew the answer, but I'm going to give you the answer. Yeah, it's about what Jesus is. It's about Jesus coming into the world, about Jesus dying on the cross, and about Jesus being risen again from the dead on the third day. And so I guess the two big days over what we call the Easter weekend would be Good Friday. What happened on Good Friday? Yeah, what happened on Good Friday? He died. Very good. And then on Easter Sunday, what happened on Easter Sunday? Just shout it out. He rose again. That's right. Sometimes we call it Resurrection Sunday. But if I called it Resurrection Sunday, the question would have been even easier than it was. That's right. That's what happened on the Sunday. But that's a week away. So what about this weekend?

I wonder what this weekend has got to do with the Easter story. Well, this weekend, or today especially, is what we call Palm Sunday. And we read in the Bible, in Matthew's Gospel, about some of the things that happened on Palm Sunday, how Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey, and the crowds were there, and they were very excited, and they were singing, Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. And I want to talk to you about a part of the story of Palm Sunday that comes just a little bit later, a little bit after, when Jesus came in riding on the donkey. And we're going to hear about what some children did on that day. So children like you, and some of the things they were doing on that Palm Sunday. And we're going to learn one or two things from them. And I'm going to read two or three verses that follow from where we left the reading. So we read in Matthew chapter 21. We read to verse 11. And now we're going to read two or three more verses. And you listen out carefully to hear what it says about children in the verses we're going to be reading. So Matthew chapter 21 and verse 12. And we read, Jesus entered the temple area. So he'd come into Jerusalem. He'd been going through the streets of Jerusalem. He got to the middle of

Jerusalem where the temple was. And we're told he entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. It is written, he said to them, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers. The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them. But when the chief priests and teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, Hosanna to the son of David, they were indignant. Do you hear what these children are saying?

[4 : 2 1] They asked him. Yes, replied Jesus. Have you never read? From the lips of children and infants, you have ordained praise. So there we've read. The Bible tells us that in the temple, the children were shouting, they were singing, they were praising God. And I want to think about three things that the children did that day. And we'll see if you can remember the three things.

Right at the end, I'll ask you if you remember the three things that we're going to talk about that the children were doing there in the temple. The first thing, I'll tell you what the three are, and then we'll go through them one by one. The first thing that we can say is that they were praising God. Okay, that's the first one. They all start with the letter P to make it easy to remember.

Okay, so the first thing is they were praising God, and then we're going to see that they were pleasing Jesus. Okay, so praising and pleasing. And then there's a final thing that I'm going to say that the children were doing that day, that Palm Sunday, and that is they were preparing Jesus for what he was going to do. So three Ps, okay? Let's see if you can remember them. Even before I've explained what they were, praising, pleasing, and preparing. Good job. Right, so let's think about each of these, okay? So the first one is they were praising God. Well, actually, the Bible tells us that they were shouting. Imagine that. They were shouting in the temple. Is that a good idea to be shouting in church? What do you think? Oh, no, no. So he doesn't think it's a good idea to be shouting in church. I suppose it depends what kind of shouting. So if you guys were shouting at each other right now, I wouldn't be very happy. That would not be a good idea. Or if you were shouting at your mom or dad, not a good idea. Or if you were shouting at me, definitely not a good idea.

So I suppose it depends what kind of shouting. But these children weren't shouting at each other. They weren't cross. They weren't angry. They weren't fighting. They were really just singing very loudly and crying out these words, Hosanna to the Son of David. So this shouting that they were doing was really praising God. That's what they were doing. They were praising God. And it's good to shout that way. It's good to shout not only in church, but outside of church about everything that God has done for us. We sometimes sing. We often sing from the book of Psalms. And in the Psalms, God tells us that we should shout loud to God with joy. So it's not just that they were doing it and we're saying, oh, well, I suppose it's okay because they're children. No, God says to everybody, shout loud with joy to God. So that's something that we're commanded to do. So that's what the children were doing. They were shouting. And I'm saying that that shouting was a way of praising God.

But I wonder, can we be sure about that? Maybe they were just kids and they were just having a good time. They were messing about. It was really exciting. And everybody else was singing and shouting. So they were just joining in and didn't really know what they were doing. Maybe some people might think that.

[7 : 39] But we know that they were praising God because the Bible tells us. Because in that reading, when some of the grownups who weren't happy with all the noise, they weren't happy with all the shouting and all the fuss, they went to Jesus and they said, well, what do you make of all this?

You know, you're the one they're shouting about. What do you think about all this nonsense, all this shouting and all this noise? And you know what Jesus said to them? He said to them, have you not read? And then he read something from the Bible. Have you not read from the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise? And so what Jesus is saying is, you guys think they're just shouting. You think they're just messing around. You think they're just making a big noise. But I'm telling you that these children are praising God. And so I'm not going to stop them. I think it's great what they are doing. Jesus calls the shouting praise. The children were praising God. But why were they praising? Well, I imagine some of the reason or one of the reasons why they were praising God is that they were copying the adults who were praising God. And they were hearing what the adults were saying. And they said, oh, well, we'll say that as well. I'm sure that was part of it.

They were hearing and they were copying what they were hearing. But it's also because of the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. We read that in the verses that we read there in chapter 21 of Matthew.

[9 : 16] It says that the blind and the lame came to Jesus at the temple and He healed them. And then we read, but when the chief priests and teachers of the law saw the wonderful things He did, healing the blind and the lame, and the children were seeing this as well. They were seeing the wonderful things that Jesus was doing. And as they saw these wonderful things, so they shouted out in praise to God. And that's what we can do when we think of all the wonderful things that Jesus has done for us. How He died for us, how He forgives our sins, how He hears us when we pray, how He's with us every day in good times and in difficult times. He's there for us.

And for all these wonderful things, we also can shout with praise to God. Now, what were the children actually saying in their praise to God? Well, they were using words from the Bible. And they were using words that we find, or some of the words we find, in Psalm 118. And we started the service by singing verses from that Psalm.

Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Now, that word, Hosanna is a special word that is used to praise somebody, to honor somebody very special. And they would use that word, Hosanna, directed to somebody very special. And the children knew that Jesus was very special. And so, they said Hosanna to Him. But then also, they said that Jesus was the Son of David.

Now, I wonder what that's about. Well, God had promised in the Old Testament that He would send a Messiah or a Savior who was a son of or a descendant of King David. King David was a very important king in Israel. And God said that one of His descendants, one of His great-great-grandchildren, would be an even more special king, a Messiah. And this was Jesus. And so, when they shouted out, Hosanna to the Son of David, they were saying, this is the one who God has promised. And then they said, He's the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Jesus was sent by His Father to do God's work.

And we'll come back to that in a wee moment. Now, I wonder if the children understood everything that what they were saying meant. Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord. I reckon they maybe didn't understand everything that these words meant. But that doesn't mean that it wasn't true praise. That's true for us, even when we come to church. Sometimes there's things we don't understand. Maybe things we read in the Bible, or even words that we're singing, we don't understand everything. But that doesn't mean that we can't praise God. We don't need to wait until we understand everything to praise God. These children, they maybe didn't understand everything. But their heart was in the right place, lifting up praise to God. So, that's the first P.

[12:30] They were praising God. But also, we said, does anybody, can you remember? It'd be really good if you remember after about five minutes. What was the second P? Just shout out. Pleasing. That's right.

They were pleasing Jesus. Now, what we read in the Bible told us that some very important people weren't pleased at all. In fact, they were quite angry. There in verse 15, it says, but when the chief priests and the teachers of the law were very important people in the temple, when they saw all that was going on, they were indignant. Well, that's a big word.

We don't use that word much, do we? Do you know what indignant means? Any ideas of a word that's similar to indignant? If you do something, if you're very disobedient, you're, what was that? Furious. That's a good one. Yes, I was going to give it, I was going to give you a clue that if you did something, if you were very disobedient, your mom or dad might be indignant, very, very angry, cross or even furious. Well, these people, they were very furious. They didn't like all this noise. And they said to Jesus, what's going on? They were very angry. They weren't pleased at all.

But what about Jesus? Well, Jesus was very pleased. He was delighted. He knew that these children had been created by God to praise God, that God had brought them there to the temple to lift up their voices in praise. And so, he was very delighted that these children were pleasing God. When we think about ourselves and what's really important, what's really important in life, there's lots of things that are important. But what's really important, the most important thing for all of us, is to live lives that are pleasing to God. And when we live lives that are pleasing to God, then God is pleased with us and all is good with us. So, they were praising God. They were pleasing Jesus. And then there's a final P that I want to say. Do you remember what it was? Just shout it out. Preparing. Right. Now, this is one we need to think about a little bit more because it's not one that if we read the passage, you might say, well, I'm not sure where that comes in. Well, we mentioned a moment ago that the children were shouting, Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

[15:08] And the children, by praising Jesus with these words, were preparing the way for Jesus to do what He had come to do. They were saying, you've come in the name of the Lord. And then the question is, well, what for? Why have you come? Why has God sent you? And of course, we know why God sent His Son, Jesus. He sent His Son, Jesus, to save us. He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. And when He came into Jerusalem that day, Jesus, He was heading into the final days that would take Him to the cross, where He would die in the place of sinners. And by the children singing

in this way, they were kind of preparing the way for Jesus to do what He had to do. And I want to tell you a true story that just happened a couple of days ago that can maybe help us all to understand a little bit more what Jesus has done for us. And some of you may have heard about this. It just happened two days ago in a wee town in the south of France. And a terrorist called Raduan Ladkin hijacked a car that had a driver and a passenger in it. And he had a gun. And he shot the gun.

And he injured the driver. He killed the passenger. And he had this car. And he was driving along. And he saw some policemen who were playing football in a field. And he started shooting at them. And then he went into the town. And he went into a supermarket where people were shopping, just like you and me, just regular folks. They were shopping, doing their shopping. And he went in with his gun.

And he got some of the customers. And he got them together. And he was threatening them with his gun. He was going to kill them. How do you think it would? Imagine if that happened in Asda or Tesco when you'd been there. How would you have felt? Somebody came with a gun. And they told you to lie down on the ground. I'm going to shoot you all. That would be terrifying.

And then a policeman came. A policeman came whose name was Arno Beltran. And of course, he heard about this. He heard the shooting. And so he came. And do you know what that policeman did? He said to the terrorist, he said, take me. Let the hostages go. And I'll go in their place. And so the terrorist thought, okay. And so he let the hostages go. And the policeman went in instead.

[17 : 40] And it doesn't have a happy ending. Because he killed the policeman. So that policeman died in the place of these hostages. How would you have felt if you'd been in there and the terrorist was there with his gun and you heard the policeman say, I'll go instead and let them go. How would you have felt? You'd have felt great. You'd have felt, wow, I'm safe. I've been freed. I'm not going to die.

Because this man has come in instead. That was an amazing thing that that policeman did. And we should pray for his family who are very sad because they lost a loved one. And that story, a true story that just happened two days ago, that tells us something about what Jesus did. Because Jesus left the comfort and the safety of heaven. He came into this world to die in our place. The death that we deserve to die, he died for us. He said, I'll die for them. I'll take their place. And that's what he did.

That's what he did on Good Friday when he died on the cross. But that story has a wonderful happy ending because though he died in our place to save us on Easter Sunday, God the Father raised him to life again, raised him from the dead, and he's alive today. And when the children were singing on Palm Sunday, Hosanna to the Son of David, to the one who has come in the name of the Lord, they were preparing Jesus for what he was going to do just a few days later. So, what were the children doing that day? They were praising God, they were pleasing Jesus, and they were preparing Jesus for the death that he was going to die. And that's something we can think about today on Palm Sunday. Well, let's just bow our heads and let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for Jesus. We thank you for his willingness to come into this world, to live the life that we could not live, that life of perfect obedience, and to die that death that we ought to have died. We thank you for his death in our place, and we thank you for the salvation and the forgiveness of sins that his death has secured for us. Help us with the children there on Palm Sunday to know what it is to shout to you with joy, and to praise you, and to please you with our lives in all that we do. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.