

Lesson 15: THE EASTER STORY IN JOHN
John 20:1-18

INTRODUCTION:

Ask students to recall the events of Palm Sunday.

1. What kind of animal did the Lord ride to enter Jerusalem the last Sunday of His earthly life? (A donkey.)
2. How did the people receive Him? (They were excited and happy, and received Him like a king.)
3. What did they carry in their hands? (Palm branches.)
4. What did they shout? (“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! The King of Israel!”)
5. What did they think the Messiah would do? (Become an earthly king and free the Israelites from Rome.)
6. What did the Lord know would happen? (That in less than a week, these Israelites would order Him to be crucified.)

During the week after Palm Sunday, terribly sad things happened, as people turned against the very God who had created them, and had come to earth to save them. But the Lord let all these events happen, because He knew that if He let His earthly body die, new and wonderful things would be possible with His resurrection.

READING:

Now read aloud **John 20: 1-18**, perhaps as they work on the project.

DISCUSSION:

Even though the Lord had told the disciples earlier what would happen, that He would be killed and then after three days rise again, they did not fully understand or believe it. In those days, there was so little knowledge about life after death that the disciples would have found such an idea strange and impossible. It seemed so impossible that they scarcely even remembered the Lord saying such a thing.

When the Lord was arrested, all His disciples forsook Him and fled, and on Friday, after He was crucified, they were completely discouraged. Their hopes had centered on the Lord, and when He did not save Himself from death at the hands of His enemies, they felt that they must have been mistaken about Him. All hope felt gone for them. You see, even the disciples had been thinking of the Lord as an earthly king.

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But the women who had been following the Lord had loved Him for Himself. They had not been so concerned with earthly greatness. They, too, did not expect to see Him again, but they thought of Him instead of themselves, and wanted to do the last thing they could for Him, which was to prepare His body properly for burial according to their customs. That was why they came to the tomb with their spices early on Sunday morning. They could not come before, because it was not considered lawful to do such things on the Sabbath.

Questions:

1. And on this first Easter morning, who was the first woman to come to the tomb? (Mary Magdalene.)
2. What did she find? (That the stone had been rolled away, and the Lord's body was gone.)
3. Whom did she tell? (Simon Peter and "the disciple whom Jesus loved," who is John.)
4. What did Peter find in the tomb? (The linen cloths that had been wrapped around the Lord's body, and the handkerchief that had been around His head. But the Lord's body was no longer wrapped in these things!)
5. What did Mary afterward see in the tomb? (Two angels, who asked her why she was weeping.)
6. Who then came and spoke to her? (The Lord.)
7. Whom did she at first think He was? (The gardener.)
8. When did she recognize Him? (When He said her name, "Mary.")
9. What did He tell her? (Not to cling to Him, because He was not yet ascended to His Father, but to go and tell His disciples that He is risen!)

Death was *not* the end of the Lord! It only caused him to come fully into a more perfect form. And death will not be the end of any of us, but only the gateway into a more perfect life. With His resurrection, the Lord showed us that He is much more powerful than death -- that He has made death a chance to cast off the last things that are only worldly and selfish, and come into a life with no more earthly sadness or pain.

And with His resurrection, the Lord also showed that He is always here with us, no matter what things look like. Even though His followers watched Him die, the Lord showed them that He would never be taken away. He was still there with them, forever. In every smile and achievement and happy time, we are feeling the Lord's presence, and it is He who gives us the strength to get through the bad times. We can remember and believe the words that He spoke to His disciples, and to each one of us: "Lo, I am with you always."

EASTER STORY PROJECT: BANNER

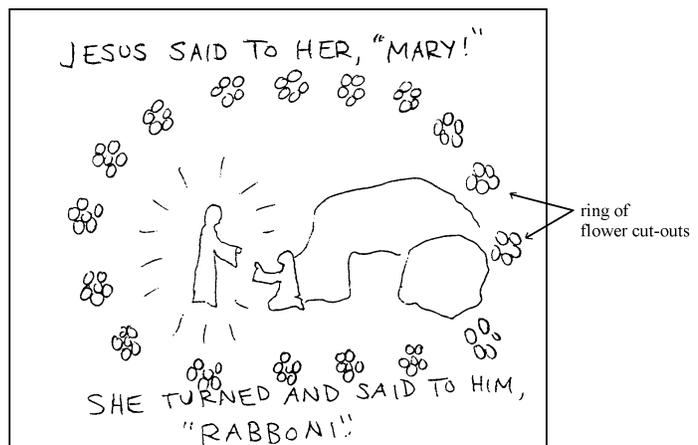
Make a felt banner to decorate at church for Easter.

Supplies:

- One large piece of light blue felt for the background
- Several smaller pieces of felt in different colors (may want white for the Lord and gray or tan for the tomb)
- Scraps of different kinds of flowered fabric
- Fabric glue or tacky glue
- Scissors
- Letter stencils
- The enclosed patterns
- Golden glitter glue (Optional.)

Procedure:

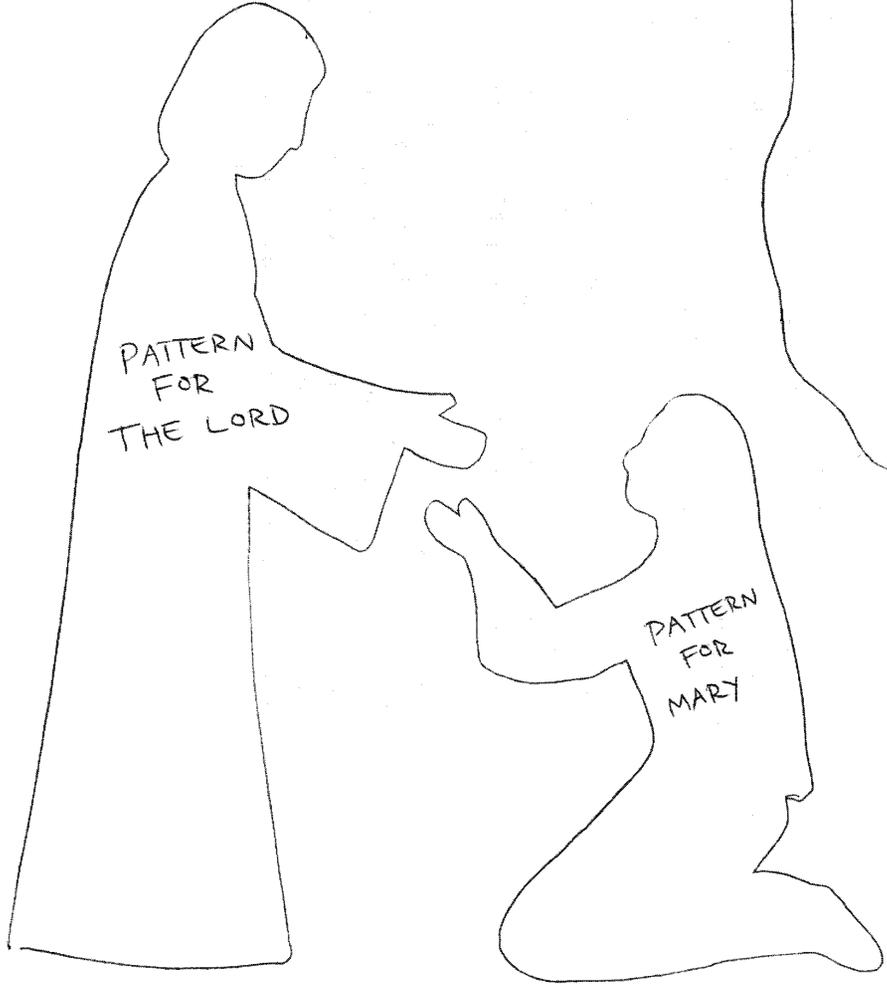
1. Have some of the children trace and cut shapes out of felt, using the patterns for the tomb, the stone, the Lord, and Mary.
2. Have some of them use the letter stencils to trace onto felt, and cut out letters to form the words: JESUS SAID TO HER, "MARY!" SHE TURNED AND SAID TO HIM, "RABBONI!"
3. Have others cut flowers from flowered fabric to form a ring of flowers around the whole scene. Explain that springtime, when flowers first return, is a picture of new life, so flowers are a prevalent symbol of Easter time.
4. Have all of the above glued onto the banner something like the sketch shown below. For an added touch, some golden rays could be drawn around the risen Lord with golden glitter glue.



*Note: Make Jesus and Mary more central, rather than the tomb. You could also have the kids cut out some greenery and/or flowers to be near the tomb of the figures, since the tomb was in a garden.

PATTERN
FOR THE TOMB





PATTERN
FOR
THE LORD

PATTERN
FOR
MARY



PATTERN FOR
THE STONE