Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today’s scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Begin by asking:

- Let’s imagine we were going to organize a “Peace Parade” in our community. Our goal would be to promote peaceful, loving and thoughtful actions toward one another in our community, in our state, nation and world. In broad strokes, now might such a parade look?
- Even if we didn’t make this event specifically about any current event, people would probably assume we were protesting something. In light of current events in the world, what might local political leaders think and why?
- In what ways might local religious leaders; civic groups; military leaders and families; or other groups respond?
Content

Read Matthew 21:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video

Then ask questions like these:

• Seen in light of typical political and military processions, what is Jesus saying by coming into Jerusalem in this kind of “parade?”
• Read aloud Zechariah 9:9-10. What in this prophecy speaks of Jesus?
• Seen in light of Jewish prophecy and their desire for the return of God’s king, what might Jesus be saying about his role among the Jews?
• Even without studying the significance of the palm branches and cloaks, what can we see from the people’s response to Jesus’ coming?
• What do they say about Jesus and how do they feel about him?
• We have the benefit of hindsight, but the people that day had no idea what would occur that week. In what ways might they have misunderstood Jesus’ actions?
• How might that misunderstanding have led to the tragic events later in the week?
• How might Jesus’ actions have been viewed by the Roman authorities; the Jewish city leaders; or the common people?
• Given the number of potential reasons for Jesus' actions in this passage, what do you think Jesus was doing?
Closure

Continue by asking:

• If Jesus were to come into our community today, how do you think he would come?
• How do you think he would be received and why?
• Who might not be so excited to see Jesus coming in our times and why?
• As those who have chosen to follow Jesus, what does this passage teach us?
• What if any, statement does this story from Jesus' life convey to people who might not know what the fuss is about?
• What kinds of things might we do to enable "outsiders" to understand why Jesus' arrival is so important?

Close with prayer.

Writer: Jon Parks
Everybody Loves a Parade

Matthew 21:1-11 | Session 9.15

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

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- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
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- Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.
Context

Share this NCAA Forecast video with the group and ask:

- Given that the tournament is over, how do you feel about the predictions you heard and why?
- What were you expecting to see happen before the tournament started?
- If you are one of those people who did not follow the tournament - not everyone loves sports, after all - how did you feel about the whole spectacle and why?
- In what ways do the moments of excitement that take place before a big event color the way you interpret that event?
- How does being an "insider" or "outsider" to the event color our anticipation and later response to it?
- What is the next "big societal event" that is coming up, and what expectations are you bringing to it?
Content

Read Matthew 21:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

- How familiar is this story for you and why?
- Why does the story of Jesus on a donkey feel special?
- Imagine that you are one of the two disciples sent to get the donkey. What might you be thinking or wondering?
- What do you think this crowd expected to see as they gathered to greet Jesus and why?
- What did they ultimately expect from Jesus and in what ways did their reception play into that?
- Matthew 21:1-11 describes a city in turmoil. When a community is in a state of disruption and chaos, what often happens among the leaders?
- In what ways does this affect the life of regular people?
- What does Jesus’ arrival on a donkey convey to people in such a turbulent situation?
- The Bible background video said that Jesus was making a claim against the leaders in power at this time. How might this be an unsafe thing for someone to do and how might it be different for us now than it was in those times?
Closure

Share this article from Christianity Today, sharing and discussing highlights from the story like:

The denomination stated that Dr. Moore will not be fired, and he made a statement: “First, let me say that my concerns last year were not primarily about the election as the election. My main objective is not normally the questions of who is up and who is down in political races (though some are called to do just that, and do so well). I see my calling as seeking to offer resources to help churches form consciences of Christians to connect the gospel to ethical and moral and social questions.” Ask:

• What does this statement say about the relationship between faith and politics?
• In what ways is this similar to the image of Jesus’ statement about power that was made by riding on a donkey?

Dr. Moore also said: “What I do know is that I—or anyone in this job—will have to talk about all sorts of controversial things. There may be times when what I believe is an issue of biblical truth or Baptist distinctive is wrong. There may be other times when I might be right, but many—maybe even most—people disagree with me. I don’t expect people to agree with me. My job is to speak to consciences, and to endeavor to provide the resources to pose the right kinds of biblical questions—even if you come to different answers.” Ask:

• How do you feel about this statement and why?
• What happens to people who speak out of their convictions to the gospel when many people in their community disagree?
• Why do you think people can be so assertive about their faith, yet turn so hateful when challenged by it?
• How can we listen to people who make disagreeable statements and discern whether their ideas align with the good news of God’s love?
• Who are some leaders in the Church today that say disagreeable statements that we nevertheless might need to hear?
Dr. Moore offered an image of bringing offerings as a child to his Baptist church. He said, “We have too much at stake, and too much for which to be grateful, to be divided. The gospel wins over everything in the end. I pray that the gospel would win in our denomination, in our churches, and in my own heart. The same gospel that reconciles us to God is the same gospel that allows us to be reconciled to one another. I learned that from y’all. That’s why they gave me those Southern Baptist missions offering envelopes.” Ask:

- What is the power of using this image of a child’s offering envelope?
- How can an image, like the envelop or like the donkey, inspire our faithful imagination?
- Dr. Moore claims that God is more powerful than the powers that would divide us. As a group, think about the things that divide you from people you know and how you would fill in this blank for this sentence: "God is more powerful than _______." Share your responses.

Pray together, using the group’s statements as a prayer and thanking God for the image of Jesus on a donkey.

**Writer: Erin Hall**
Before the Session

- Review today’s scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Poster paper (to make a “graffiti wall”), markers
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Read aloud Matthew 21:1-11 then play the Bible Background Video

In today’s session, the group will place themselves in the Palm Sunday event as a means of finding those places where Jesus needs to enter into their own situations.
Reflection

Before the meeting, set up a "graffiti wall," using large pieces of paper and markers that will not bleed through them. Invite the group to think about our country or the larger world, calling to mind current situations we are facing and the places where these things are happening.

Ask people to close their eyes and choose one situation or place upon which to focus and encourage them to spend a few minutes silently imagining some facets of Jesus’ coming into that situation and place, by considering:

- What happens?
- What does Jesus do?
- What do the people do?

Say: “The word ‘hosanna’ means "save us or help us." It can also be a shout of praise.” Direct attention to the poster paper, inviting the group to write a group prayer to God, with individuals writing sentences of supplication (that start with the words ‘save us’ and or ‘help us’) and praise on the poster (graffiti style) that pertain to the situation or place of each person’s focus. Encourage the group to fill up the paper. When the paper is filled, or the group is finished writing, invite everyone to sit down and contemplate the written prayers and pray as you play Ludovico Einaudi – “Due Tramonti” in the background.

As an alternative, you can invite volunteers to take turns praying a sentence of their choosing from the poster out loud as you go around the circle several times and reminding the group that it is okay for different people to pray the same sentence. Pray together for the length of the song, then close by reading Matthew 21:7-11.

Close with prayer.

Writer: Joy Yee
Everybody Loves a Parade

Matthew 21:1-11  |  Session  9.15

Before the Session

• Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
• Review today’s scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
• Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
• Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.
Context

Start by asking:

• How many social media accounts do you have and why?
• What would that be like if you had to do an interview to get a social networking account?

Play the Twitter video and ask:

• What did you think of that interview?
• How faithfully do you think it resembles the real world of social networking?
• How political are you on your social networking and why
• Why do people seem to get addicted to speaking out with uninformed arrogant opinions?
• If you could change the way people do social networking, what would you do?

Content

Read Matthew 21:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like these:

• How do you think the two disciples felt about going to get a donkey colt?
• What do you think they understood as the probable significance of this act?
• What does it mean to ride in humbly on a donkey?
• Why did the crowd cry ‘Hosanna” to Jesus?
• What is the significance of the term "Son of David" in this context?
• What do you think of Jesus’ version of political activism and how do you balance that with humility?
Closure

Play the "Credit" movie clip and the "Line" movie clip from The Resurrection of Gavin Stone and ask:

- How do we balance the power of God within us with humility?
- At what points in his ministry can you recall Jesus doing that?
- How do we balance caring for what we believe to be injustices in the world with a humble spirit?
- At what points might our inability to cultivate such a humble spirit act against our faith?
- What might we do to be redemptive of good people or ideas that are failing because of their inability to cultivate humility?

Close in prayer.

**Writer: Jon Self**
Everybody Loves a Parade

Matthew 21:1-11 | Session 9.15

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today’s scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Have some random objects; some markers and poster board; and paper and pens available. (See Context)
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.
- Use the social media prompts on this session’s webpage to help youth begin engaging the session them ahead of their gathering.
- Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.

Intro

Show the Nintendo Switch Commercial and ask:

- Who either owns one of these or is working up to get one?
- What makes this device so special?
- What are some other things that you’re excited about when you see the commercials?
- How does watching this kind of commercial make you feel, and how might you feel differently if you don't care about whatever they're promoting?
**Context**

Form three to five teams (if your group is really small, they can be one-person teams), give each some markers and paper and one randomly chosen object (the more pointless the object, the better). Invite the teams to take a few minutes using their materials to prepare a presentation to convince the members of the other teams to endorse their object. After everyone makes their presentation, everyone will get to select the object that they think another team made look most appealing by having each person write the team or object name on a piece of paper. All the votes will be revealed at once.

After making sure that the teams understand what to do, give them a few minutes to work on their presentations, encouraging them to be as creative as possible. After about ten minutes, or when the teams stop working, call time, invite teams to make their presentations, then vote. Once the winning presentation is decided, ask:

- How did you feel about this activity and why?
- What made a presentation good or bad?
- Why did more people vote for a particular object over the others?
- What are some things that you regularly see promoted in ways that make you want to try them?
- When have you gotten something that everyone said was great, but you didn’t think it was so great?
- What are some basic expectations you have of things that everyone says you should try and why do you have them?
- What are some expectations that you have based on the things you hear from church?
Content

Read Matthew 21:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- What do you think the disciples thought was really going on during this story and why?
- What do you think people were expecting when Jesus rode into town?
- Given what you know about people and how they act, how else could this story have gone and why?
- If Jesus' ride into town was a subtle form of protest, what do you think he was protesting and why?
- Since it sounds like the whole town was involved in this parade, why did people get caught up in this event, even though they might have had no idea as to what was really going on?
- When have you encountered or heard about people who were engaging in making a quiet statement about the world and how things needed to change?
Closure

Share the Buttercup video and ask:

• How do videos like this make you feel and why?
• Assuming that Buttercup's story got the best possible ending, how do you think that went?
• Looking at Buttercup’s whole story, what kinds of things do you think Buttercup went through and will go through?
• While they made it easy to imagine what a happy ending might look like for Buttercup, what kinds of "happily ever after" stories do you think most people want and why?
• What kinds of things do people have to go through in order to get their "happily ever after?"
• Palm Sunday is part of the most important story that Christians have to tell. How do you feel about this story, knowing about the events of the coming week?
• In what ways does the good news at the end of this story affect the way you feel about it and maybe share it?
• The world has a lot of people who don’t understand our excitement about this story, so what are some elements of our faith story that we might be able to help others by telling and how might we do that?

Close this session in prayer.
Everybody Loves a Parade
Matthew 21:1-11 | Session 9.15

Before the Session
Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
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- Find web links for underlined items on this session’s webpage at faithelement.net.

Context (From the Mind Session Page)

Begin by asking:

- Let’s imagine we were going to organize a “Peace Parade” in our community. Our goal would be to promote peaceful, loving and thoughtful actions toward one another in our community, in our state, nation and world. In broad strokes, now might such a parade look?
- Even if we didn’t make this event specifically about any current event, people would probably assume we were protesting something. In light of current events in the world, what might local political leaders think and why?
- In what ways might local religious leaders; civic groups; military leaders and families; or other groups respond?
Content (From the Youth Session Page)

Read Matthew 21:1-11, then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

• What do you think the disciples thought was really going on during this story and why?
• What do you think people were expecting when Jesus rode into town?
• Given what you know about people and how they act, how else could this story have gone and why?
• If Jesus' ride into town was a subtle form of protest, what do you think he was protesting and why?
• Since it sounds like the whole town was involved in this parade, why did people get caught up in this event, even though they might have had no idea as to what was really going on?
• When have you encountered or heard about people who were engaging in making a quiet statement about the world and how things needed to change?

Closure (from the Media Session page)

Play the "Credit" movie clip and the "Line" movie clip from The Resurrection of Gavin Stone and ask:

• How do we balance the power of God within us with humility?
• At what points in his ministry can you recall Jesus doing that?
• How do we balance caring for what we believe to be injustices in the world with a humble spirit?
• At what points might our inability to cultivate such a humble spirit act against our faith?
• What might we do to be redemptive of good people or ideas that are failing because of their inability to cultivate humility?

Close in prayer.