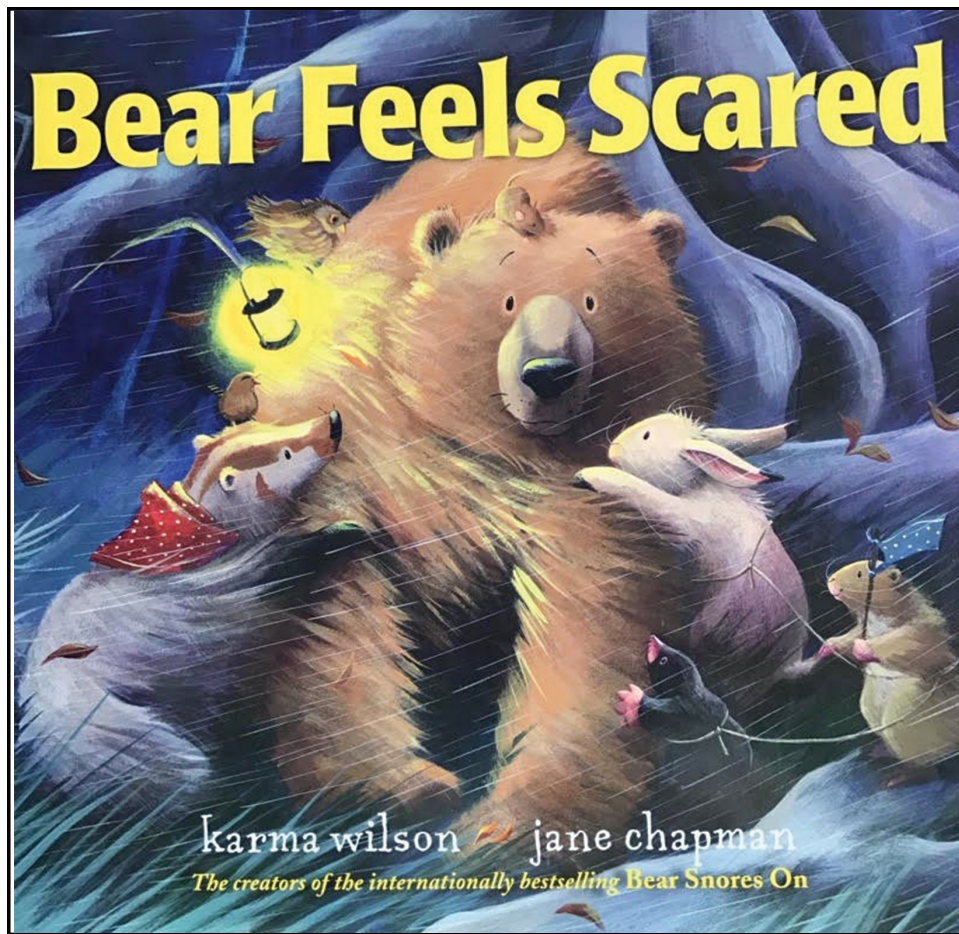


Living Grace

CYCLE A PALM SUNDAY

"DID JESUS GET SCARED?"



*In **Bear Feels Scared** the sun is setting and it's getting chilly. When Bear's friends discover that he is not at home in his lair, they march out into the cold to find their pal. Friends don't let friends stay lost! Wren, Owl, and Raven take to the skies while Badger, Mole, and Mouse search on the ground. Pretty soon Bear is found, and once he's back in his cave, he feels quite safe with his friends all around. Beloved Bear gets another emotional workout, this time a frightening episode in the dark and stormy woods. While Bear is on the trail of a snack, things quickly turn windy, wet and, as Bear gets lost, downright spooky. He cries and trembles, curling up amid the gnarled roots of a huge tree until his ever-faithful band of woodland friends—who have carefully formed a proper search party—come to his aid. A great story to help you conquer your fears and find comfort in friends!*

Read-aloud video link: IMG_2315.MOV
<https://1drv.ms/u/s!AisIEidPP-elhhTQIRkrfN1PfxVp>

Sunday Gospel

MATTHEW 26:14 to 27:66

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, The disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near: in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine

until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Then Jesus said to them, "This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken, for it is written: *I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed;* but after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him in reply, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples spoke likewise.

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to feel sorrow and distress. Then he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me." He advanced a little and fell prostrate in prayer, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will." When he returned to his disciples he found them asleep. He said to Peter, "So you could not keep watch with me for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not undergo the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, "My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!" Then he returned once more and found them asleep,

for they could not keep their eyes open. He left them and withdrew again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing again.

Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand when the Son of Man is to be handed over to sinners. Get up, let us go. Look, my betrayer is at hand."

While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived, accompanied by a large crowd, with swords and clubs, who had come from the chief priests and the elders of the people. His betrayer had arranged a sign with them, saying, "The man I shall kiss is the one; arrest him." Immediately he went over to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and he kissed him. Jesus answered him, "Friend, do what you have come for." Then stepping forward they laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. And behold, one of those who accompanied Jesus put his hand to his sword, drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its sheath, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels? But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled which say that it must come to pass in this way?" At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to seize me? Day after day I sat teaching in the temple area, yet you did not arrest me. But all this has come to pass that the writings of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left him and fled.



THE KISS OF JUDAS

*Fresco by Giotto di Bondone ~ 1304 to 1306
Scrovegni Chapel ~ Padua, Italy*

EXPLORING THE ART:

This fresco was painted in the private chapel of the Scrovegni family, who had grown rich from their banking and moneylending businesses. The dramatic scene depicting the betrayal of Christ shows the moment when Judas Iscariot identifies him to the authorities with a kiss of greeting, and as he does so, Christ calmly stares at him without flinching. This fresco painted by Giotto in this chapel is most celebrated for the realism - the physical characterization of each and every figure - a technique that had barely existed at any time before - as well as the clarity, delicacy, and variety of color. With these techniques, Giotto humanizes the image of the sacred, making it feel closer, bringing it down to earth. Before Giotto, people were painted in the conventional Byzantine style, with stiff figures in flat one-dimensional space, which made it almost impossible for the viewer to "connect" with the subject matter. Giotto came along and created realistic, three-dimensional people with individual faces that one might see on the street. Suddenly, his paintings have a real impact, and would become the foundation of the Italian Renaissance, where Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo developed the main principles of Western art, that changed painting forever.

DISCOVERING HUMANITY IN THE SACRED

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

EXPLORING THE HUMANITY AND DIVINITY OF JESUS IN HIS PASSION TO THE CROSS

It is difficult every year when we read the Passion to be able to imagine what Jesus went through. Did he have any idea the extent of the suffering, betrayal, and abandonment he would experience? Was he scared? Our children's story today, *Bear Feels Scared*, helps us look at the emotions Jesus would have gone through. Did you ever think that a bear could get scared? A mouse maybe, but not a bear. Bears are the ones who scare everyone else. In the same way, who would ever think that God could get scared?

Jesus was fully human as well as fully God. He felt what we feel. He was scared. As the book opens we see Bear on a path choosing to walk on, even though he was afraid. Jesus said yes also to walk this path in fear, to drink this cup of suffering, and to die for our sins. Like Bear, Jesus choose this path. It doesn't mean that he didn't experience the fear, sorrow and pain that he encountered on this path any less than we would. Jesus and Bear shake and shiver, Jesus sheds blood. Jesus and Bear both experience self-pity, "How can I get out of this?" Jesus asks his Father, "Must I drink this cup"?

The friends for both try to display courage. They work to calm their friends and share hope and comfort. However, their stamina falls short and they can't endure, both sets of friends sleep on the job of being true friends. Bear eventually finds comfort with the help of his friends. Jesus continues his path to the cross. He goes alone through the suffering and torture to his death. On this path Jesus, shows us the way through death to life, resurrected life.

Jesus conquers death, and because of this when we make this journey we won't be scared. If we do all we can this Holy Week to stay awake, we will find the way of Jesus to live every day in the glory of "Christ is risen"! Let's Stay.... Awake, and in doing so, be not afraid, and be able to be there for others!

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: What do you do when you get scared? Does it help to have friends around you when you are scared? What does helps you feel strong and peaceful? Have you ever seen your parents get scared? Have you ever seen your teachers get scared? Is it weird that your parents or your teacher would get scared? How has that made you feel, when someone who is there to protect you, gets scared? Is getting scared something that makes us human?

THE CHILDRENS' STORY: Is it weird that a Bear got scared? What does Bear do when he is scared, does he run? Does he fight? How does he find strength and peace?

THE GOSPEL STORY: How does it make you feel knowing that Jesus got scared? How does the response of Jesus and Bear help us to know what to do when we get scared?

We have the choice to run or to fight when we are face fear. How do Jesus and Bear teach us to stay in our strengths and our truth? And in doing so, how might we become instruments of bringing heaven to earth like Jesus did?

Biblical Background

MATTHEW 26:14 to 27:66

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Palm Sunday's events happen all around Jerusalem. It would be great to get a map of the old city out and try to follow the path of Jesus. The story begins on the Mount of Olives starting very close to Bethany where the story of Lazarus takes place. Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey would have been down the Mount of Olives entering the city through Lions Gate, close to the closed Golden Gate. The Last Supper would have taken place on the other side of the city. Today there is an upper room that is an honored site pilgrims can visit for this final meal. Jesus would have then walked through the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane which is right at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The site of the crucifixion at the time of Jesus would have been outside of the city walls. Today the site is right in the heart of the old city enclosed within a church that holds what is believed to be the once cave site of the burial place, thus the site of the Resurrection of Jesus as well.

TERMS: *Suffering* Our cultural view of suffering is much different than in the first century Mediterranean world. Because of this we tend to miss the point of the Passion of Jesus. In our culture where suffering is a nuisance and pain that can readily be avoided by cleverness or medicine, it is difficult to understand. Jesus suffers silently. He is like a sheep before the shearers. The sheep does not bleat, does not cry out even as something as violent as a shearing is taking place. The fact that Jesus suffered without crying out brings him honor. To cry out in despair would bring shame upon the victim.

CULTURAL INSIGHT: Jesus had died a shameful death, one reserved for the worst of criminals. The public spectacle of crucifixion was intended to heap scorn and shame on the person being tortured. The goal was to break the person, and to reduce the victim to despair so that they would curse God and beg to die. Those standing nearby must have wondered how Jesus could be subjected to such shameful treatment. Why, they wondered, would God allow this to happen to his Son? But God turned this human way of thinking completely upside down. By raising Jesus from the dead, God honored Jesus more than anyone ever could have. The resurrection event washed away Jesus' shame. Throughout the Passion narrative we see that Jesus knows that he is in the right, and he knows that God will vindicate (bring him honor) on the day of the resurrection.

INSIGHT INTO MEANING: What is happening when Jesus cries out from the cross, "My God why have you forsaken me?" Is it possible that Jesus experienced rejection from the Father? Was this a cry of despair? Did Jesus lose hope at that critical moment before his death? How could that be possible? These options are not viable as to why Jesus cries out as he does from the cross. Take a moment to find Psalm 22 in your Bible. Read the opening line. It is identical to what Jesus says on the cross. Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me." The Jewish people memorized all of their scriptures since there were no books at the time. Therefore, Jesus was letting the Jewish onlookers know what he had come to fulfill. He was the fulfillment the Psalm speaks of. He is explaining from the cross in a loving way for his followers what is happening. By quoting the first words of the Psalm, Jesus is encouraging his mother, the Apostle John, and others to recall the message of the Psalm 22 which was written by David when he faced his greatest trial. He had been deposed from the throne by his eldest son Absalom. He was on the run; fearing for his life. Yet even in this moment of despair, at a time when David felt that God had abandoned him, the King knew in his heart of hearts that he would return to Jerusalem and sit once again on the throne. These words of Jesus were intended to console those who are watching him die. David said that he would return, and he did. Jesus uses the first words of Psalm 22 to convey that same assurance to those he loved most in the world.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

*All who see me scoff at me;
they mock me with parted lips, they wag their heads:
"He relied on the LORD; let him deliver him,
let him rescue him, if he loves him."*

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

*Indeed, many dogs surround me,
a pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
They have pierced my hands and my feet;
I can count all my bones.*

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

*They divide my garments among them,
and for my vesture they cast lots.
But you, O LORD, be not far from me;
O my help, hasten to aid me.*

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

*I will proclaim your name to my brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise you:
"You who fear the LORD, praise him;
all you descendants of Jacob, give glory to him;
revere him, all you descendants of Israel!"*

R. My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Share as a family together, what makes you scared? What can we learn from the actions of Jesus when he got scared?

CHARACTER QUALITIES: LOYALTY
BEING SINGLE-HEARTED

FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Talk about how you might choose to support each other in difficult times. What does it mean to be present to someone on their cross? Decide to make a commitment as a family to visit a person on a regular basis in a nursing home or hospital. How can you as a family help them deal with their fears and feelings of abandonment? What kind of difference can you and your family make for someone who is afraid or alone?

Gospel Illustration

"PALM SUNDAY" BY VICKI SHUCK



The Palm Sunday gospel story shows us the way through these difficult days.

Jesus chooses to ride into his suffering and death keeping his heart wide open.

He rides into Jerusalem trusting in the redeeming Love of his heavenly Father. He chooses the heroes journey.

May we too grow heroes hearts for these days, trusting in God's transforming grace to give us the strength and courage of Jesus. We must ride forward, but never alone.