



## Introduction

The story of Palm Sunday introduces the events of Holy Week with an account of Jesus noisily disrupting the religious life of the temple in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:12-16). This story tells it from the point of view of a priest in charge of the temple.

## Development

Begin by asking the children why we have rules. (*To make things safe and fair.*) Can they name any school rules that we follow here, and explain why the rules exist? (*For example, no running in the corridors - to prevent accidents.*) Explain that people in charge sometimes make bad rules. If that happens, it's up to everybody else to change those rules before life gets really unfair or somebody gets hurt.

Explain that Jesus could sometimes be very awkward when he came across bad rules that hurt people, and that earned him enemies among those who set the rules. There was one day when he decided to make a stand against some very bad rules. In his time, it was believed that if anyone wanted to give money to support God's work, it had to be expensive special money that you could only buy from approved dealers at the big temple in Jerusalem. The priests running the temple were quite happy about this, because it brought in extra cash. But when he arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus decided to show them that God was not happy about it at all. I'm going to tell you that story, but I'm going to tell it from the point of view of one of the people who didn't like Jesus. Listen carefully. Can you spot some of the reasons why he doesn't like Jesus? I'll ask you how many reasons you found, afterwards!

## A Palm Sunday rant, by the chief priest

What are all these children doing in here in my temple? It should be quiet! Peaceful! Profitable! I don't like children, you see. They don't have much money to spend. I only want to see the adults.

I don't like children - with their little fingers and their little noses and their little ears... and the way they keep asking awkward questions, like 'WHY?' *You're* not like that, are you? But now there's someone who stands up for them and says children are important. I ask you - why? Well, he says he likes children... but I can't stand him.

Jesus - that's him. For three years he's been traipsing up and down the country, irritating people and getting in the way. Teaching people about the kingdom of God and the love of God. Making friends with people who haven't got any friends, and healing them of their illnesses. What's the point of that? Who does he think he is? And he even does it on our special holy days, when people aren't supposed to do anything.

And do you know - he told his friends that if they want to be special to God, they've got to become like little children. I ask you! What good are children? They're not worth anything until they get



older. Children aren't really people. They're not important enough. I think that if you want God to love you, you've got to be smart and clever, and know lots of stuff - like me.

But do you know what happened today? This Jesus person really went too far. He came into our temple... and... (*sobs*) messed up my holiday! Completely!

That market was raising money for my holiday. I'd fixed it so that all the people coming into the temple had to buy my special money to give to God, and then buy my animals (goats... sheep...doves...) to give to God as well. Because if you want to impress God, nothing impresses him like the gift of a goat. I was going to make so much money!

But then this Jesus rode his donkey right into my temple and said it was all a con! He said that the temple was the place to pray to his 'Father God'!

So he marched over to the special moneychangers' table and gave it a big kick, and all the coins went flying. Then he stomped over and cut loose all the farm animals and opened all the cages of the birds. And suddenly, the place was filled with money, goats, sheep and doves... flying everywhere! And he shouted out, 'THIS IS MY FATHER'S HOUSE! BUT YOU'VE TURNED IT INTO A DEN OF THIEVES AND ROBBERS!'

I marched straight up to him and said, 'Young man, what do you think you are doing?'

He turned towards me, looking angry. 'I'm clearing out the rubbish,' he said.

'But... but... Who do you think you are?' I spluttered. 'You don't have the authority! You can't do this!'

'Oh yes I can!' he said. 'My Father God told me to do it.' With that, he turned and walked away into the crowd.

And then, what do you know? He started healing people. Some little old lady was standing up and saying her back wasn't hurting any more. And some beggar was saying he could see the sky now, because his eyes were working perfectly. And some little girl was clapping her hands and telling her mother, 'Mum! I can hear you! My ears are working!'

Ridiculous! Those people aren't important. God's not interested in helping people like that.

Then the children started to chip in... because children always like making a fuss. They started singing 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' again and again, as if this Jesus person was somebody important. When I told him to shut the children up, he said 'No!' He said, 'The children are the only ones who've spotted who I really am today.' And when he said that, the children cheered. Cheeky little blighters!

You'll see - I'm going to sort him out. Mark my words, he's gone too far. He stopped me going on my holiday... and nobody does that and gets away with it. I'm going to get my own back on Jesus



somehow, and then everyone will forget all about him... and everything will go back to normal. Won't it?

## Plenary

Come out of role, removing the robe if you're wearing one.

Ask: Can you think of some reasons why this man doesn't like Jesus? (*Discuss in pairs, then feed back a few ideas.*)

Remind pupils that most rules are there to keep everything safe and fair, but sometimes a bad rule needs to be challenged. By turning the tables, Jesus wasn't making a fuss for the fun of it, or losing his temper because he was having a bad day. It was all about making an important point about the money, and the way the temple was being used. Afterwards, what did Jesus do for the rest of the day? He healed people who were poorly. That says a lot. He was probably tired after a very busy morning, but he was still putting others first.

I wonder... next time we get really angry about something, will it be because we just feel grumpy or because we see something genuinely wrong that needs to change?

I wonder if any of us have got a bad rule or two stuck in our own heads, telling us it's OK to make life harder for others when we feel like it.

And I wonder if, today, we could put other people first instead of ourselves.

## Prayer / Meditation

In your lap, make a fist with one hand. Imagine something that makes you feel cross. Make your fist go tight and hard, to reflect how angry you sometimes feel. Then open your hand and imagine releasing your anger, letting it float away.

*Lord Jesus, the story of Palm Sunday shows us how to use our anger to do something good. When we get angry, remind us to do something good with it, not something bad. Amen.*