

## Station 1:

### Welcome to Neighborhood Church's Easter Interactive Journey!

We are going to be walking through some of the last events of Jesus' life, explore them a little deeper, and explain why they are so important. But first, let's see where in the world we are.

Click on the Google Earth journey below.

This is where all of the events of the last week of Jesus' life took place. To navigate to the next slide, click the arrow button on the bottom left side to see the next underlined location that we will be exploring.

First, Jesus traveled from Lazarus' house in **Bethany/Bethpage** towards Jerusalem (located about two miles from the city wall). He walked toward the **Mount of Olives**, descended down the Mount of Olives, crossed over the **Kidron Valley** and then walked toward the East Gate which is called the **Golden Gate**. This is the gate where most scholars believe Jesus entered the city during the Triumphal Entry, as it was the gate closest to the entrance to the **Temple**. Later in the week Jesus would be in the **Garden of Gethsemane**, located on the side of the Mount of Olives, where He would surrender His will to the Father and be arrested. He was taken outside of the city, to **Golgotha** (formerly Mount Moriah) where He was crucified, and then taken off the cross by Joseph of Arimathea to be **buried** in his own tomb, but we know He didn't need it for long!

#### **Activity for the kids (adults can participate too):**

Before we continue on, take a piece of dough and a marshmallow. The marshmallow represents the body of Jesus that was wrapped in burial clothes, and the dough represents the tomb that Jesus was buried in. At the end of our journey, you will have a warm treat to take home with you to remind you of what we celebrate today.

## Station 2: Wave Branches & Select a Lamb

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!  
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!  
See, your king comes to you,  
righteous and victorious,  
lowly and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

The week before Jesus' death, up to 100,000 people were coming to visit the city of Jerusalem to observe a Passover feast. Passover was considered a pilgrimage holiday so people from all over were coming to Jerusalem for this feast to celebrate when God miraculously delivered the Israelites out of slavery from Pharaoh, the most powerful ruler of the world's most powerful Egyptian empire.

We are most likely pretty familiar with the story of Passover, but just to refresh our memories, on the night before they were to be delivered from the land of Egypt, they were instructed to sacrifice a spotless lamb, and put its blood on the doorpost of their homes in preparation of the tenth plague, the coming of the death angel – or the destroyer. Any home that was covered by the blood would be “passed over” and spared the death of the firstborn – both Israelite and Egyptian alike. The blood of the Passover lamb led to life and gave freedom.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan (we now call it Palm Sunday), four days before the Jews celebrated this Passover feast, Jesus came riding into Jerusalem on a donkey during his “Triumphal Entry.” Crowds had gathered to welcome Jesus as news had been spreading about his miracles, and with Lazarus recently being raised from the dead, excitement was growing even more that Jesus would be the one to do the impossible for all of Israel - overtake the Romans and establish a new kingdom on earth. Palm branches were being waved, but something else was happening too. According to Jewish custom, on this day all Jewish families would select the lamb that would be sacrificed on Passover. Each household would select a lamb without spot or blemish, present it to the priests at the Temple where it would be observed for four days to make sure it was truly spotless, and then at twilight on the eve of Passover, it would be sacrificed.

*That year, during that Passover and on that day, the perfect Lamb was selected by God. He came in riding on a donkey, a symbol of a king at peace, and fulfilling the prophecy from Zechariah 9:9. Jesus, the Lamb of God, would be sacrificed as the fulfillment of the perfect Passover Lamb. God's judgment for the sin of all mankind was “passed over” to Him, and the blood of this One, when it is applied to our heart, leads to life and freedom once and for all.*

## Station 3: The Anointing of Jesus

2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."

John 12:2-8

In Luke 9:51, we read that Jesus "sets His sites for Jerusalem." Just as He *had* to go to Samaria to meet the woman at the well, Jesus had to get to Jerusalem before the start of Passover. He begins this six-month journey (Luke 9-19) to Jerusalem that will take him through many cities where he will perform miracles, teach to a lot of people about the upside-down Kingdom of God, make religious leaders upset, meet the famous wee-little man, Zacchaeus, in Jericho, and make a stop in the familiar town of Bethany. At this point in John 12, Lazarus had been raised from the dead just a few days earlier, and we find Jesus and his disciples having a dinner, in Jesus' honor, with Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha, and Mary.

While they were reclining at the table, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, poured pure nard on his feet and the fragrance filled the room. Are you curious how pure nard smells? Open the glass jar provided. So, not everyone appreciates this act of worship, and they may not have appreciated the smell, but Jesus commends it. He tells them to leave her alone and that Mary was saving this for the time of His burial.

Up to this point Jesus had told his disciples that he was going to die, be buried, and rise again, but we read that they do not understand (Mark 9:31-32). In this story, it seems that Mary may actually have understood Jesus and believed He would actually soon die and be buried, which means He would need to be anointed beforehand. Whether or not she knew what she was doing, we don't know for sure, but what she did still holds so much meaning because of the week that was ahead of Him. Mary's response to Jesus in that moment was done out of a heart of worship and out of a heart of honoring Jesus the best way she could at that specific moment. Jesus agreed, and He said that when the Gospel is preached, her story will be told as well.

So, what does this story show us? We might not know the whole back story or the story that is yet to come, but when we respond to Jesus out of a heart of worship, and we obey what we know he is telling us to do,

## Station 4: The Two Gardens

“For just as through one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.”

Romans 5:19

In the Garden of Eden, Adam was created to worship God perfectly, to have fellowship with God in the cool of the day, and to live in such a way that he all around him would flourish. But Adam was also created with the ability to choose to stay on this path. And this choice came in the shape of a tree. God placed a tree in the garden, with a command to not eat of its fruit, and this command provided a daily opportunity for Adam to choose God. He had to choose to believe that God’s way was the best way, and He had to choose to humbly submit his will to the will of the Father. There came a time when Adam had to choose between God’s will and trusting God’s plan above his own, and Adam fell. Adam and Eve were deceived into believing that their Creator was withholding something good for them and desired something more than what God had given, and they ate. They replaced the will of their Creator with their own and this rebellious heart set all of creation on a path of destruction, leaving nothing untouched. Through his actions, sin and death entered the world.

In the Bible, this isn’t the only mention of a Garden scene. In all four Gospels we read about another Garden - the Garden of Gethsemane.

In this garden we find the Second Adam, Jesus Christ, likewise making a choice. However, unlike the first Adam, who believed that God was withholding something good from Him, Jesus pressed in. He faces the will of His Father, weighs it against His own, and willingly submits to the Father’s will. In humility He prays, “not my will, but Your will be done.” He understood what the will of the Father would mean. He would be betrayed, denied, falsely accused, mocked, beaten, and killed as a criminal by being nailed to a tree, all by the hands of the people that He came to save. Jesus chose the will of the Father and trusted God’s plan over His own. In John 12:27-28 we read, “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” He understood what was at stake and He knew what His death would achieve – the defeat of the power of death, the bondage to sin would be broken, and the required perfect sacrifice to cover sin forever would finally be given. What was done in the Garden of Gethsemane through the Second Adam would pave the way to undo what was done in the Garden of Eden. The redemption of all things is now possible.

## Station 5: Good Friday

7 “Blessed are those  
whose transgressions are forgiven,  
whose sins are covered.

8 Blessed is the one  
whose sin the Lord will never count against them.”

Romans 4:7-8

Think about areas in your life that you struggle with. Think about sin in your life that you are battling. Think about ways that you have hurt people, the lies that you have told, the things you do that you hate. Press “pause” and then as a family, or even individually, write some of them on the piece of foam board in front of you.

This isn't an exciting time for us because we see our sin, we can remember the guilt from our decisions, and we can sometimes still feel the shame. We know we battle many things, and they often win.

And then it gets worse. Now take the magnifying sheet and put it over the board. Our enemy, the true destroyer of life, magnifies our weaknesses and our sinful decisions just like this. He is happy to remind us of all of our faults and shortcomings, and he finds great joy in throwing our sin in our face over and over, and not just our face. In Revelation 12:10 we read that day and night he accuses us before God, letting Him know of all of our sin and how horrible we are, like a tattling child.

But God doesn't listen. He doesn't listen because, for those whose are covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb, the punishment for all of our mistakes has been paid in full.

And that is the beauty of Good Friday. Christ, the perfect Passover Lamb, took our sin and what it produces - shame, guilt, death - upon Himself. He never sinned, but He died like He did, as God's wrath against sin was fully poured out on His only Son. Then God's wrath was fully satisfied.

To remind us of this amazing truth, take a copy of the cross picture and using the tape provided, cover your piece of foam board. As you cover your sins, remember and celebrate that this is what was done on your behalf by the blood of Christ on Good Friday.

## Station 6: The Importance of the Resurrection

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. **14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.** 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

The resurrection is a foundational belief for anyone who says they are a follower of Christ. In fact, Paul says that if the resurrection didn't happen, we are to be most pitied. Wow.

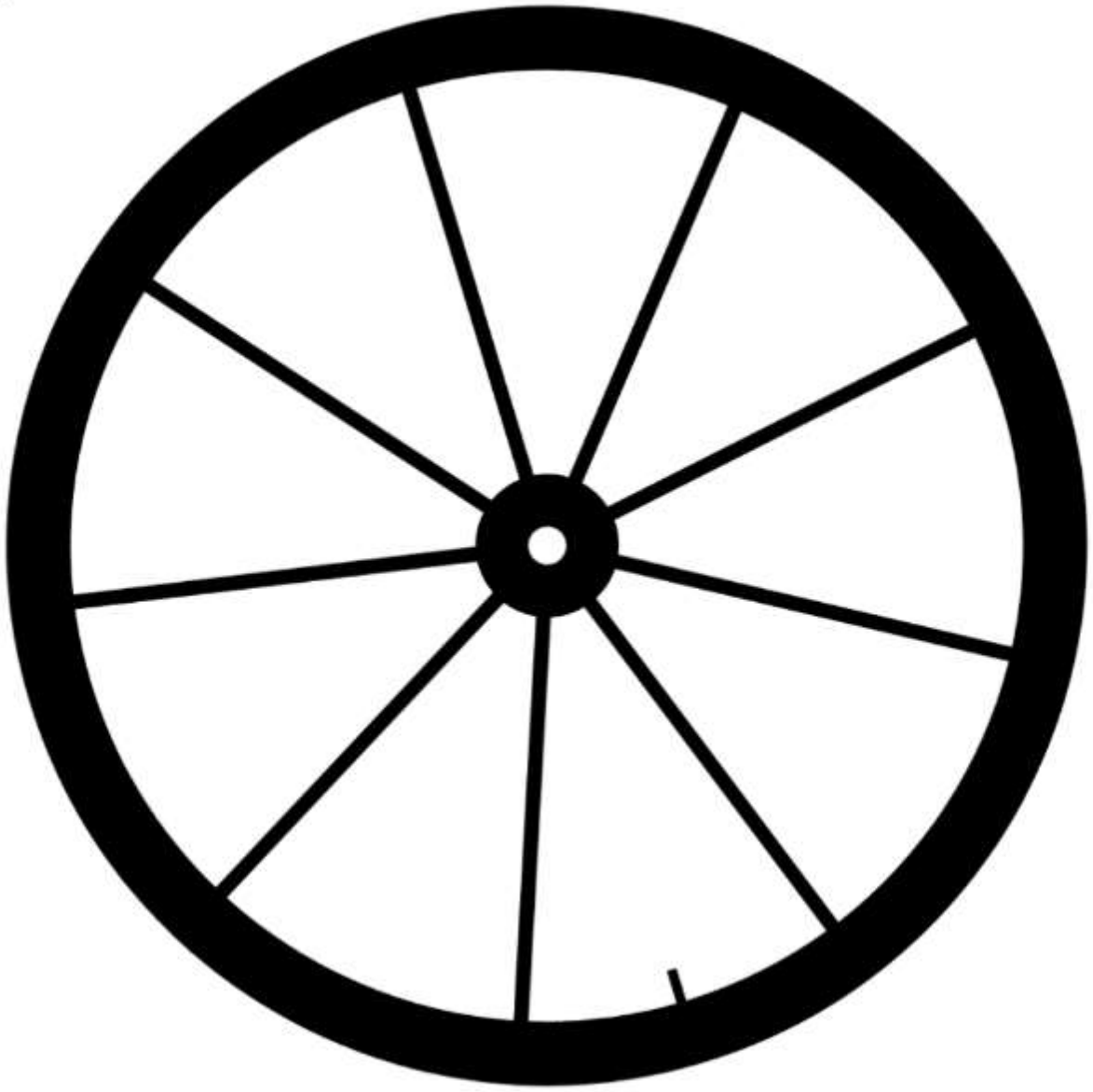
So, why is the resurrection such a big deal?

If the resurrection didn't happen, then that means that death, which comes as a result of sin, has still not been defeated. We need someone who can take our sin, and not just take it, but pay the price for it (which is death) and not just pay for it but render it powerless. And that is what Jesus did! He took our sin, paid the penalty for our sin through His death on the cross, and then declared it powerless by conquering it. Because He conquered it.....we will too! We are on the winning team.

Why else is the resurrection of Christ important?

Consider the following picture. If the middle piece of the wheel, or the hub, was removed, all of the spokes would become loose, as they are all connected to the hub. Likewise, if the resurrection of Jesus did not happen, it would impact so many other things in our lives.

Take the blue pieces of paper below and as you put them on the spokes of the wheel, consider how the reality of the resurrection makes a difference in each one, and talk about it with those around you.



## Station 7: The Resurrection of Christ = Restored and Empowered

5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Mark 16:7

Today is the day that we celebrate Jesus conquering the grave, defeating death, and giving us hope that one day, we will too. Our greatest enemy is defeated because HE IS ALIVE!

This hope produces a confidence that cannot be explained. It makes impossible things happen and it rebuilds and strengthens that which was destroyed. Consider Peter.

Before Christ’s death, Peter was adamant about his devotion to Christ and he was confident that come what may, he would defend Jesus – even to the point of death. Jesus told Peter that despite what he said, he would deny Him. This was not an option to Peter, just like the thought of the Messiah being put to death, but then it happened.

While Jesus was under arrest, Peter was close by and he was approached, not by an armed Roman guard, but by a powerless servant girl. She started to question Peter and his relationship to Jesus, and just as Jesus predicted, Peter denied Him. He denied being with Him and eventually He denied even knowing anything about Him. Peter remembered all that Jesus had said predicting his denial, and Peter was destroyed.

But the story doesn’t end there. Jesus was just getting started!

When the women find that the tomb was empty, and when they were approached by an angel announcing that Jesus was not there, that he had risen, what did he instruct them to do next? Tell the disciples and then he mentions Peter by name. Peter had to know.

In the following pages of Scripture we see Peter was restored back to Christ, and not only **restored** but the reality of the resurrection **empowered** him. In the book of Acts we see him speaking with such boldness - straight to the people who were responsible for Christ’s death. Was this man the same man that was once afraid of a slave girl?! Yep. The reality of the resurrection rebuilt and strengthened Peter to do great things for the Kingdom.

In this story, Peter had everything he needed to live in such a bold way. He was restored back to Christ and was empowered with an amazing amount of confidence because of the resurrection, the power of the Holy Spirit, and a story. If we are in Christ, we have all we need too! May we be encouraged to live like Peter as we have been restored back to Christ and empowered to do likewise.

Below is a keychain with three colors, representing what all who believe are given – (1)confidence that comes through the resurrection, (2)the power of the Holy Spirit, and (3) a story. As you go home today we pray that you will be empowered and challenged today to live boldly for Christ, like Peter.