

Again Jesus said, "Peter do you truly love me, no matter what?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?"

Peter's feelings were hurt because Jesus kept asking him, but he replied, "Lord, you know the answer, you know that I love you."

"Then follow me," Jesus said.

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We have learned that Jesus died on the cross because He loves us, no matter what bad things we do! Now we need to love Jesus no matter what. Here are some questions to think about:



Would you still love/follow Jesus if...

- your mom or dad got very sick
- you had no friends
- you became blind, or couldn't walk anymore
- everything was going wrong
- you had to move away from all your friends
- you were poor and never got any Christmas present

Some kids just like you have these problems, and much worse, and they still love Jesus! We need to remember that no matter what, Jesus loves us and will never ever stop loving us! Sometimes things happen that we don't understand, but Jesus knows everything and He will help us if we ask Him to.

*All stories by Sharla Guenther*



*Six Stories by Sharla Guenther*

**The "Red Door" Church, Oneonta, NY**

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## The Story of People Waving Palms to Jesus



As Jesus came closer to Jerusalem, he asked two of his disciples to go ahead of Him. He said, "When you get to the town, you will see a donkey tied up. Untie it, and bring it to me. If anyone asks you about taking the donkey, just tell them, 'The Lord needs it and He will bring it back as soon as He's done with it.'"

So, the disciples did as Jesus asked. They soon found the donkey tied at a doorway. As they were untying it, some people were standing nearby visiting. They didn't recognize the men and asked, "What are you doing? Why are you untying the donkey?"

They replied just as Jesus had told them to. Explaining that the Lord needed it, the people let them go.

When they brought the donkey to Jesus, some of the disciples took off their coats and laid them on the donkey's back. They did this out of respect for Jesus. Then Jesus rode on the donkey towards Jerusalem.

As He was traveling, some people saw Jesus coming and came running towards Him. They had heard He might be coming and they wanted to see him because he had just helped a dead man come back to life.

One by one, they laid their coats on the ground for the donkey to step on. Even the people that weren't wearing coats ran to the fields and trees nearby and cut palm branches and laid them down.

These people knew that Jesus was special. It was like when a King or Queen would come to town, and people would roll out a red carpet for him or her to step on. This is what these people did for Jesus when they laid down their coats and branches.

As they got even closer to the town, more and more people noticed Jesus. A crowd surrounded Him and started to shout praises to Him for all the miracles He had done: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna, Hosanna!"

The word Hosanna means *save us*. They said this because Jesus was helping them and doing amazing things. They wanted to praise Him, and they wanted Him to keep helping them.

Some men named Pharisees (these men thought they were important; a lot of the people listened to them). They heard the crowd praising God. They said to Jesus, "Teacher, why don't you tell these people to stop praising you as if you were God?"

The Pharisees thought that Jesus was getting too much attention from the people. They wanted to be the most important, but everyone was listening to Jesus instead.

Jesus replied, "If they were quiet now, even the rocks would cry out!" Even the rocks knew that He was God; after all, Jesus did make them.

Now Jesus could see Jerusalem and it made Him very sad. He came to help the people, but no one realized that He was God, and they didn't accept Him.

## The Last Supper

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples asked Jesus, "Where would you like us to plan for you to eat the Passover feast?"

Jesus replied to them, "Go into the city and you will find a man. Tell him that we would like to come to his house for Passover."

First of all, what is the Feast of Unleavened Bread? What is the Passover? These are actually the same things. The Jews celebrated the Passover ever since the time of Moses, when the



Lord saved all the Israelite babies. This was when the Lord 'passed over' their houses, and they were kept safe. This is another big story your teacher will have to tell you another time.

During the time of the Passover celebrations, the people didn't eat or have any bread in their homes with yeast in it. Yeast is what makes the bread all big and puffy. Without yeast, the bread is flat and that is called unleavened bread. Now back to the story.

The disciples did just as Jesus asked, and they found a place and got ready for the Passover.

The evening came, and Jesus and the twelve disciples sat to eat the meal. The disciples were eating quietly because they had a lot on their minds. They were worried. Some people wanted to kill Jesus since he was getting so popular.

Jesus could see the disciples were worried. He said to them quietly, "I tell you the truth, one of you here will betray me."

The disciples looked at each other in shock, and some of them asked Jesus, "It isn't me, is it Lord?"

Jesus replied, "The one who dips his bread into the bowl with me will betray me. I will die, just as it is written, but the man who betrays me will feel sorry forever.

Then Judas, with his head down spoke quietly to Jesus, "It isn't me, is it?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, you are the one."

Judas' head went down even lower; he had hoped that the other disciples had not heard what Jesus said. Luckily, they were paying more attention to Jesus breaking apart some bread.

He thanked God for the bread and shared it with the disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is my body which is given

for you". Then He took a full cup, thanked God for it and said, "This is my blood, which will be poured out for many people so their sins may be forgiven." They all took a sip from the cup.

The meal continued after this; it was a long celebration. The disciples took their time because they enjoyed talking with Jesus and asking Him questions. (Just like when you go out to eat with your parents and their friends, sometimes they seem to talk forever, and you just want to go home...).

After some time, Jesus got up from the table and went to a different part of the room. He took off his everyday clothes and put a large towel around himself to look like a servant. After that, he poured water into a large bowl and began to wash the disciples' feet. Then dried them with the towel that was wrapped around Him.

First of all, Jesus is like a King - but even greater than a king: He's the King of Kings! By washing the disciples feet, He was doing something that only a servant would do. This would be like if someone famous came to your house and started to clean your room -- even getting down on their hands and knees to clean under your bed! It probably would never happen.

When it was Peter's turn to get his feet cleaned he said to Jesus, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't understand what I am doing, but you will later."

"No," said Peter, "you will never wash my feet." He said this because he didn't feel right having Jesus wash his feet. He knew Jesus was very special.

Jesus replied back to him, "If I don't wash your feet, you cannot be with me."

"Then, Lord," Peter replied, "don't just wash my feet but my hands and head too." Jesus then explained that He only

needed to wash his feet; and that, this would make his whole body clean.

When Jesus had finished washing all of the disciples' feet, he put his everyday clothes back on and returned to the table. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" Jesus asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and that is who I am. And now that I have washed your feet, you can also wash one another's feet."

This is an example of how you should treat others. You don't have to actually wash other people's feet, but doing nice things for others and acting like a servant for Jesus, that is what He wants you to do. If you do these things, Jesus will bless you.



### **Jesus Prays**

After singing a song at the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples went to a garden called Gethsemane. It was getting to be quite late in the evening, so everyone was whispering.

Jesus was especially quiet, and walked a bit ahead of the rest of the group. He looked as if He was sad and upset about something. He stopped and whispered to some of the disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

Then, with Peter, James, and John he walked just a little bit further and told them, "My heart feels heavy, and I feel very sad. Please stay here and keep watch, I need some company close by." The disciples looked at each other; they had never seen Jesus like this before.

Then Jesus walked a bit further by himself. Next to a big tree he knelt down with his face to the ground and began to talk to God. He prayed, "My Father, I know that I am about to go through some horrible things; I wish I wouldn't have to, but it doesn't matter what I want, I will do whatever you want."

When He had finished praying, He went back to where the disciples were to find that they had fallen asleep on the ground. Jesus woke them and said to them, "Couldn't you have stayed awake for me for just a little while? You should also pray that you will continue to do what God wants."

The disciples felt bad, and tried to keep their eyes open. But when they started praying, they fell asleep. Two more times Jesus went off to pray the same prayer as before, and when he was finished He came back to his friends -- disappointed to find that they had fallen asleep once again.

The third time Jesus woke them saying, "Are you sleeping again? Enough! It is time to go. Here comes the man who is about to give me up to the people who want to hurt me."

While He was still speaking, Judas, one of Jesus' disciples was coming towards them. He was followed by a large crowd of people who were carrying swords and clubs. Judas walked right up to Jesus and gave Him a kiss on the cheek. This was a sign to the chief priests that this was Jesus, and that He was the man that they wanted to arrest.

Jesus let them take Him. But one of Jesus' disciples didn't like what was happening; he wanted to stick up for Jesus. He took out his sword and cut off the ear of a chief priest.

Before the situation got more out of hand, Jesus spoke firmly, "Enough!" He reached up to the man whose ear had been hurt and healed it instantly.

Jesus spoke to all those around him. "If I wanted I could pray to my Father for help. He would send angels to protect me and stop this. However, I know this needs to happen to finish what it says in the Bible."

The disciples did not know what to do. They were afraid that they might be arrested for being with Jesus; they quickly retreated, leaving Jesus to be arrested alone. Peter was the only disciple that followed Jesus. He was careful to follow at a

distance because he was afraid. He wanted to see what would happen to Jesus.

They took Jesus to a man named Caiaphas, who was the high priest (a man who made a lot of decisions). This is where all the other 'important' people had gathered. They were trying to find a reason to arrest Jesus, but He had never done anything wrong. People tried to make up bad stuff that they knew wasn't true.

Finally Caiaphas asked Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" When Jesus replied that He was the Son of God, Caiaphas couldn't believe it. He even tore off some of his clothes because he thought what Jesus was saying was untrue. These people didn't believe Jesus, and that's when they decided that they would kill him.

Meanwhile, Peter was just outside the building where they had taken Jesus. A servant girl saw Peter and had recognized him and asked, "Weren't you with that man named Jesus?"

But Peter lied and said, "You don't know what you're talking about."

Peter started to walk away, but the girl spoke louder so the other people who were around could hear, "I'm sure you are one of the men that is friends with Jesus."

Again, Peter said, "No, I don't know what you're talking about."

After a while, more people asked Peter the same thing; Peter started to get upset by this, and he said in a loud voice, "I don't know the man you are talking about. I've never talked to him."

Right after Peter said this a rooster crowed and Peter remembered something Jesus had said to him: "Before the rooster crows, you will turn your back on me three times." When Peter remembered this, he was very sad. Peter was one of Jesus closest friends, and now he had lied and said he didn't even know him.

Peter started to cry. How could he have done this to Jesus?

## **Jesus Dies on the Cross**

Very early in the morning, the soldiers brought Jesus to Pilate, the governor at the time. Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "Yes, I am."

This upset the chief priests because they were jealous of him and the Jewish friends He had made.

Pilate listened to the complaints of the people that brought Jesus, but he couldn't find any reason to punish Him. Pilate questioned Jesus, but Jesus didn't stick up for himself (He knew that they wouldn't listen anyway). He had done nothing wrong.

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people. He said to them, "I have talked to Jesus, and I find no reason to kill Him."

After they heard that, all the people shouted, "We want Jesus! Release Barabbas instead!" Barabbas had been in jail because he had killed someone, and the people wanted him to be free, and Jesus to be punished. (It sounds strange but it was like peer pressure. The chief priests went around telling people lies about Jesus, so that they would be afraid of Him, and would want to kill Him).

Pilate didn't like this one bit. He wanted to let Jesus go, so he tried to talk to the people but they didn't let him. They just kept shouting, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

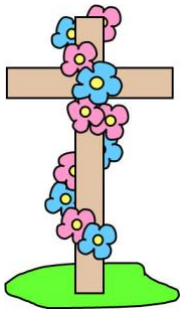
Pilate tried again, yelling, "What has Jesus done wrong? I can punish Him but then I must let Him go, He doesn't deserve to die!" But the people just shouted louder to crucify Jesus and Pilate wanted to please the crowd so he freed Barabbas and sent Jesus to die.

The soldiers led Jesus into the palace and made Him put on an old royal robe and they twisted together a crown of thorns to put on His head. Then they made fun of Him and said, "Hail, king of the Jews." They didn't understand that He was a king; that's why they made fun of Him.

Next, the soldiers led Jesus toward a hill called Golgotha. They made Him carry the cross on His back, but because Jesus couldn't carry it the whole way, He fell down. The soldiers had whipped His back and it hurt so much that Jesus couldn't handle the weight of the cross on His shoulders.

A man named Simon happened to be near Jesus when He fell, and the soldiers grabbed him, and made him carry the cross the rest of the way. The soldiers offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh. This was supposed to help make it less painful, but Jesus refused to have any.

When they reached the top of the hill, they nailed Jesus to the cross. There were three crosses: Jesus was in the middle, there was a criminal on His right, and on His left. Pilate made a sign to be put on the cross. It read what He was being punished for: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.



The soldiers watched Jesus and made fun of Him; they even divided up His clothes to be even more mean. Some people walked by and shouted, "You saved others, why can't you save Yourself?" Jesus could have saved himself, but he chose not to. He wanted to save us instead.

Jesus ignored the people, but He did see His mother, His aunt, and some other women He knew. Jesus felt bad for His mother, she was so sad to see her son die (just like your parents feel when you get hurt).

Then Jesus saw one of His disciples close to His mother, and He said, "Mother here is your son, and friend here is your mother." Jesus couldn't say too much for he was very weak. But He wanted His friend, the disciple, to be like a son to

His mother and take care of her. And from that day on, the disciple did.

Later, Jesus could not handle the pain any longer and He said, "It is finished." That is when Jesus bowed His head and went to Heaven.

Suddenly, a huge curtain that hung at the temple was torn in half, from top to bottom. And a man that had wanted Jesus to die saw all of this and he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

He realized he had been wrong about Jesus.

It seems like a really sad story, but its one of the greatest stories of all! Jesus died knowing that you (--put in the children's names) would do things wrong (that is what a sin is) -- things that you're not supposed to -- not obeying your parents, saying something mean to your sister or brother, or not telling the truth. He knew what you would do when He died so many years ago. Jesus died for **everybody's** sins, so now when we ask God to forgive us, and we are truly sorry for what we've done, He will act like it never happened. That's right He forgets what we did! Now that doesn't mean we should ever make the same mistake again, because by doing that it's like we're hurting Jesus all over again.

So, next time you do something you're not supposed to, remember to say sorry to Jesus, and remember what He did for you!

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)**

## **Jesus is Alive!**

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph (from a place called Arimathea) put Jesus in His tomb that nobody had ever

used. The tombs they used then were cut out of rock, almost like a cave, they weren't buried deep in the ground like they are now. Before Joseph left, he and some men rolled a large heavy stone in front of the tomb.

Mary and Mary Magdalene had waited a day to see Jesus because they couldn't go on the Sabbath (which was a day of rest). They made spices and oils as a sign of respect to Jesus and went very early Sunday morning to go see Jesus' body.

As they were just about at the tomb, the earth suddenly shook and an angel came down from heaven. He easily rolled away the stone at the entrance of the tomb and sat on top of it.

The women looked at each other and rubbed their eyes since they couldn't believe what they had seen -- plus it was very early in the morning, and they were still a little sleepy. The angel was so bright -- almost as bright as lightning! His clothes were as white as snow.

There had been guards watching the tomb so no one would steal Jesus' body. When they saw the angel, they fell over and they couldn't move or speak because they were so afraid.

Then the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus who has died. But He isn't here; He has risen just as He said He would! Come and see for yourself, the tomb is empty."

The women were confused. How could this happen? They were sure Jesus had died, and now He was alive? They looked in the tomb and the cloths Jesus had been wrapped in were lying on the ground; the tomb was empty. Then the angel spoke again, "If you want to find Jesus He's on his way to Galilee."

So the women hurried away, They were laughing and crying at the same time. They didn't know what to feel; they had been so sad that Jesus was dead and now they were so excited that He was alive! They just knew they had to find Jesus, and they had to tell the disciples the good news.

As they were running down the path, they turned a corner, and there was Jesus. "Greetings," He said. The ladies fell at His feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my disciples to come to Galilee. That is where they will see me."

The disciples came to Galilee, having heard by this time that Jesus was alive. They were sitting around talking about it when Jesus walked into the room and said to them, "Peace be with you."

The disciples immediately stopped talking. Even though they had heard He was alive, they were shocked to see Him standing there with them.

Jesus said to them, "Why do you look at me like you've just seen a ghost? Why don't you believe what you're seeing? Look at the scars in my hands and feet. It is really me! Touch me and see, I am not a ghost but a real person."



The disciple's mouths were open in amazement because they still didn't know what to think. They were so full of joy, and yet it was so impossible. Jesus understood what they were thinking, so He said, "This is what I told you would happen, that everything must happen that has already been written in the Bible."

Jesus had told the disciples when they had the Last Supper together; they took the bread at communion and Jesus said, "this is my body which I have given to you..." but the disciples hadn't understood what it really meant.

Then Jesus told them, "You have seen these things that have happened, so stay in the city and soon I am going to give you what God has promised you: the Holy Spirit.

When we become Christians, Jesus automatically gives us the Holy Spirit to live inside of us. The Holy Spirit makes us know

when we have done something wrong. We might feel sick to our stomach, or just get a bad feeling but that is the Holy Spirit reminding us that we are doing something wrong, or that we need to stop and say sorry and ask for forgiveness for what we've done.

The story is almost done, but Jesus had one more person to see. His name was Thomas, and he was one of the disciples that wasn't there when Jesus met with them. Thomas had also heard that Jesus was alive, but would not believe until he saw Jesus with his own eyes.

A week later when Thomas finally saw Jesus, Jesus said to him, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Stop doubting and believe." But Jesus continued, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; but it is more amazing for those who don't see me, and believe anyway."

It's really neat, but Jesus was actually talking to us when He said this. If you believe in Him, without seeing Him, He will think you're very special! That is exactly what faith is: believing in God even though you can't see Him.

## **Jesus Loves You**

Jesus appeared several times to the disciples after He rose from the dead. This is a story of one of those times...

Peter said to some of the other disciples, "I think I'm going to go fishing."

The disciples that were there said, "Wait up, we'll go with you."

It was getting dark outside but the disciples thought they would catch more fish at this time of day. They got into the boat and went out onto the water. They were out there for a long time. The time passed and it was almost morning but they still hadn't caught any fish.

Jesus knew where His disciples were and went out to meet them. He was standing on shore, but the disciples didn't realize who He was. Jesus called to them, "Friends, haven't you caught any fish?"

"No," they answered.

So Jesus told them, "Throw your net on the other side of the boat and you will catch some." What happened next was amazing.

The disciples, who had been fishing all night without catching anything, threw the net over to the other side and within minutes the net was overflowing with fish.

One of the disciples realized who had been talking to them, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Peter heard this he jumped out of the boat to go to Jesus. (They weren't that far from shore).

The other disciples stayed in the boat, and worked hard to tow all the fish to shore. When they met up with Jesus, there was a fire started with some bread lying close by. Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have caught and we'll have breakfast together."

Peter helped the rest of the disciples get the fish out of the boat. There were so many fish and they were all so big and heavy that they all needed to lift together to get the fish out of the boat.

Then they all sat together in front of the warm fire and Jesus took the bread and the fish and gave it to them. This was the third time Jesus had met with the disciples since He rose from the dead.

After breakfast, Jesus asked Peter some important questions. He asked him, "Peter do you love me more than your parents and all your friends?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "You know that I love you."