

Creating a Holy Week Centerpiece

Adapted from Lilly Lewin at freerangeworship.com

As we celebrate Holy Week, here is a centerpiece you can create with your family! Each day there is an activity and response you can do to retell the stories of Holy Week.

The centerpiece is like a reverse Advent wreath. If you create the centerpiece at the beginning of the week, start with all the candles lit on Palm Sunday and Monday. Then, you extinguish a candle each day, so that the centerpiece is dark by Saturday. On Easter, you relight all the candles.

You don't have to do all this every day. If you have time every day to do the activities, great! If not, you may decide to only do this on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday. Also, you can modify questions or prayers for your family, if needed. You may wish to read stories out of a story Bible for younger children.

NOTE: All the supplies listed are suggested by Lilly Lewin. However, get creative. Use what you have at home; you don't have to buy things. God will be present, no matter how your centerpiece turns out.

To make the centerpiece, you will need:

- 5 candles (votives or tealights work well, but you can use any candles you have on hand)
- Dish or plate that will hold candles and be large enough for extra things to be added to it

PALM SUNDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Pieces of fern or palm branches (colored on paper is fine!)
- Cut out clothes/jackets from magazines (or color and cut out outlines, like paper doll clothes)

LIGHT ALL 5 CANDLES

Read: Matthew 21:1-10 (Jesus' entry into Jerusalem)

Activity: Add pieces of ferns or palm branches and cut outs of clothes or jackets to remember Jesus' entry to Jerusalem.



Reflect and talk: What do you think it was like to be in the crowd when Jesus rode into town?

- What do you see, hear, smell?
- How do you think the crowd felt? The Pharisees?
- How do you feel when you hear this story?

Pray: Dear Jesus, we love and praise you! Open our hearts to love you more this week as we journey to Easter. Amen.

MONDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Pennies

LIGHT ALL 5 CANDLES, then ask someone to blow out ONE of them.

Read: Matthew 21:12-17 (Jesus cleansing the temple)

Activity: Pass around the pennies. Hold a penny in your hand and think about the scene. What does it look like, smell like, what do you see? What do you notice?



Reflect and talk: The Money Changers were blocking people's access to prayer & worship, especially the Gentiles.

- What things block you from prayer and worship right now? What things keep you from worshipping Jesus?
- What things (like the tables of the money changers) keep you from being with God?

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving us, even when we are distracted. Help us remember to focus on you this week, and always. Amen.

TUESDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Bottle of oil or bottle of perfume

LIGHT ALL 5 CANDLES, then ask someone to blow out TWO of them.

Read: Matthew 26: 6-13 (Jesus anointed at Bethany)

Activity: Pass around the oil or perfume and put a dab on your forehead as a symbol of your willingness to honor Jesus.



Reflect and talk: The woman in the story gave Jesus her most valued possession. She honored him with this gift of expensive perfume.

- What is your most valuable possession?
- Are you willing to give this to Jesus to honor him? Why or why not?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for the good things you give us. Help us remember to honor you with our words and actions. Amen.

WEDNESDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Hershey kisses (or color and cut out clip art lips, like shown)

LIGHT ALL 5 CANDLES, then ask someone to blow out THREE of them.

Read: Matthew 26:14-21 (Judas agrees to betray Jesus)

Activity: Eat a Hershey kiss as a symbol of your willingness to forgive those who have betrayed you and as a symbol of your need for forgiveness. Or, write your Name on the lips cut out and put it on the centerpiece dish/plate.



Reflect and talk: Jesus was betrayed by two of his friends, Judas and Peter. Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Peter denied that he even knew Jesus.

- Has anyone betrayed you before? What happened?
- Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Why would Jesus tell us to do this?
- How do you think we betray Jesus?

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for loving and forgiving us. Help us remember to love and forgive others, too. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Pieces of paper with a plate drawn on it to use as placemat, or paper place mats, one for each person

- Strips of purple fabric (if fabric isn't available, strips of purple paper will work, too.)

LIGHT ALL 5 CANDLES, then ask someone to blow out FOUR of them.

Read: Matthew 26:26-30 (The Last Supper)

Activity: Add strips of purple cloth under the candles to form a cross. Have extra strips of purple, enough for each person in your group. You will use these on Good Friday. Then, create or decorate paper place mats (one for each person).



Reflect and talk: Imagine the scene. Picture the colors, the smells, the atmosphere of the room. This was Jesus's last meal with his disciples, his closest friends.

- If this was your last meal, what would you be eating?
- Who would also be at your table?

(You may wish to draw/write your answers to these questions on the placemats.)

Pray: Dear Jesus, thank you for the gift of food, and for people to share it with. Help us remember you during each meal. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Strips of purple cloth or paper (one per person)
- Piece of muslin or black cloth that will cover entire centerpiece

LIGHT ONLY THE CANDLE IN THE CENTER OF YOUR CENTERPIECE.

Read: Matthew 27:32-54 (Jesus' Crucifixion) **After reading the story, extinguish the candle. SAY "IT IS FINISHED."**



Activity: Have everyone rip their pieces of purple cloth or paper in half, which symbolizes the temple curtain being torn separating the holy of holies when Jesus died on the cross. When the candle has had time to cool, have someone cover the centerpiece with a cloth symbolic of Jesus' burial.

Reflect and talk: The curtain was ripped top to bottom! We now have direct relationship with God!

- How does it feel to know that you are not separated from God even in death?
- How does it feel to know that Jesus knows and understands your suffering and pain?
- What things do you need Jesus to finish for you in your life?

Pray: Dear God, thank you for never leaving us. Help us remember that we can never be separated from you. Amen.

SATURDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Band-aids

DO NOT LIGHT ANY CANDLES ON THE CENTERPIECE. KEEP CENTERPIECE COVERED.

Read: Matthew 27:57-61 (Jesus' Burial)

Activity: Pass out band-aids to each person. Unwrap them and stick them on your wrist. As you stick on your band-aid, name aloud a person (or a group of people) for whom you would like to pray today.

Reflect and talk: Jesus's disciples, his friends, have abandoned him and are hiding and afraid. His body is buried in a borrowed tomb. We are also living in a time when we are afraid. We have all lost something this crazy season: going to school, work, meeting people in-person, even freedom of movement.

- How are you feeling today about the death of Jesus?
- How are you feeling today about what is happening in the world?
- Is this the end of the story? What happens next?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for bringing healing and hope, even though things may seem dark right now. Help us remember the promise you make to never leave us. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY:

Things to add to your centerpiece:

- Candles, one for each person (you can use small birthday candles)

UNCOVER YOUR CENTERPIECE AND LIGHT ALL OF THE CANDLES!

Read: Matthew 28:1-10 (Jesus' Resurrection)

Activity: Pass around the birthday or other small candles. Light your candle from the centerpiece. **Say together:**
CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN INDEED.

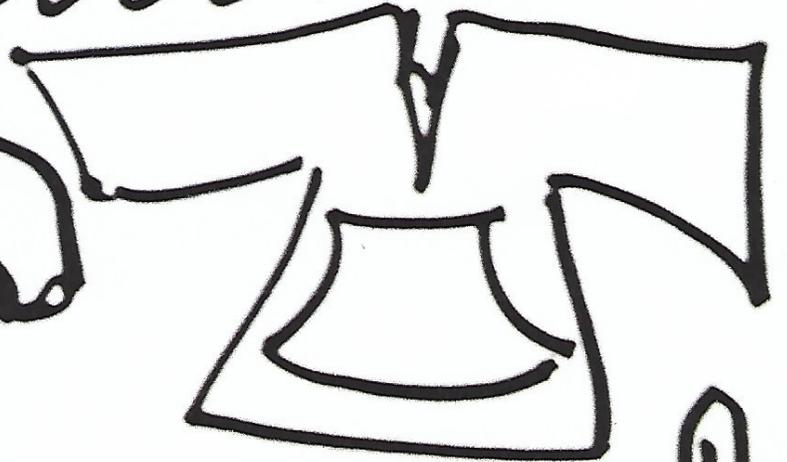
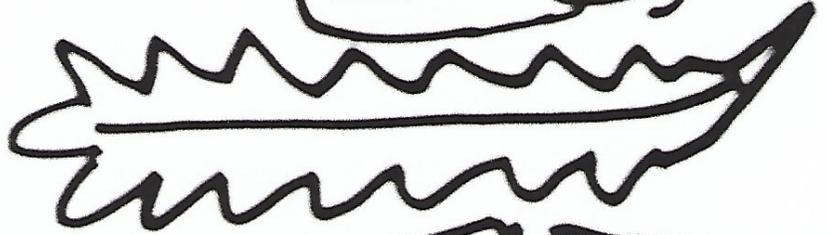
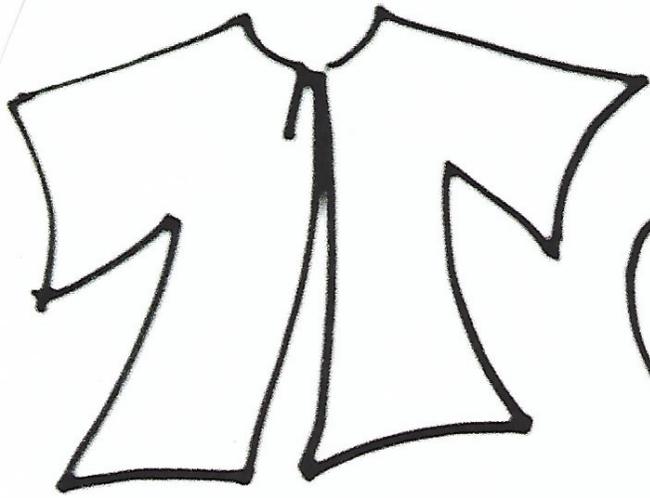


Reflect and talk: The light on our small candles is a symbol of Jesus resurrection and the Light returning to the world. Now we can share that Light and his love with everyone we meet!

- What are some ways you've seen or experienced resurrection and new life this week?

- Where are some places in our world that need to see the light of Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, help us to see your light and experience your resurrection today and every day. Thank you that we are Resurrection People able to share your love and life with others. Amen.



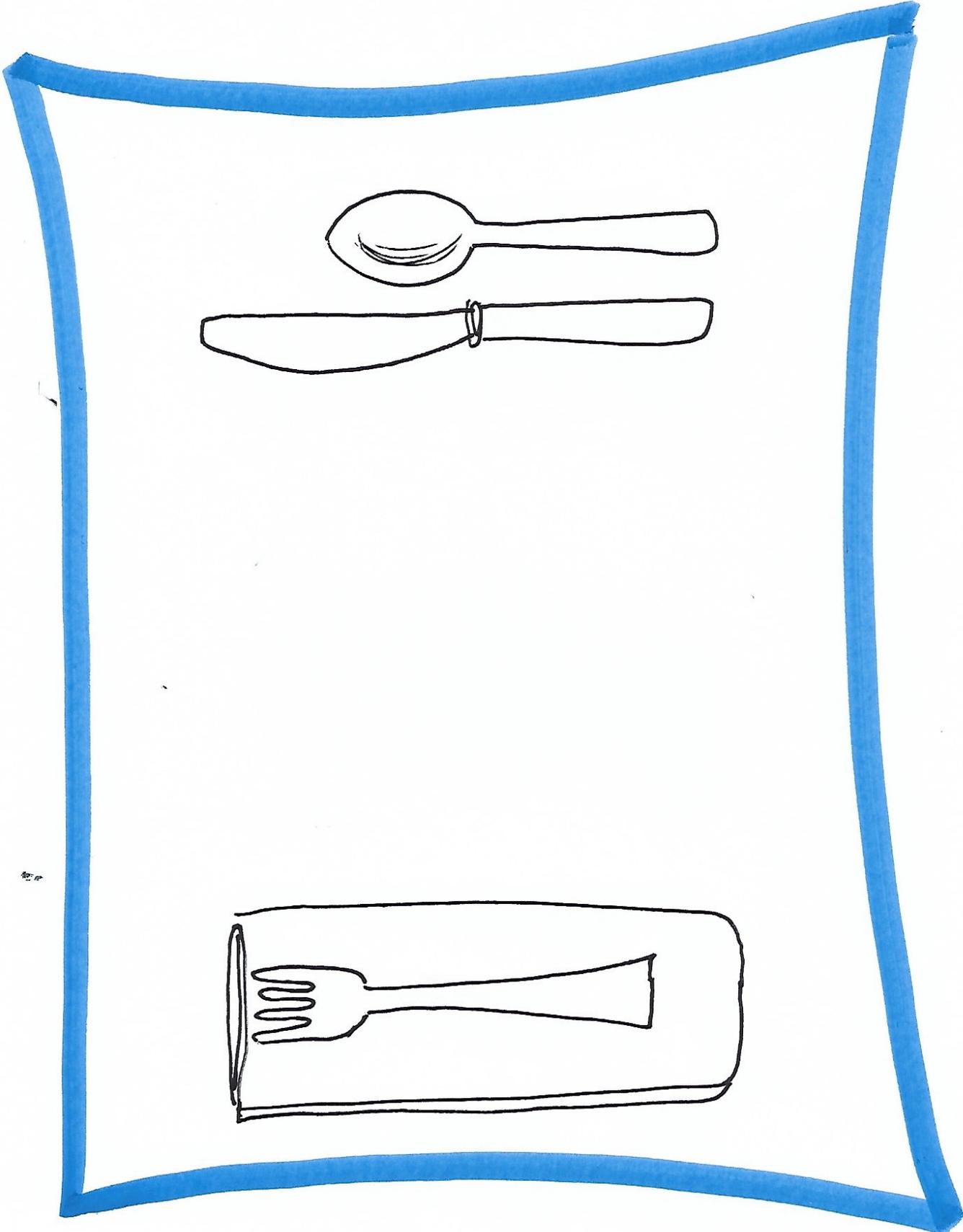
PALMSUNDAY

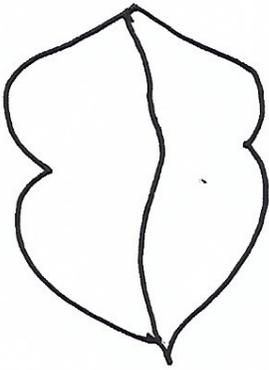
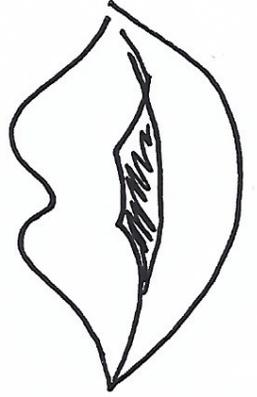
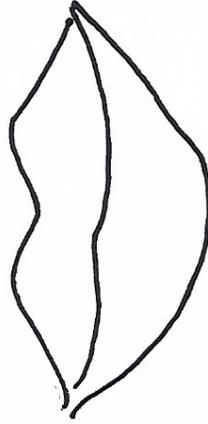
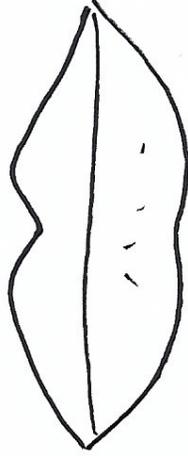
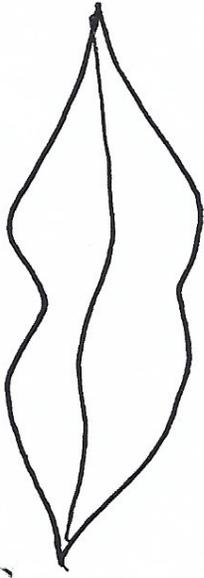
COLOR & CUT OUT

and PUT around

Centerpiece







KISS
OF
BETRAYAL

