

Scene 4: The last supper

Bible

Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23; John 13:1-7

Aim

To help pupils to experience the story of the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples. This story is linked with the idea of Jesus serving his disciples by washing their feet. What sort of king is Jesus? A servant king and a mysterious king.

Setting the scene

Jesus and the disciples were in the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. The sacrament or special ritual which we now know as the Holy Communion is based on the things which Jesus did and said at this meal. The meal took the form of the traditional Passover meal in which the Jewish people remembered how, led by Moses, the Israelites escaped from Pharaoh's Egypt after the angel of death had 'passed over' their houses. All the elements of the meal have meaning for Jewish people. A special plate called a Seder plate is used which holds seven foods, all with symbolic meaning.

- A lamb bone represents the lamb sacrificed on the last night.
- Bitter herbs remind the people of the bitter time as slaves in Egypt.
- Salt water represents the tears of the slaves.
- Unleavened bread (bread without yeast) was used as there was no time for the bread to rise.
- Charoset (a mixture of apple, cinnamon, nuts and wine) symbolises the mortar from the bricks which the slaves had to make.
- Roasted egg represents the new life after leaving Egypt.
- Parsley and spring onion provide a sign of new life.

Traditionally, the youngest child in the family asks the question, 'What makes this night so special?'

Jesus arranged to eat the Passover meal with his disciples in an upper room in the city.

Character(s)

Jesus and Peter

Narrator

The youngest child in the group (*previously arrange with the teacher to ensure that the child is happy to read a sentence*)

Costume

Jesus and Peter are both dressed in modern dress, such as white T-shirts and jeans.

Scenery

Two gazebos are placed side by side with an adjoining open side to create a large room. The lighting is dim and the walls are plain, created from either the sides of the gazebos or dark fabric and screens.

Props

Low tables are placed in the centre of the room to create a table long enough for the children to sit round either on the floor or on cushions. The table is covered in a white cloth.

A Seder plate is placed in the middle of the table with the items described above in place. These are: lamb bone, herbs, salt water, matzo bread, charoset, hard-boiled egg and spring onions.

Battery operated tealight candles help to give atmosphere and there are pottery jugs and beakers to represent the wine. Wooden plates of matzo bread and dishes of grapes complete the table setting. There should be enough plates of Matzo and grapes to pass round to everyone.

A large pitcher and a towel are placed near where Jesus is to sit.

For suppliers of Seder plates and battery operated tealight candles see resources.

Alternatively, a large platter or tray can be used with small dishes containing the food items. It may be possible to borrow a Seder plate from the RE department of a local high school. Some primary schools also have their own artefacts.

Battery operated garden lanterns are also useful to give atmosphere. For safety reasons, real candles or oil lights should not be used.

The groups are led quietly into the darkened room and the children are encouraged to sit down on the floor around the table. Jesus and Peter are already sitting centrally at the table ready to mime the story. Group leaders explain to the children quietly that they are invited to take part in the meal and are offered a piece of Matzo bread and a grape. Once all the children are settled and have taken some food, the narrator begins to read.

Narrator: On the Thursday of that week, Jesus' Easter journey takes us to an upstairs room in a street in the city of Jerusalem where Jesus is eating a special meal with his friends. When everyone had settled at the table, Jesus got up. He tied on a towel around his waist and fetched a jug of water and a bowl. He began to wash the dust from his friends' feet.

(Jesus mimes washing Peter's feet.)

The table was set with special food. There was lamb to eat and some flat bread that had not risen in the way that the bread we might buy in the shops does. This flat bread is called unleavened bread. Then the youngest person in the room spoke up.

Youngest child: What makes this night so special?

Narrator: Jesus told his friends that they were celebrating how God had rescued his people from slavery and brought them through the waters of the Red Sea to freedom.

God had told the people to sprinkle the blood of a lamb on their doorposts. The angel of death would see this and pass over their homes. They had to get ready to travel and quickly baked bread for their journey. There was no time to let the bread rise.

At the end of the meal, Jesus took a piece of the flat bread. He said thank you to God and then he broke the bread and handed it to his friends with the words...

‘This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this as a way of remembering me!’ (*Jesus mimes this action.*)

Then Jesus poured out some more wine and said to his friends...

‘This is my blood. It is poured out for you, and with it God makes his new agreement.’ (*Jesus mimes this action.*)

Whatever did Jesus mean? What was he talking about? Jesus was always saying puzzling things.

After this, Judas, one of Jesus’ friends, slipped out of the room. When the meal was finished, everyone sang a hymn. Then Jesus led them out into the night... (*Jesus leaves the room with Peter.*) They went to a garden beneath the city walls, where Jesus wanted to pray.

(After Jesus has left the room, the group leaders tell the children that they are going to follow Jesus into the garden. They encourage the children to creep quietly through the doorway into the next scene.)