

The Adventures of Isabella & Luis

The Life and Times of Jesus — Mary is Visited by an Angel and is Rewarded with a Baby

It's been a very hot summer here in Memphis. This Sunday afternoon was no exception. Isabella and Luis were in their backyard under the tree, just trying to stay cool. Baby Sofie was inside taking a nap, so Mama told them to stay outside unless they wanted to come in, be very quiet, and read. Isabella was beginning to think that being quiet inside would be better! Luis, on the other hand, was the holdout. He doesn't really like reading, so he opted for the backyard swing. Bela was sitting under the tree, fanning herself and thinking about the supper.

Soon, baby Sofie was awake, so the kids could make noise again. Luca and Maya, their next-door neighbors, came over, and the kids started a game of kickball near the back fence. It wasn't long before they sat down for a tasty Sunday Supper.

Papa asked the kids about the coming week. "Are you all going to Bible Club this week?" He asked. They nodded yes, and they were looking forward to it. Papa continued. "Well, maybe if I hear good reports, we could consider taking in a baseball game on Saturday!" Luis was excited – he loved baseball! "But you kids know the rules – good report all week. And help around the house for Bela, too." Isabella told him, "No problem, Papa. We'll help!"

Monday morning, it was really hot and sunny! Isabella and Luis got dressed and went to the kitchen to see what breakfast was that day. After eating, they helped clear their stuff to the kitchen, then went out front to wait for the church people.

It wasn't long before they could be seen coming down the road. They stopped for a minute to speak with Bela, then the kids said bye and left with the church people. Their Bible Club site is close by, so in short order, the kids were all settled under the big tree waiting for the story leader. Soon she stood there talking to them. "We are so happy to be here with

you all this week. Our week will be talking about the life and times of Jesus. We will talk about the birth, the life, and the death of Jesus!" Isabella knew many stories about Jesus, but always loved hearing them. The story leader continued, "Let's get right into our first day and see what we can learn!"

Now, the story for today begins like this...

Long ago in Nazareth, a young woman named Mary lived. She did her chores, was kind, and loved God. She was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter.

One day, while Mary was at home cleaning her room, an angel suddenly appeared. Before Mary could say anything, the angel told her that she was favored by God and that God was with her.

Mary was surprised. She was trying not to be afraid, but she had never seen an angel before. After all, Mary was just a regular lady like you or me. Why was this angel visiting her? What did the angel want? The angel reassured her: "Do not be afraid! God has found favor with you. You will have a baby boy named Jesus."

Mary was confused; she was not yet married to Joseph, so how could she have a baby? The angel thought that this might concern Mary, so he said, "The Holy Spirit will perform a miracle, and because of this, your baby will be called the Son of God."

The angel continued: "Even your cousin Elizabeth will have a son in her old age. Many thought she couldn't have children, but she's already pregnant. Nothing is impossible with God." Mary couldn't believe what she heard. Trembling, she knelt down. When she could finally speak, she said, "I am the Lord's servant, and I hope everything you have said will come true." Then the angel disappeared, leaving Mary alone.

Gabriel had reminded Mary of her relative Elizabeth, who lived in Judah. He told Mary that, even though Elizabeth was too old to have children, by a miracle, she was also expecting one. Gabriel was telling Mary that there is nothing God can't do! Mary went to see Elizabeth. When Elizabeth hears Mary's voice, the baby inside Elizabeth jumps for joy! Elizabeth is filled with God's spirit, and she says to Mary, "You are especially blessed among

women." Mary stayed and visited with Elizabeth for a while, then returned home, where Joseph was. Elizabeth had her baby about six months before Jesus was born; he was known as John the Baptist. (Remember this name; it will come up again on Wednesday!)

Soon after, Joseph found out that Mary was going to have a baby. Joseph was confused and upset by this, but an angel came to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child Mary is going to have is God's son, and you are to give him the name Jesus." When Joseph woke up, he remembered what the angel had said. He knew that everything was okay, and he wasn't upset anymore.

In those days, the government decided to count everyone living in that area of the world. The leader, Caesar Augustus, passed a law requiring everyone to return to the city of their birth to have their name written in a book. So Joseph had to take Mary to Bethlehem to register. Mary and Joseph took a long, tiring journey to Bethlehem since there were no cars. This was especially exhausting for Mary, who was about to have a baby. They reached the town. All the hotels were full, and there was nowhere to stay. Finally, someone felt bad for them and offered a place to stay. Mary and Joseph stayed in a barn and prepared the manger for their baby. Isn't it strange that Jesus, the King of the Jews, was not born in a palace or even a hospital?

Mary and Joseph were thankful that they at least had a place to lie down. It was warm, and there was plenty of straw to lie on. That night, an exciting, wonderful thing happened: Mary and Joseph had a baby! But this wasn't just any baby; he was Baby Jesus! The creator of the whole world, the King of Kings, and the one who would save the world. The baby boy fell asleep in Mary's arms. She wrapped him in cloth and laid him in the manger on clean straw. Mary and Joseph soon fell asleep, glad to have this special baby join their family.

Isabella knew this story, but always loved to hear it again and again. She was going to enjoy this week. They finished their rotations and had some snacks before starting home. When they arrived, Bela was waiting for them. The church leader gave Bela a thumbs-up and then continued on down the road. Luis was happy. He knew as long as they behaved, there would be a baseball game to see on Saturday!

Group Discussion Questions:

Who was the angel that appeared to both Mary and Joseph?

What happened when Mary visited Elizabeth?

Why did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

What is a manger?

Bible Verse:

“And she will bring forth a son, and you shall call his name JESUS; for he shall save His people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21

Word of the Day: Blessing

A way God shows someone special favor

The Adventures of Isabella & Luis

The Life and Times of Jesus: A Star was Followed

Once the kids settled in after Bible Club, Bela had a treat: fresh empanadas she'd made that morning. As Bela worked on supper, the kids recounted the day's activities. Isabella told her about the church team that week and how much she liked the many young people, which made game rotations especially fun. After snacking, Luis went next door to play with Luca and Maya. Isabella went to Sofie's room as she was waking, changed her, and brought her to the living room to play with blocks on the cool floor. Sofie didn't mind being inside. Bela was making Carne Guisada for supper—Isabella's favorite.

After playing for a while, Mama came home. She picked up Sofie for a bottle while Isabella checked on Luis, who was swinging in the backyard. They played outside until Papa got home, and it was time for supper. Luca and Maya went home, and Isabella and Luis washed up for supper. At supper, Papa asked how Bible Club went. They told him it was good. They had a Monday thumbs up! "Great," he said. "I'll look for some tickets then."

Tuesday morning arrived just as hot as Monday morning was! But that didn't slow down Isabella and Luis. They got dressed and headed to the kitchen, where Bela was making breakfast. The kids enjoyed their breakfast, helped Bela clean up, and went outside to wait for the church people. It wasn't long before they were coming down the road. Bela had joined them outside with baby Sofie on her hip so they could all wave bye. Then the kids joined the church people and started to their club site. They were there in no time and settled under the big tree to hear the story for today. The story leader stood before them, looking excited. "We continue our journey through the life of Jesus today," she said. "We are going to talk about a star! As you probably guess, they didn't have GPS back in Bible Times, so the shepherds all had to rely on other methods to find their way. Let's get into our story now."

And our story today goes something like this...

Some shepherds, who lived near Bethlehem, were out at night in their fields watching over their sheep. They were worried that a larger animal might come and hurt the sheep, so they sat on a hill, visiting and watching their sheep together.

Suddenly, a bright light appeared. Now this wasn't just any bright light. The light was so bright that the shepherds had to close their eyes for a minute because the light hurt their eyes. When they opened their eyes to see what was going on, a beautiful angel stood in the air just above them, his arms open wide.

The shepherds looked at each other in disbelief, but realized it must be real because they were all seeing the same thing. All at once, they were very afraid, but they didn't run because they were too stunned. Then the angel spoke to them: "Do not be afraid. I'm here to bring you good news for all people. Today in Bethlehem, a baby has been born. He is the one who will save the world. You will know the baby because He will be wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly, just as quickly as the first angel came, a large group of angels appeared and said together, "Glory to God, and peace to all people on earth." After they spoke, they floated away.

The shepherds were amazed and excited. Did everyone know this news, or just them? They had to go see this baby the angels were talking about. They ran as fast as they could, and soon found Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus. The shepherds fell to their knees when they saw Jesus. They were filled with joy that they had found the Lord.

The shepherds only stayed for a few minutes because they realized that Mary needed to sleep. As soon as they left, they began shouting in the streets and telling everyone they met what they had seen and the arrival of baby Jesus. Mary sat and watched Jesus sleep. She was so happy. She was thinking about what it would be like when her son got older, and what an important person He was. When Jesus was born, there was a very mean king who ruled the land. His name was King Herod.

Soon after Jesus was born, wise men were traveling on their camels. One night, they noticed a very strange star in the sky. They knew that this star

meant that the King of the Jews, the One who would save the world, had been born. When the mean King... (What was his name again?) Herod heard this he got very worried. He called a meeting with all the other important people in the area and asked them where this special baby had been born. The people replied, "In Bethlehem." They knew this because they heard that one day a special person would come from there and take care of all the people.

Then King Herod called the wise men to a secret meeting and learned exactly where they had seen the star. He then told them, "Go and find this child. As soon as you find him, tell me, so that I can go and worship him." After they had spoken to the King, the wise men left to find the baby. They didn't know exactly where the baby was, but at night they followed the star in the east. They followed the star until it hung right over the very place where Jesus was.

When they finally arrived, they were very excited and happy. They found Jesus lying in Mary's arms and bowed down to worship him. They opened the gifts they had brought to Jesus. The gifts were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were very expensive gifts; these were gifts that you would give to a King, not to a baby. Mary thanked them for bringing the gifts for Jesus, and the wise men went to find a place to sleep for the night.

As the wise men slept, they each had the same dream. They were not to go back and tell King Herod where they found Jesus. King Herod didn't want to find Jesus to worship him; instead, he wanted to kill him because he was jealous that this baby would someday be better than him. So, the wise men went home another way so that Herod would not know where they had come (Who do you think put that dream into each wise man's mind?). They also decided not to tell King Herod anything about what they had seen.

When the wise men had left, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," the angel said, "take Jesus and Mary and run away to Egypt. Stay there until I come to you again, because Herod is going to search for Jesus to kill him."

Joseph immediately got up and woke Mary. She gently picked up Jesus so he wouldn't wake. They left in the middle of the night for Egypt, so no one would see them. They were safe in Egypt, and after King Herod died, an

angel appeared to Joseph and told him he could go to a place called Nazareth. And that is where Jesus grew up.

Isabella just loves the story about baby Jesus. They finished their rotations and had a snack before heading home. When they got there, Bela was waiting patiently, and the church leader gave the thumbs-up! Luis was happy! He had been very good and also loved the thought of that baseball game on Saturday!

Group Discussion Questions:

Do you really think King Herod wanted to worship baby Jesus?

What did the angel tell Joseph to do?

Why were the shepherds in the fields all night?

Bible Verse:

Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people,' Luke 2:10

Word of the Day: Glory

Brightness or splendor

The Adventures of Isabella & Luis

The Life and Times of Jesus: Jesus is Baptized

Note to leaders:

Days 3 and 4 are good times to discuss what baptism is and what it means.

Children will have many questions, so it's best to have some tracts (please see note about the ABC's of Salvation)

It was a very hot afternoon. But Bela was ready for that. They all went inside, where she directed the kids to the kitchen table. She was going to work on supper and listen out for baby Sofie to wake up from her nap. On the kitchen table was a big bowl of watermelon chunks! Isabella and Luis were so excited! They sat down and enjoyed some cold treats. While they were snacking, Isabella told Bela about their morning at Bible Club. She told about the star and the angels. "Bela," she asked, "Do angels appear to people now like they did in Bible times? I never hear about those things." Bela looked at her thoughtfully. "Well, child," she said, "I have not seen such a thing myself. But it's in the Bible, so I surely do believe they are out there. We believe everything in the Bible, you know." Isabella nodded, yes. She thought she would also ask Mama that same question.

Soon, they could hear baby Sofie waking up in her crib. Isabella went back and got herself some watermelon. Bela had a watermelon with no seeds, so Isabella made some little, tiny bites for her little sister. She and Luis laughed as she enjoyed her snack!

A little later, Papa was home, and they all sat down for supper. Sofie was in her highchair between Mama and Bela – she always made such a mess! Papa asked how the Bible Club was today. Luis told him about the star and the angels. "Ah, the Angels," Papa said. "That's a good Bible story for sure. Were you two well behaved at Bible Club?" Isabella said right away, "Yes, sir, we got a thumbs up from the church leader!"

On Wednesday morning, the sky was cloudy as if it might rain. Isabella was hoping it would not rain until at least they got home. The kids got dressed

and went to the kitchen for breakfast. After breakfast, they all went out front to wait for the church team. Soon, there they were, coming down the road towards Isabella and Luis. They waved bye to Bela and Sofie, then joined their group going to Bible Club. They went to the site, settled under the big tree, and waited for the story leader to start speaking. Soon she stood up and said to the kids, "Today, we will talk about when Jesus was baptized! Who knows about being baptized?" (Allow kids time to respond; also explain what baptism is.) "So we will get right into our story."

And today's story goes something like this...

There once was a man named John the Baptist, who actually was one of Jesus' cousins. Do y'all remember me mentioning his name in Monday's story? Well, he became a preacher and told others to ask for forgiveness for what they had done wrong. He wanted to help others change their lives so they could become a brand-new person inside.

He was doing this not to be better than Jesus, but to help Jesus. By preaching to others to feel bad for their mistakes and to ask forgiveness. By teaching that they needed God in their lives, he was preparing the people to hear from Jesus himself.

John was a man who wanted to live a very simple life. He felt that having many things wasn't important; instead, he traveled through the desert and told others about the good things God was doing in his life and how God could do the same for theirs.

So, John didn't go to a big house every night to eat a big supper and go to sleep in a nice, comfortable bed. John didn't have a home, and he probably slept outside sometimes. Other nights, he may have been invited to stay with friends he made along the way.

For food, he ate insects like locusts (which are kind of like grasshoppers); he would find some wild honey to eat with them. Can you imagine a diet of bugs? Remember, John wanted to live a simple life; he felt like God was all he needed. Nothing else was more important.

When people heard that John was in the area, they came from all over to listen to him and be baptized. Now, for some of you, you might not quite

understand what baptism is, and that's okay. If you've ever seen someone get baptized, it's sort of like taking a bath with clothes on. Has anyone here seen a baptism or been baptized?

When someone believes in God, baptism is a way to show others that they believe in Him and want to live their lives the way God wants. It's like having a bath to make yourself clean on the inside. When you get baptized, it's a special way of showing that you understand that you have and need God's forgiveness.

When some men named the Pharisees and Sadducees came to listen to John, he had a strict warning for them: they needed to feel bad for the wrong things they had done and ask forgiveness for their mistakes. But these men didn't think they were doing anything wrong; they weren't sorry, and so John would not baptize them.

As people came to John to be baptized, they wondered whether he was the Saviour they had waited for. John heard what they were saying, and he told them, "I am baptizing you now, but very soon someone greater than me will come. He is so great that if He asked me to carry His shoes, it would be an amazing honor."

John continued to preach and baptize people until one day Jesus came by to be baptized. Now, Jesus was about 30 years old, and John, we remember, is only about 6 months older than Jesus. John didn't know what to say; all he thought was, "How could I, just a regular man, baptize Jesus the Saviour of the world?" John said to Jesus, "You should be baptizing me. I cannot baptize you, Lord."

Jesus replied, "It's important that I do this now. I am ready, and I want to be an example to others and show them that it's important."

So John took Jesus and baptized Him. He placed his hand on His back and laid him down in the water until He was covered. Then he brought Him back up again. As soon as Jesus was baptized, the sky opened, and the Holy Spirit descended like a beautiful white dove and landed right on Jesus' shoulder. Then a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, I love him, and I am pleased with him."

Just like when Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. When we lie down in the water, we are dying or getting rid of all the bad things we've done.

Under the water, we are buried. Then, when we are brought out of the water, we are a brand-new person to God.

Baptism is important because Jesus made sure this was the first thing He did when He started His ministry. He did this even though He had never sinned in his entire life. Jesus was setting an example as he was about to begin his ministry.

Isabella really liked the story and had many questions for the story leader about baptism. So, they got to talk a bit. Isabella thought she would also talk more to Mama about this tonight.

Group Discussion Questions:

How did God show his pleasure with Jesus?

What do you think the dove represented?

What do you think about the lifestyle John the Baptist chose?

Bible Verse:

“When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized, and while He prayed, the heavens were opened.” Luke 3:21

Word of the Day: Baptism

A symbol of having your sins washed away

The Adventures of Isabella & Luis

The Life and Times of Jesus: The Miracles of Jesus – Lazarus

Note to leaders:

Days 3 and 4 are good times to discuss what baptism is and what it means.

Children will have many questions, so it's best to have some tracts (please see note in this file about the ABC's of Salvation)

When the kids got home from Bible Club, Isabella was glad it didn't rain on them. Bela was waiting on the front porch as they arrived, and the church leader gave her a thumbs-up. Luis was glad – he really was looking forward to that baseball game on Saturday. They all went into the kitchen, where Bela took out the rest of yesterday's watermelon for the kids to snack on. Baby Sofie was still napping, and Bela sat down with them for a snack too. "How was Bible Club?" She asked. Isabella told her they talked about when Jesus was baptized. Isabella asked Bela, "Have you been baptized?" Bela smiled. "Yes, many years ago, when I was a little girl about your age."

Isabella then asked her what it was like. Bela responded, "It's like a special ceremony where someone shows the world they love Jesus and are starting a new life with him. Water is used as a symbol for washing away old mistakes (we call them sins) and being cleaned up." Bela paused to let all that sink in. She knew Isabella would have more questions. She told Isabella and Luis that they could all talk about it more at supper tonight. Bela had to get back on her supper prep. Isabella went to see about baby Sofie, who was waking up. She brought Sofie to the kitchen for some watermelon bites, and then they retired to the living room to play with Sofie's blocks. The girls played until Mama got home. Luis had gone next door to play with Luca and Maya. It wasn't long before Papa also got home, and they all sat down for supper. Bela had prepared a delicious pork roast with vegetables and rice.

Papa, of course, asked how the Bible club was that day. Isabella told him the story of the baptism. Papa told her it was an important story and that they would talk more about baptism soon.

Thursday has arrived. No clouds today, it's just hot! The kids got dressed and went to the kitchen, where baby Sofie was in her highchair, eating a banana. Bela had made oatmeal with fruit for the kids. They were hungry today and ate everything, then helped to clean up. They all went to the front to wait for the church people.

Soon they could be heard coming down the road. Isabella and Luis said bye to Bela and Sofie, then joined the group headed for their site. It didn't take long to get there, and they were sitting under the big tree. The story leader stood and started talking to the kids about some sisters and brothers who were friends of Jesus.

"Brothers and sisters, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were good friends to Jesus. They lived in the town of Bethany. Jesus liked to go to Bethany and visit His friends." The story leader said. "Let's go there also and see what is happening."

And our story goes something like this...

One time, when Jesus was far away preaching about God, Lazarus got sick. Mary and Martha were very worried about their brother. They thought he might die. "Let's send someone to go and get our friend Jesus," the sisters said. "Jesus can help Lazarus get better." So, Mary and Martha sent a messenger to find Jesus.

When the messengers found Jesus, they asked Him to hurry to Lazarus' house because he was very sick. Jesus said, "Don't worry; this sickness will not end in death." Jesus kept teaching the people for two more days before He travelled to Bethany.

After the two days had passed, Jesus told the disciples, "We have to go to Bethany because Lazarus has fallen asleep. I have to go wake him up." When He saw the disciples did not understand, He explained, "Lazarus is dead." The disciples were very confused as they traveled to Bethany. What did all this mean? How did Jesus know that Lazarus was dead? How could you "wake up" a dead person?

Finally, Jesus and the disciples arrived in Bethany. Lots of people came to Mary and Martha's house. Many of them were crying. Jesus was not

surprised because He knew that they were all crying about Lazarus. Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Martha went out to meet Jesus. Martha was very sad, "Jesus," she said, "if you had gotten here earlier, then Lazarus would not have died!"

Jesus said to her, "Don't worry, Martha, your brother will rise again."

Martha did not understand. She thought Jesus meant that Lazarus would be raised up on the last day of the world when all of God's people were resurrected. She went to get Mary.

When Mary heard that Jesus was in town, she quickly went to meet Him.

She was so sad about Lazarus that she was crying very loudly when she said, "Jesus, if You had been here sooner, then Lazarus would not have died."

Jesus knew that everything would be all right, but He was very sorry to see Mary so sad. Jesus knows what it is like to feel very sad. He cared so much for Mary that He cried too.

Then Jesus asked someone to take Him to the place where Lazarus was buried. When Lazarus died, the family had to take care of his body. In those times, they put a cloth over the dead person's head. Then they wrapped the hands and feet in strips of cloth. After that, they used long strips of cloth to wrap the person up. Sometimes, they put sweet-smelling perfumes like aloes in the clothes so that the body would not stink so much. They then placed the body in a cave or tomb and set a large stone over the entrance. Lots of family members were often buried in the same cave or tomb.

Lazarus was buried in a cave. Lots of people were gathered around it.

When Jesus arrived at the cave, He asked the people to roll the stone out of the entrance. Martha gasped, "Jesus, how can we do that? Lazarus has been dead for four days. His body will stink."

"Martha, just you wait and see. If you believe, then you will see the glory of God."

The people took away the big stone. After Jesus prayed, He called out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" What was Jesus doing? Didn't He know that Lazarus was dead? What do you think was happening?

Everyone looked at the tomb's entrance, and guess what they saw?

Lazarus was coming out of the tomb, and he was alive! Everyone was so

happy! Lazarus was alive. There was only one problem. Lazarus was alive, but he could not move. He was still all wrapped up in the burial clothes! Jesus told the crowd, "Go ahead, and take his grave clothes off so he can move around."

What a happy day this must have been in Bethany. At the beginning of the day, everyone was sad, but now they were happy. God and Jesus know what it is like to be sad. When we are sad, we can pray to God, and he will help us feel better. Those who witnessed this event reacted in different ways. The story ends with some believing in Jesus, but others rushing off to report it to the Pharisees.

Luis was amazed. How could someone die and then be alive? He was very confused. Isabella was thinking the same thing. The story leader stood for a bit to try to explain to all the kids how Jesus could perform miracles. After their rotations and snack, the kids finally started home with the church people. The church leader gave Bela the usual thumbs up, which made Luis smile!

Group Discussion Questions:

Who was Mary and Martha's brother? (Lazarus)

Why was everyone crying when Jesus arrived at their home? (Lazarus was dead)

What did Jesus do when he saw Mary crying? (Jesus wept)

Is it sinful to be sad or to cry? (No)

Bible Verse:

"Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live." John 11:25

Word of the Day: Resurrection

Rising again after being dead, all due to Go

The Adventures of Isabella & Luis

The Life and Times of Jesus: Jesus' Greatest Gift to Us All

The first thing Isabella noticed was that baby Sofie was already awake from her nap. Bela was dressed like they were going somewhere. "What's going on, Bela?" Isabella asked. Bela answered with a smile, "Mama is coming home early, and we are going shopping for picnic stuff for Saturday. We will have a picnic before the baseball game." Luis liked the sound of that for sure! About that time, Mama pulled up. She told the kids she would be ready in just a minute and that they would head to Walmart to do some shopping.

They all went to the store for food for Saturday. Daddy was planning to utilize grilling stuff at AutoZone Park and cook hot dogs. So, they got hot dogs, buns, chips, and cookies. Of course, they had to get "Sofie food" since she was still too little for hot dogs! After that, Mama decided they would get pizza for supper tonight to give Bela a break from cooking. Luis thought this idea was great – he loves pepperoni pizza! So, they stopped at the local pizza shop on the way home and picked up a pizza. When they got home, Papa had just arrived. They all enjoyed pizza and lemonade. Friday has arrived. It's a clear, hot day in Memphis. The kids are a bit sad to say goodbye to this group, but happy about the baseball game on Saturday. They hop to the kitchen and eagerly eat some cereal Bela has set out for them. Mama and Papa have gone to work, so the kids and Bela head out front to wait for the church people, and they are already coming down the road. Waving bye to Bela and Sofie, Isabella and Luis join the group going to their site. In short order, they were sitting under the big tree waiting for the story leader. She stands in front of them. "We've enjoyed this week with you all. You are a great group of kids. Maybe we'll be back next summer. Right now, we are going to get right into what we think was Jesus' greatest gift to us all."

And today's story goes something like this...

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 who 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, made Him put on an old royal robe, and 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, and a criminal was 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 John, the disciple, to be like a son to His mother and take care of her. And from that day on, John did.

Later, Jesus could no longer bear the pain, and He said, "It is finished." That is when Jesus bowed His head and went to Heaven. Suddenly, a huge curtain hanging at the temple was torn in half from top to bottom. And a man who 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 it's one of the greatest stories of all! Jesus died knowing that you (point to all the children in the circle) 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 as if it never happened. That's right. He forgot 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!

After Jesus died, a man named Joseph (from a place called Arimathea) placed Jesus in a tomb that had never been 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 travel on the Sabbath (a day of rest). They made spices and oils as a sign of respect to Jesus and went very early Sunday morning to 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 to the ground and 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 in which Jesus had been wrapped 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 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, "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 disciples' 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."

That Jesus was resurrected (or rose from the dead) is the greatest of all miracles. He died on the cross for our sins, then rose from the dead to soon go to heaven to be with God.

Isabella was thinking about how sad it was that Jesus had to die, but she understood why it was considered a great gift. Something to talk to Bela about tonight. The kids finished the rotations and had a snack. They hugged some of the church people goodbye before leaving with the others. Once home, the church leader gave Bela a thumbs up and told her she had some great kids. Bela just smiled and thanked him! Isabella and Luis hopped onto the front porch as the church people went down the road. And now, for some lunch and to prepare for the baseball game tomorrow.

See everyone next week!!!

Group Discussion Questions:

How did Jesus behave during this time?

How did Jesus' resurrection help? (Jesus' resurrection shows his power over death and his love for humanity.)

Why did Jesus die? (Jesus died to take the punishment for the sins of humanity, even though he was without sin.)

Bible Verse:

"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

ABC's of Salvation

The ABCs Explained

- **A - Admit:** Acknowledge that you are a sinner and have fallen short of God's glory, needing forgiveness (based on Romans 3:23).
- **B - Believe:** Believe that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that He died for your sins, and that God raised Him from the dead (John 3:16)
- **C - Confess:** Confess Jesus as your Lord and Savior, turning from your sins (repentance) and committing to follow Him (1 John 1:9).

Prepare for the question.

Be sure you know what the Biblical response is before you arrive. Children will have more questions than you think.

Have several methods of explanation ready in case they don't catch one; you will have a backup plan.

There are many tracts you can obtain. Your church probably has one you could order and bring with you.

There are also options on Amazon, Lifeway.com and your local Christian bookstore. Just come prepared!

A note to remember. You are not there to lead every child to Jesus (although that would be a glorious thing to see!)

You are there to explain and plant seeds. If a child is showing interest, explain and also refer this information to your Street Reach Missionary.