

Psalms of Hope



Resources for Lent in troubled times

THE CHURCH
SCHOOLS OF
CAMBRIDGE



Psalms of hope

We approach Lent 2021 locked down for the third time in less than a year. Each time hope seems a little harder to cling on to, and the damage done to physical and mental health seems yet more engrained. It is difficult to even begin talking about some of the complex feelings and issues arising from these troubled times, never mind processing them.

When we open the Bible at the Book of Psalms, alongside songs of praise we find songs of lament. They give voice to some of the emotions swirling within the troubled mind and have offered comfort and hope for thousands of years.

In Lent, Christians often follow Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, which ultimately leads to death on the cross and then resurrection to new life. Some of the stories speak of miraculous healings and crowds desperate to hear Jesus' teaching. But many are less than straight-forward. They tackle incidents which have many layers of meaning, with anger and despair placed alongside future hope. Jesus is seen to be enraged, confrontational, resisting authority.

Placing psalms and gospel stories side by side allows space and gives room for us to wonder about our own distress and our hopes for the future.

1

Hope of being comforted

Jesus in the wilderness

Luke 4: 1-13; Psalm 91

2

Hope of help and renewal

Jesus cleansing the temple

John 2:13-22; Psalm 69

3

Hope of new life

Jesus raising Lazarus

John 11:17-44; Psalm 30

4

Hope of being able to offer comfort

Jesus being anointed at Bethany

John 12; Psalm 126

5

Hope of happier times

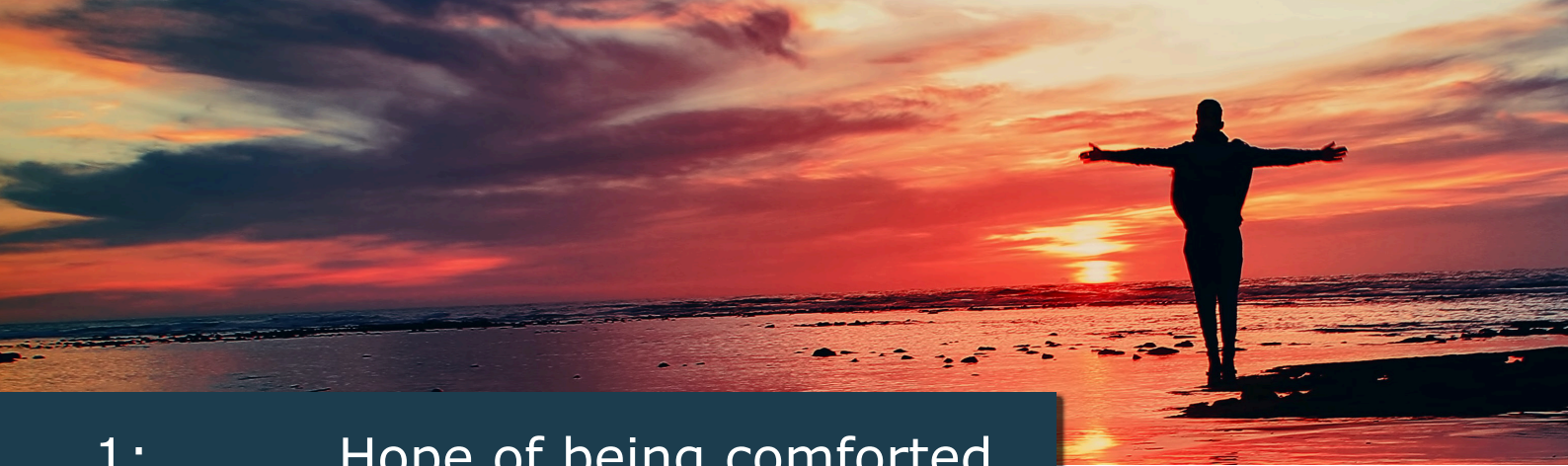
Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-40, 20:17-19, 21:27-28; Psalm 118

Lament Psalm Workshop

Lament psalms are poetic prayers that reach out to God, they articulate distress and despair, trusting that God will help, and look forward in praise and expectation.

The children will learn what the psalms are for, how they are structured into different sections, how they work as poetry and how they can go about writing their own psalms.



1: Hope of being comforted

You will need:

desert bag or thick sheet and sand; praying hands; chain; musical instrument; baby in hand model; black organza; 2 angels; heart; Jesus figure, stones, Mount Sinai model; crown; Temple model; wooden cross.

Story

Open the desert bag and swirl the sand as you say:

The desert is a dangerous place. The wind blows and the landscape changes.

There is little to eat or drink, and almost no shelter.

Days are hot, but nights can be freezing cold.

Make a road in the sand with your finger, then blur it with your hand

It's hard to find the way in the desert, and easy to get lost.

People only journey through the desert if they have no choice.

Place the praying hands in the back centre

The Book of Psalms in the Bible is the prayer book of God's People.

In it we find poems and songs of lament and praise;

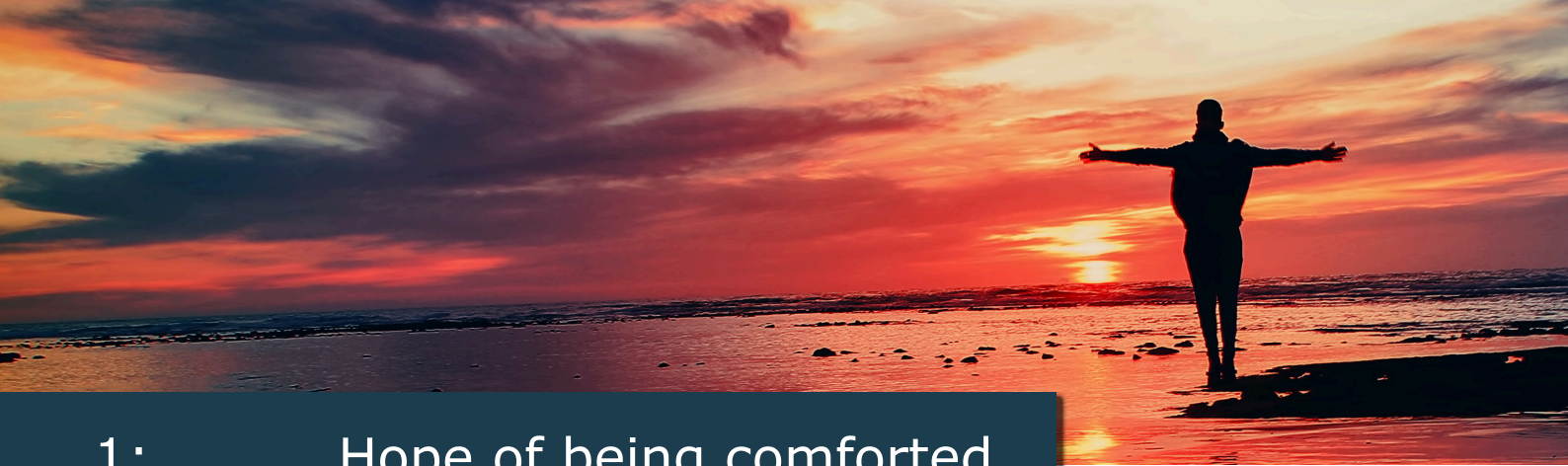
Place the chain in the back left corner

calling out to God for help in difficult times;

Place the musical instrument in the back right corner

or praising and thanking God in joyful celebration

Psalm 91 is a prayer to God for protection from danger and for strength in times of trouble. The Jewish people say it was written by Moses on the day he finished building the Tabernacle – the home for God's presence.



1: Hope of being comforted

Place hand and baby in back centre

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
The Lord alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.

Place your hands over the baby like wings

He will cover you with his feathers.

He will shelter you with his wings.

Place some black organza behind the baby

Don't be afraid of the terrors of the night,
or the disease that stalks in darkness!

Place an angel on either side of the baby

For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.

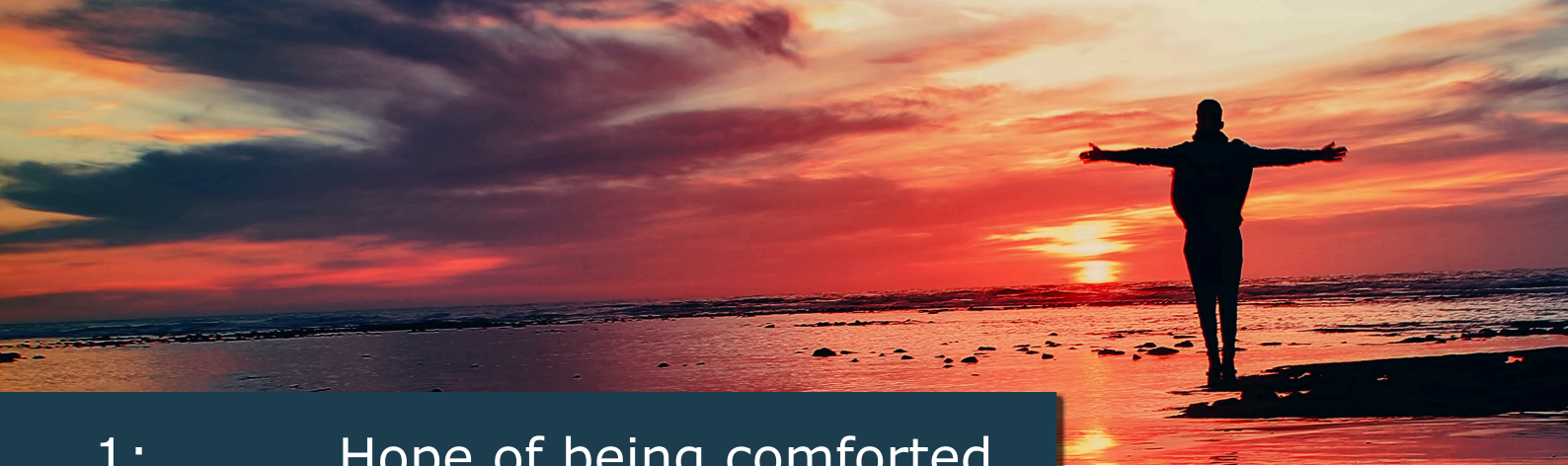
They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

Place a heart in front of the baby

The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.

When they call upon me, I will answer."

Psalm 91 offers comfort to those who are troubled. It helps them to see through the difficult times to find rest with God.



1: Hope of being comforted

PAUSE

When Jesus was alone in the wilderness, this Psalm came to his mind:

Present the Jesus figure, and 'walk' him into the wilderness

After Jesus was baptised by John in the River Jordan, he was led by the spirit of God into the wilderness. He stayed there alone for 40 days and 40 nights.

Place stones centre front

He was very hungry. He was tempted to turn stones into bread to eat.

But Jesus said, "No! We need more than just bread to really live."

Place Mount Sinai at the side

Then, it was as if Jesus was on the top of a very high mountain.

Place a crown at the foot of the mountain

He could see all the kingdoms of the world. A voice said, "I will make you king of all these if you bow down and worship me."

But Jesus said, "No! You should only worship God. I am to be a king, but not that kind of king."

Place the Temple at the other side

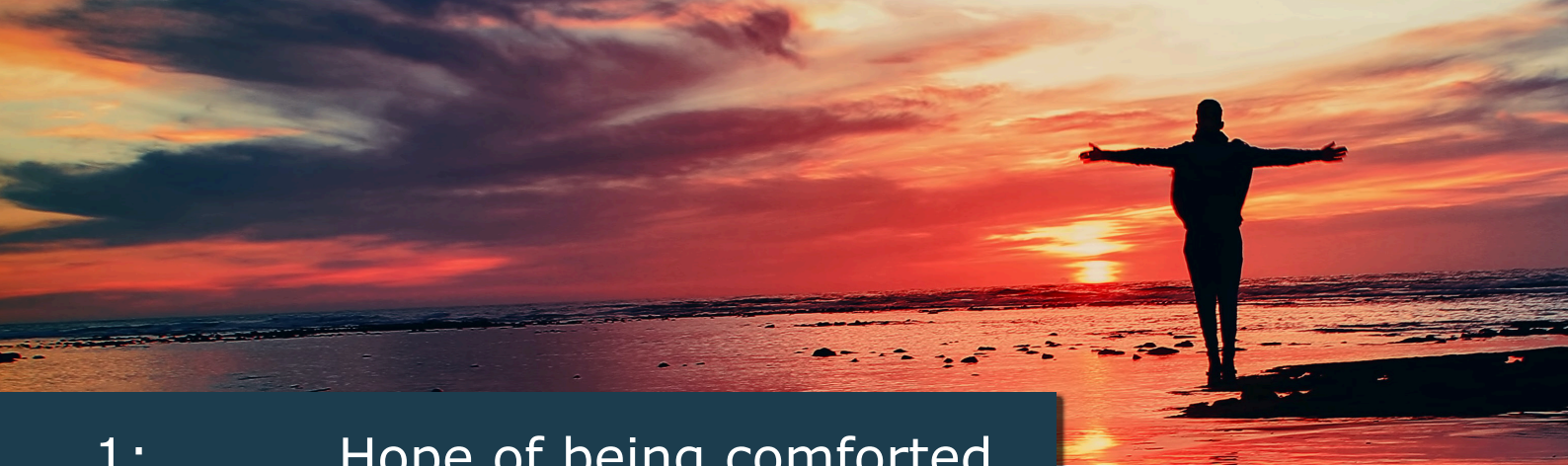
Suddenly it seemed as if Jesus was on top of the great temple in Jerusalem.

Move the two angels forward and place them at the foot of the temple

He was tempted to throw himself off. The Scriptures said God would order his angels to protect him. He wouldn't even hurt his foot on the stones below! Then everyone would know how special he was

But Jesus said, "No! You should trust God, not test him."

Move Jesus to centre



1: Hope of being comforted

Then Jesus was alone.

Place a cross behind Jesus

God's shelter and protection were with him wherever he went.

Christians believe that God's shelter and protection are with them wherever they are.

They hope to find comfort in God, no matter what happens.

Wondering

I wonder which part of this story you liked best?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder what you would change?

I wonder where you would put yourself in this story?

I wonder what you hope for?

Response Activities

Can you find anything in your home or classroom or playground to add to this story?

What can you paint or draw to tell something more about this story?

What can you find to make a model or collage to tell something more about this story?

What can you find to play with to help you think about this story?

Can you make yourself a comfortable shelter?

What will you do in it?

Can you find or make some bread to eat, and someone to share it with?

How could you help someone else who is in need of comfort?



2: Hope of help and renewal

You will need:

desert bag or thick sheet and sand; praying hands; chain; musical instrument; bowl and jug of water; 3 people figures; Temple model; heart; wooden wave model; coil of rope; strands of blue cloth; Jesus figure; cows; sheep; tables; doves; bag of coins; 2 disciple figures; wooden cross; Risen Christ figure

Story

Open the desert bag and swirl the sand as you say:

The desert is a dangerous place. The wind blows and the landscape changes.

There is little to eat or drink, and almost no shelter.

Days are hot, but nights can be freezing cold.

Make a road in the sand with your finger, then blur it with your hand

It's hard to find the way in the desert, and easy to get lost.

People only journey through the desert if they have no choice.

Place the praying hands in the back centre

The Book of Psalms in the Bible is the prayer book of God's People.

In it we find poems and songs of lament and praise:

Place the chain in the back left corner

Calling out to God for help in difficult times;

Place the musical instrument in the back right corner

Or praising and thanking God in joyful celebration

Psalm 69 is one of the psalms that is thought to have been written by King David. It is a cry for help, when everything seems to be going wrong.



2: Hope of help and renewal

Place the bowl and jug in front of the musical instrument, then pour water into the bowl as you speak:

Save me, O God,
for the floodwaters are up to my neck.
Deeper and deeper I sink into the swamp;
I can't find a foothold.
I am in deep water,
and the floods overwhelm me.

Place 3 figures beside the bowl, and move 2 away, turning their backs

I have been mocked when I stood up for You;
I walk around ashamed to show my face.
Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me;
They treat me like a stranger.

Place the temple model beside the figures

And here's why: I am consumed by you, passionately devoted to protecting your
house;
When they insult you, they insult me!

Move the praying hands and place them beside the temple

When I pray and give up food to fast,
they make fun of me.
But I keep praying to you, Lord,
Hoping this time, you will show me your kindness.



2: Hope of help and renewal

Place the heart beside the praying hands

In your unfailing love, O God,

Answer my prayer and rescue me as you promised.

Place the wave beside the heart

Don't let the floods overwhelm me,

Or the deep waters swallow me,

Or the pit of death seal me in.

Place a coil of rope beside the wave and uncoil it

Come near and rescue me,

Free me from those who hate me.

Shake the musical instrument and place it beside the rope

Then I will praise God's name with singing,

And I will honour him with thanksgiving.

Wave some strands of blue cloth and place them beside the musical instrument

Praise him, O heaven and earth,

The seas and all that move in them.

Psalm 69 offers hope that God will listen and help, and that better times will come.

PAUSE

When the disciples saw what Jesus did at the Temple, God's house, this Psalm came to mind.

Move the Temple model to the centre front

Present Jesus and move him to the Temple



2: Hope of help and renewal

One time when Jesus went up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover, he made his way to the Temple to pray.

Place the cow, sheep and tables with doves and bag of coins in front of the Temple

When he arrived, he saw merchants with stalls selling cows and sheep and doves for sacrifices; he also saw dealers at tables exchanging foreign money.

Swing then place the rope (used earlier) in front of the stalls

Jesus made a whip from some ropes and chased them all out of the Temple.

Move the animals to the side, and turn over tables and upset money

He drove out the sheep and cattle, scattered the money changers' coins over the floor, and turned over their tables.

'Fly' the doves away

Then, going over to the people who sold doves, he told them, "Get these things out of here. Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!

Move the praying hands and place them on top of the Temple

The scriptures say, "My house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it into a den of thieves!"

Place 3 disciple figures beside Jesus

Then his disciples remembered this prophecy from the Scriptures:

"I am consumed by you, passionately devoted to protecting your House."

Move the mocking figures from the Psalm and place them beside Jesus

But the Jewish leaders demanded, "What are you doing? If God gave you authority to do this, show us a miraculous sign to prove it."



2: Hope of help and renewal

“All right,” Jesus replied. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”

“What!” they exclaimed. “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?”

Move Jesus forward, and place the cross and risen Christ on either side of him

But when Jesus said “this temple”, he meant his own body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

Wondering

I wonder which part of this story you liked best?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder what you would change?

I wonder where you would put yourself in this story?

I wonder what you hope for?

Response Activities

Can you find anything in your home or classroom or playground to add to this story?

What can you paint or draw to tell something more about this story?

What can you find to make a model or collage to tell something more about this story?

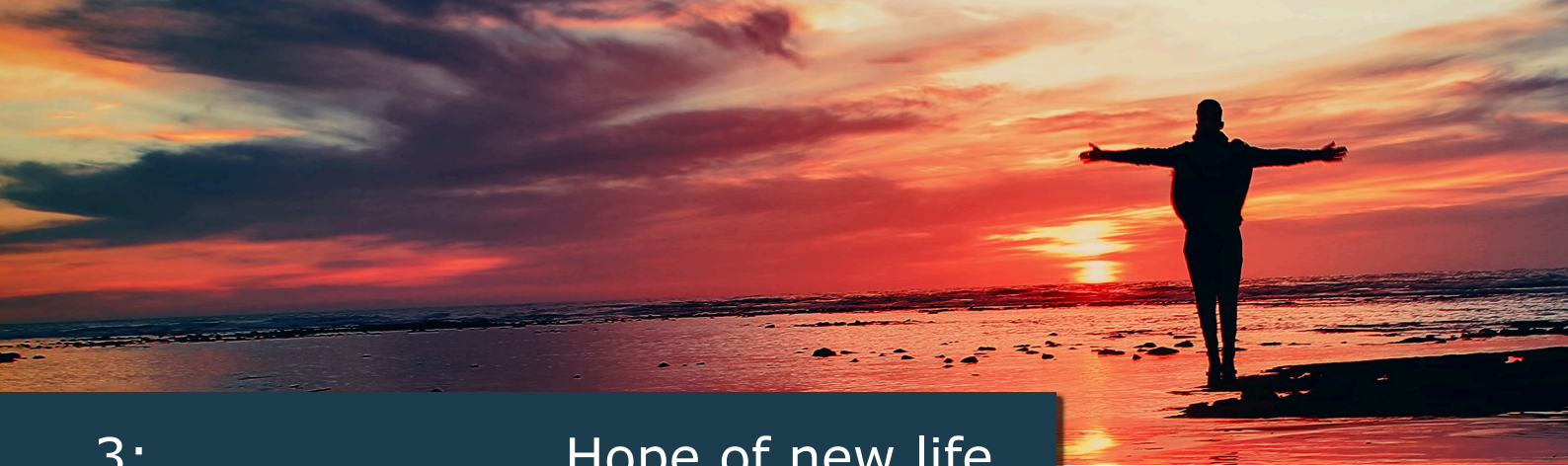
What can you find to play with to help you think about this story?

Can you use some soil or sand in a tray to build a dam to hold back a flood?

Can you design or build a house for God?

What will it have in it?

Can you think of a way to help someone, or find something that is broken and mend it?



3:

Hope of new life

You will need:

desert bag or thick sheet and sand; praying hands; chain; musical instrument; rainbow stacker pieces; model coffin; sackcloth robe; brightly coloured robe; bed; Mary, Martha, Lazarus and Jesus figures; tomb model and stone;

Story

Open the desert bag and swirl the sand as you say:

The desert is a dangerous place. The wind blows and the landscape changes.

There is little to eat or drink, and almost no shelter.

Days are hot, but nights can be freezing cold.

Make a road in the sand with your finger, then blur it with your hand

It's hard to find the way in the desert, and easy to get lost.

People only journey through the desert if they have no choice.

Place the praying hands in the back centre

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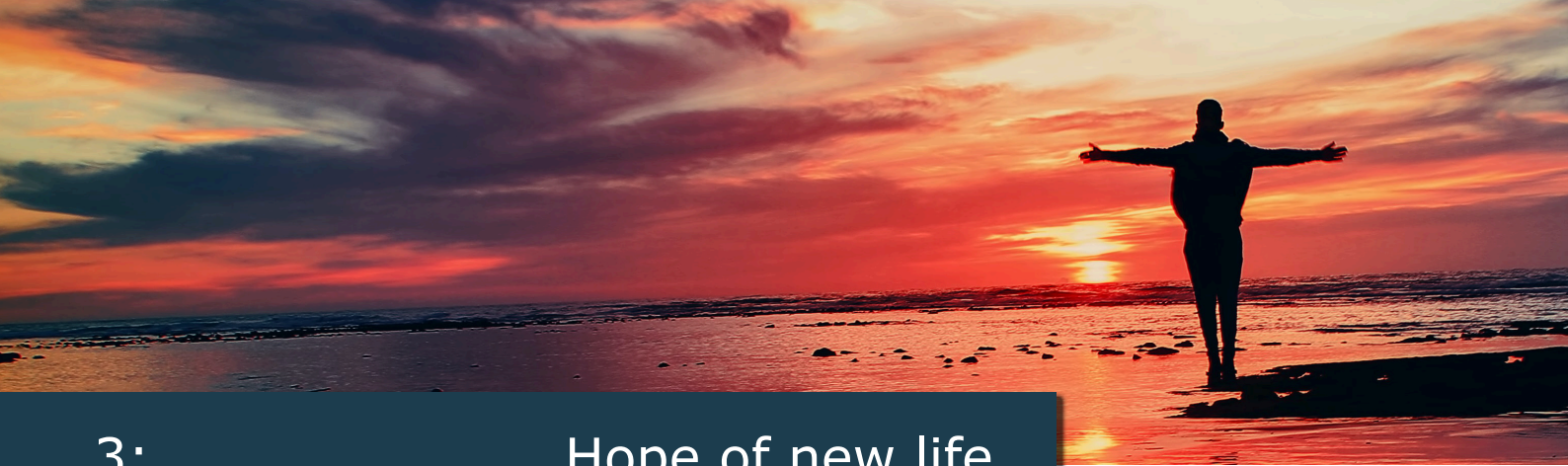
Place the chain in the back left corner

Calling out to God for help in difficult times;

Place the musical instrument in the back right corner

Or praising and thanking God in joyful celebration.

The Jewish people say Psalm 30 was written by King David, ready for the day when the Temple would be built and dedicated to God by David's son Solomon:



3:

Hope of new life

Shake the musical instrument and re-place it just below

I will praise you, Lord, for you rescued me.

You refused to let my enemies triumph over me.

Scatter the stacker pieces, put them together and place the finished rainbow to the left of the musical instrument

God, my God, I cried to you for help,

And you mended the shattered pieces of my life.

Place the model coffin to the left of the puzzle, and open it

You brought me up from the grave, O Lord, and gave me another chance at life.

You saved me from sinking into the pit of death.

Place the sackcloth robe to the left of the coffin, and cover it with the brightly-coloured robe

You have turned my sadness into joyful dancing.

You have taken away my clothes of mourning and robed me with joy.

Shake the instrument and replace it to the left of the robes

I'm about to burst with song; I can't keep silent!

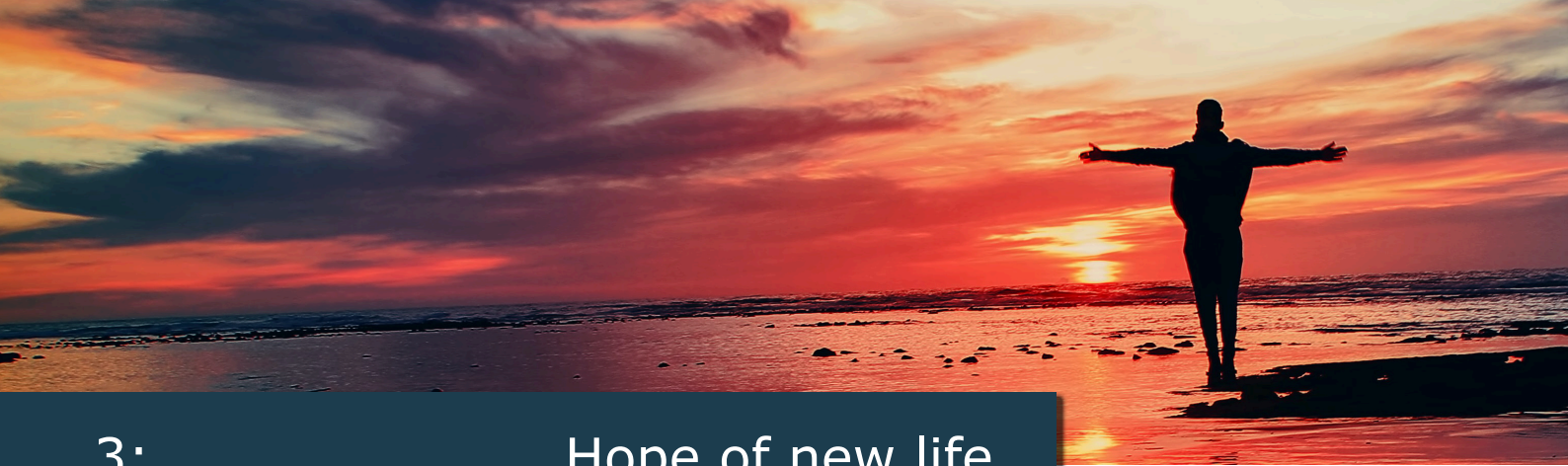
O Lord my God, I can't thank you enough!

Psalm 30 offers hope of new life; that death and sadness are not the end but can be a new beginning.

PAUSE

Place the bed centre left. Place Mary and Martha to the left of the bed, facing it. Place the tomb at the centre right, and the stone beside it.

Present Lazarus and lay him on the bed.



3: Hope of new life

Lazarus was very sick. In fact, he was dying.

Place the messenger beside Mary and Martha, then 'walk' him away

So, Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, sent a message Jesus saying, "Lord, your dear friend is very sick."

Place the Jesus figure at the front left and 'walk' the messenger to him

When Jesus heard the news, he said, "Lazarus' sickness won't end with death." And he waited for two days before setting off to Lazarus' house.

Touch Mary and Martha

Mary and Martha waited, but before Jesus arrived, Lazarus died.

Pretend to wash and anoint, then wrap Lazarus in a cloth as you say:

They washed his body, anointed it with oil, and wrapped it in a cloth.

'Carry' Lazarus over, place him in the tomb and roll the stone over the entrance.

They placed him in a tomb.

'Walk' Jesus over to the tomb

When Jesus arrived, he was told that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days.

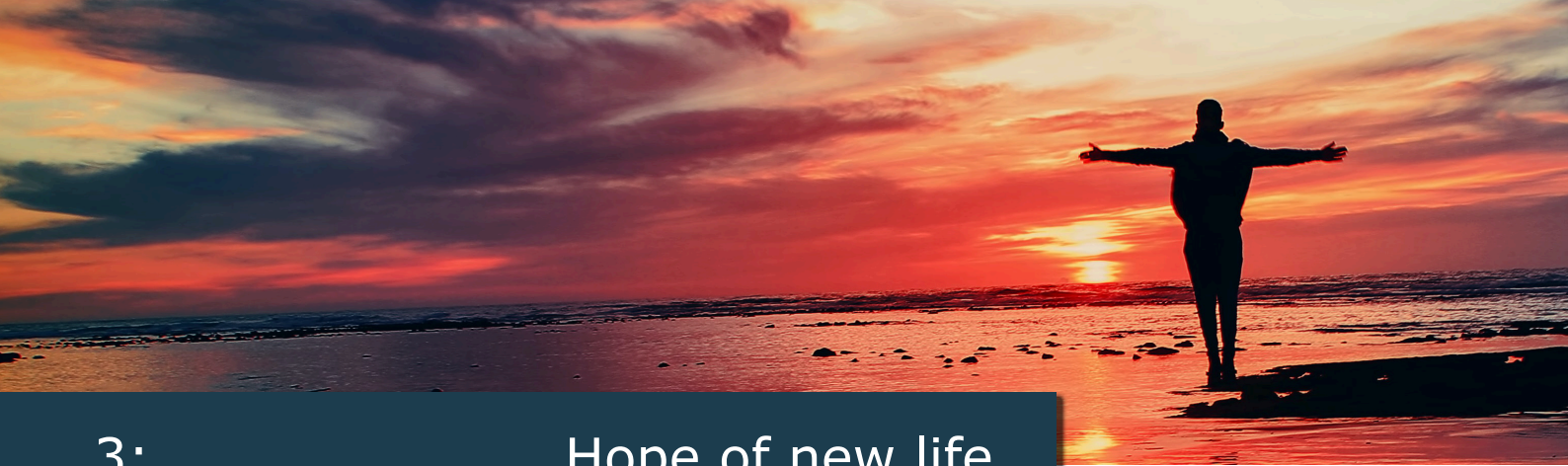
Move Martha to Jesus

Martha went to meet him and said, "If you had been here my brother would not have died."

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will be rise again ... I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even when they die. Everyone who lives in me and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes," Martha said, "I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Move Mary to Jesus



3:

Hope of new life

Then Mary came to Jesus. When Jesus saw that she was crying and other people were wailing, he said, “Where have you put him?”

Sweep your hand over to indicate a crowd when you say:

“Lord, come and see,” they told him, and Jesus wept.

Move Jesus, Mary and Martha to the tomb

They led him to the tomb and Jesus said, “Roll the stone away.”

Remove the stone

Jesus looked up and prayed, “Thank you, God, for hearing me.” Then Jesus shouted, “Lazarus, come out!”

PAUSE

Take Lazarus out of the tomb

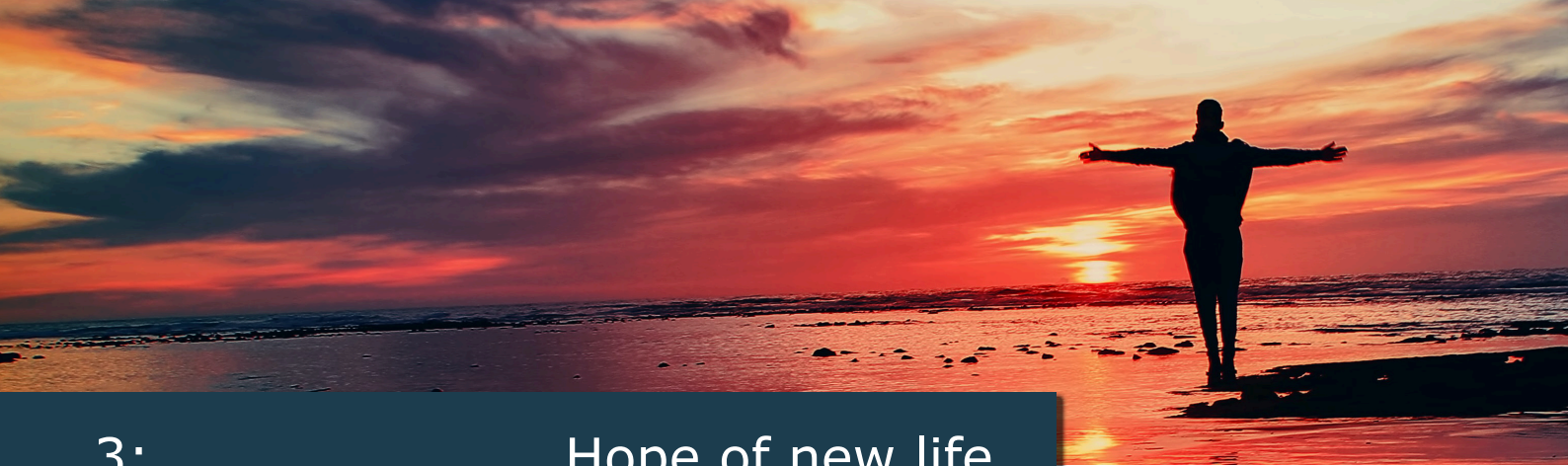
Lazarus came out, still wrapped in grave cloths.

Unwrap Lazarus and place him near Jesus

They unwrapped him.

Many who were there believed in Jesus, but some of the chief priests and Pharisees did not. They began plotting ways to kill him.

Christians believe that death is not the end, and that Jesus died and rose again to new life so that they will be able to have eternal life. They hope that one day they will join the angels and saints in heaven, praising God



3:

Hope of new life

Wondering

I wonder which part of this story you liked best?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder what you would change?

I wonder where you would put yourself in this story?

I wonder what you hope for?

Response Activities

Can you find anything in your home or classroom or playground to add to this story?

What can you paint or draw to tell something more about this story?

What can you find to make a model or collage to tell something more about this story?

What can you find to play with to help you think about this story?

Can you find some music and create a joyful dance of hope for new life?

Can you design or make a costume so you can be clothed in joy?

Can you go for a walk and find signs of new life?

What can you see growing and flowering?



4: Hope of being able to offer comfort

You will need:

desert bag or thick sheet and sand; praying hands; chain; musical instrument; Jerusalem model, people figures; wooden wave model; blue glass nuggets; seeds; sheaf of corn; house model; table and food; Jesus, Lazarus, Martha, Mary, Judas figures; bottle of perfume.

Story

Open the desert bag and swirl the sand as you say:

The desert is a dangerous place. The wind blows and the landscape changes.

There is little to eat or drink, and almost no shelter.

Days are hot, but nights can be freezing cold.

Make a road in the sand with your finger, then blur it with your hand

It's hard to find the way in the desert, and easy to get lost.

People only journey through the desert if they have no choice.

Place the praying hands in the centre back

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In it we find poems and songs of lament and praise:

Place the chain in the back left corner

Calling out to God for help in difficult times;

Place the musical instrument in the back right corner

Or praising and thanking God in joyful celebration

Psalm 126 was written for pilgrims to sing as they made their way up the steep hill to the Temple in Jerusalem:



4: Hope of being able to offer comfort

Place the Jerusalem model centre back, with the praying hands showing through the archway
Remember when the Lord brought the exiles back from Babylon to Jerusalem?

It was as if we were dreaming!

Shake the musical instrument and place it in front of the Temple

We were filled with laughter,
and we sang for joy.

Place people figures on either side of Jerusalem

People in all the other nations said,
“What amazing things the Lord has done for them.”

Shake the instrument and replace it

Yes, the Lord has done amazing things for us!
What joy!

Place the wooden wave in front of Jerusalem

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
as streams renew the desert.

Scatter the blue glass nuggets

Those who plant in tears
... will harvest with shouts of joy.

Scatter the seeds

They weep as they go to plant their seed,

Place a sheaf of corn

but they sing as they return with the harvest.



4: Hope of being able to offer comfort

PAUSE

Place the house silhouette in the centre and ‘walk’ the Jesus figure to it

Six days before the Passover celebrations began, Jesus arrived in the village of Bethany just outside Jerusalem, to the home of Lazarus – the man he had raised from the dead.

Place a table and food beside Jesus

A dinner was prepared in Jesus’ honour.

Place the Lazarus figure beside Jesus and the table, and have the Mary figure move around Martha was busy serving, and Lazarus ate with Jesus.

Place the Mary figure in front of Jesus, hold up the perfume bottle, and ‘pour’ it over Jesus Then Mary took a jar of expensive perfume, and anointed Jesus feet with it. Then she wiped them with her hair.

Present the Judas figure

As the pleasant fragrance of this extravagant ointment filled the entire house, Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples, began to speak: “That perfume was worth a year’s wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.”

Move Jesus forward to stand beside Judas

Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.”

Place some people figures around Jesus

When all the people heard of Jesus’ arrival, they flocked to see him.



4: Hope of being able to offer comfort

Wondering

I wonder which part of this story you liked best?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder what you would change?

I wonder where you would put yourself in this story?

I wonder what you hope for?

Response Activities

I wonder if you can find anything in your home or classroom or playground to add to this story?

I wonder what you can paint or draw to tell something more about this story?

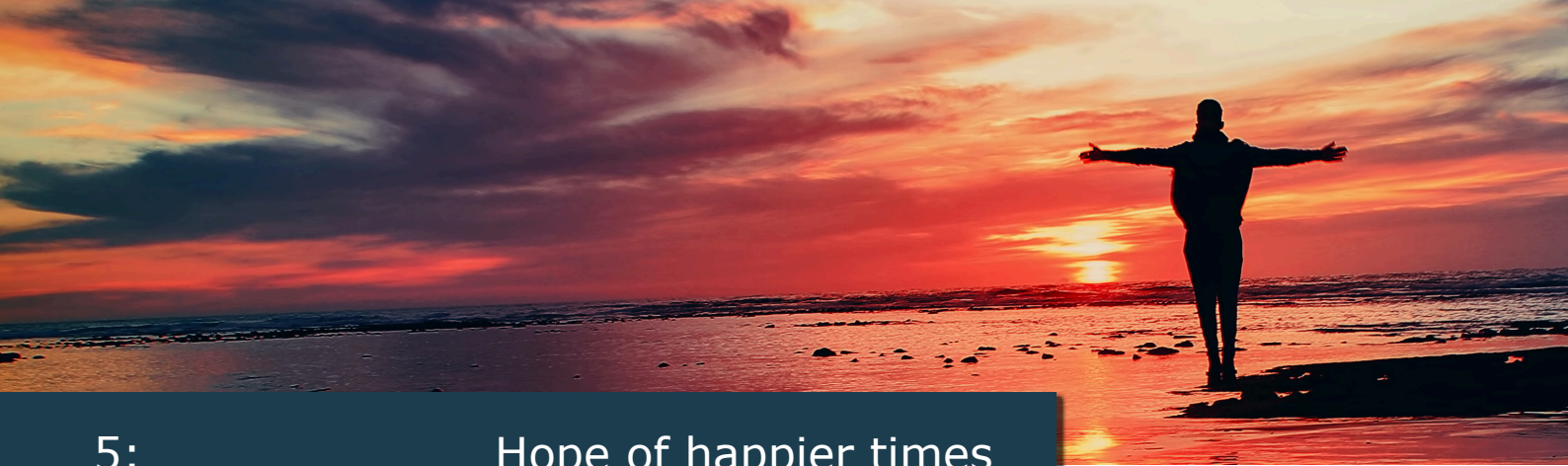
I wonder what you can find to make a model or collage to tell something more about this story?

I wonder what you can find to play with to help you think about this story?

I wonder if you can find and plant some seeds?

I wonder if you can find some perfumed lotion or soap or oil to rub into your hands or feet?

I wonder if you can think of something to give comfort to someone you know?



5: Hope of happier times

You will need:

desert bag or thick sheet and sand; praying hands; chain; musical instrument; heart; model of Jerusalem; stone; sun/moon/stars creation panel; palm branch; table with lamb wrapped in cord; Jesus on a donkey figure; felt coats; palm leaves; Pharisee figures; Jesus, teacher and priest figures; risen Christ figure

Story

Open the desert bag and swirl the sand as you say:

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There is little to eat or drink, and almost no shelter.

Days are hot, but nights can be freezing cold.

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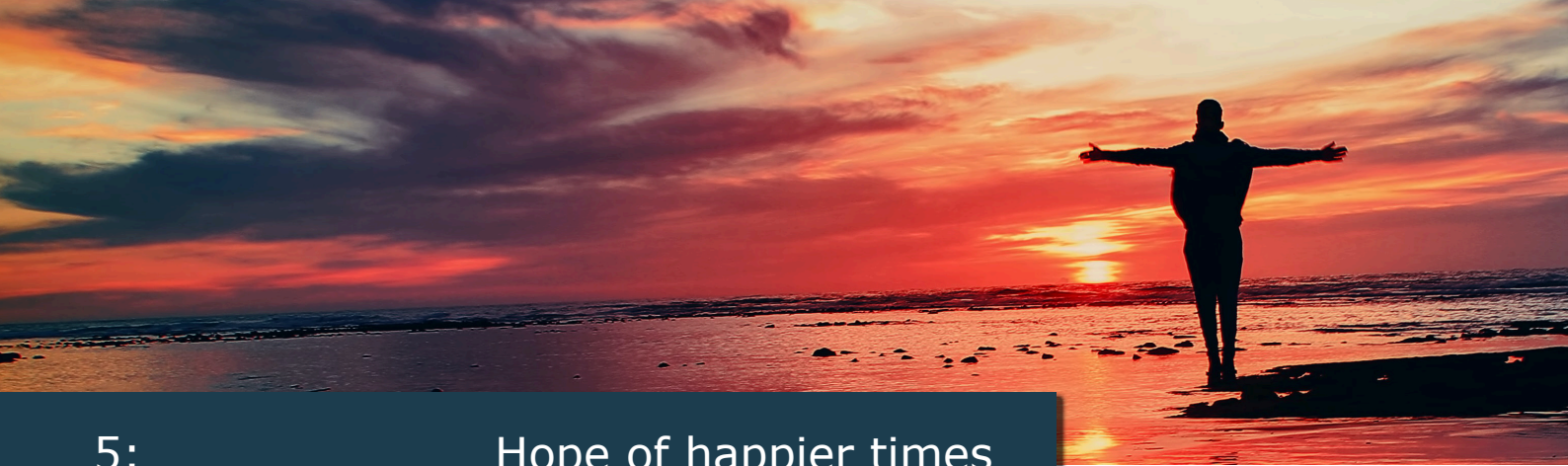
Calling out to God for help in difficult times;

Place the musical instrument in the back right corner

Or praising and thanking God in joyful celebration.

Psalm 118 is a song of thanks and praise to God whose love is everlasting:

Place a heart in front of the musical instrument



5: Hope of happier times

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good!

His faithful love lasts forever.

Place the model of Jerusalem centre back, with the praying hands visible through the opening

Open wide the gates for me

And I will go in and thank the Lord.

Shake the musical instrument, then rattle the chain

I will offer praise and worship to you, Lord

because You helped me when I was in trouble.

Place a stone beside Jerusalem

The stone that the builders rejected

has now become the cornerstone that holds everything together.

Place the sun, moon and stars panel from the creation story beside Jerusalem

This is the day that the Lord has made;

we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Place a palm branch beside Jerusalem

Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

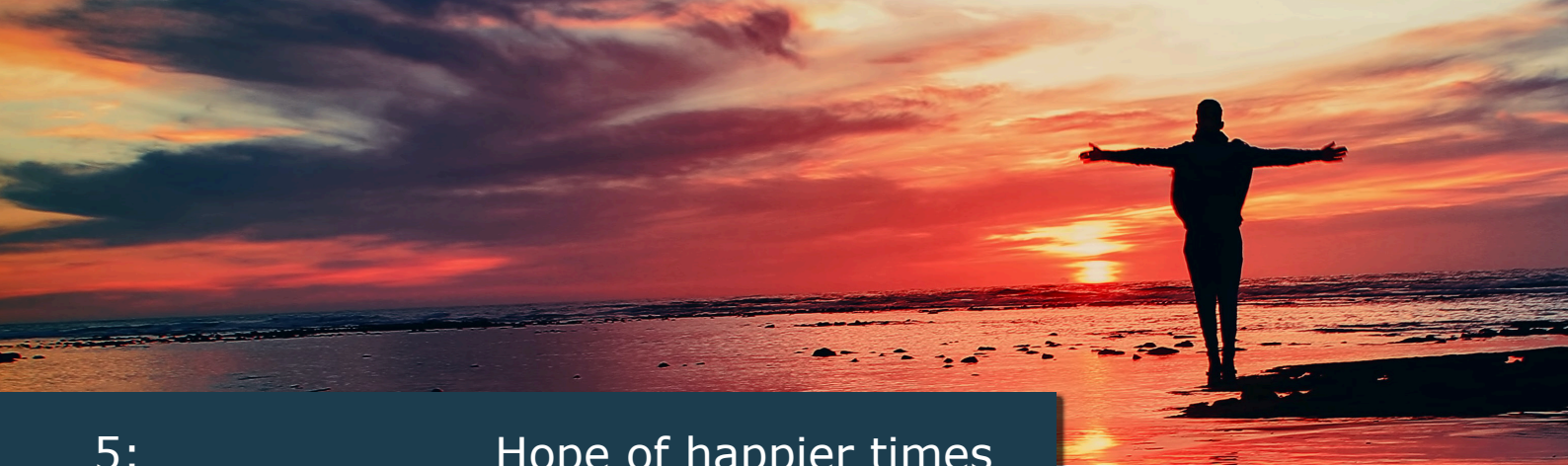
Place a table with a lamb wrapped in cord in front of Jerusalem

The Lord is God, shining upon us.

Take the sacrifice and bind it with cords on the altar.

Place the heart and the musical instrument in front of the table

Give thanks to the Lord because he is good!



5: Hope of happier times

His faithful love lasts forever.

PAUSE

Move the Jerusalem model, placing it to one side, draw a road in the sand with your hand, and have Jesus on the donkey approach along it

Jesus approached Jerusalem for the last time, riding on a borrowed donkey.

Start to place some 'coats' along the road for Jesus to ride over

As he rode along, the crowds spread their coats on the road ahead of him.

Wave the musical instrument

When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the miracles they had seen:

Place palm leaves along the road for Jesus to walk on as you say:

“Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosannah!”

“Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosannah!”

“Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord!

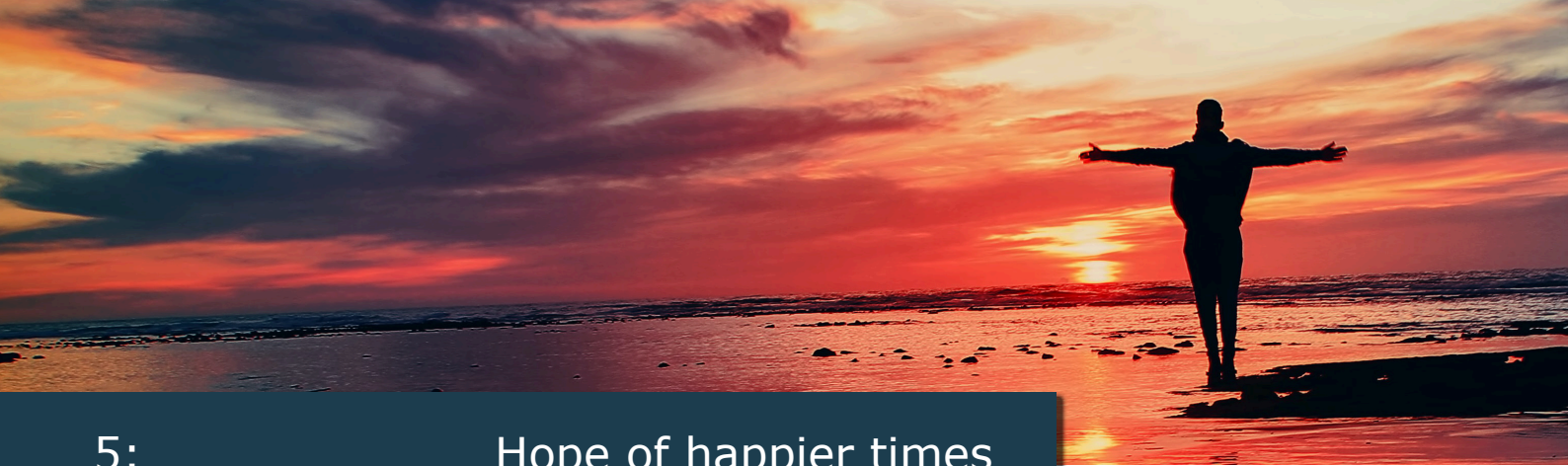
Hosannah!”

Place some figures beside the gate of Jerusalem

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, “Teacher, tell your followers to stop making these wild claims and acting this way!”

Bring Jesus to the Pharisees

Jesus said, “Listen – if they kept quiet, the stones on the road would burst into cheers!



5: Hope of happier times

Place the Temple model to one side, with priest and teacher figures in front, and bring Jesus over. Later that week, when Jesus was teaching the people in the Temple and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and teachers came up and questioned him”

“Who gave you the authority to say and do these things?”

Move the stone from the psalm section and place it in front of the Temple

But Jesus didn’t back down. He looked at them and said, “What does this Scripture mean?

‘The stone that the builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.’

Everyone who stumbles over that stone will be break every bone in his body, and anyone it falls on will be crushed to dust.”

The teachers and priests wanted to arrest Jesus straight away, but they were afraid of the people’s reaction.

Place the risen Christ figure centre front

As he left the Temple that day, Jesus said: “One day, everyone will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. Be ready – for your salvation is near!”

Wondering

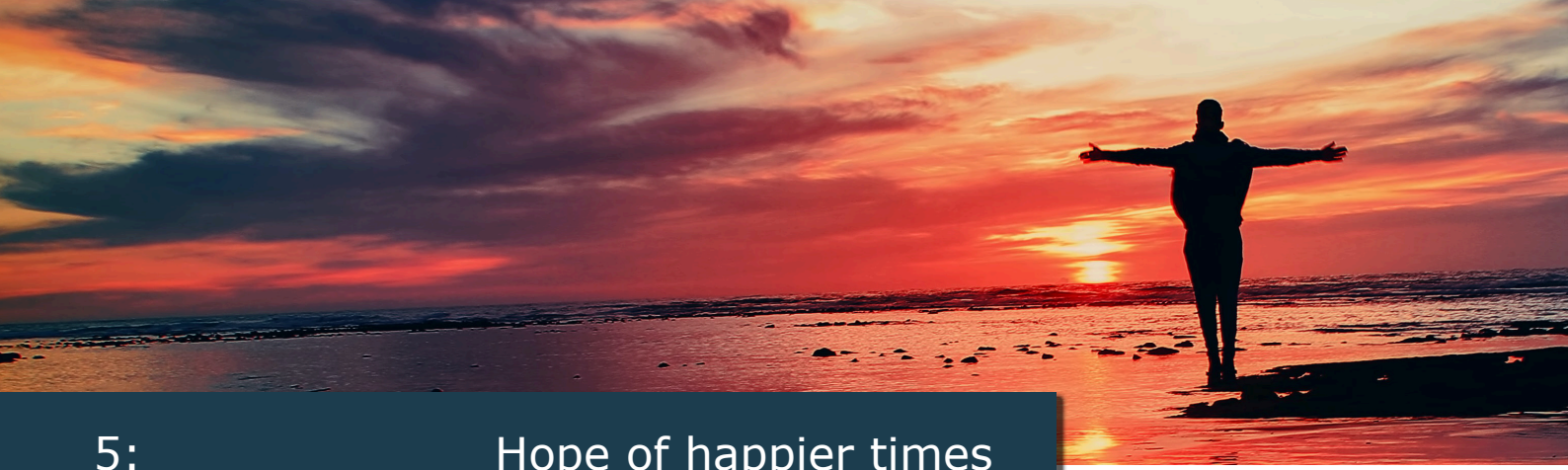
I wonder which part of this story you liked best?

I wonder which is the most important part?

I wonder what you would change?

I wonder where you would put yourself in this story?

I wonder what you hope for?



5: Hope of happier times

Response Activities

I wonder if you can find anything in your home or classroom or playground to add to this story?

I wonder what you can paint or draw to tell something more about this story?

I wonder what you can find to make a model or collage to tell something more about this story?

I wonder what you can find to play with to help you think about this story?

I wonder if you can find and plant some seeds?

I wonder if you can find some perfumed lotion or soap or oil to rub into your hands or feet?

I wonder if you can think of something to give comfort to someone you know?