

Community-Developed

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The Surprising Story of Jesus **An Easter Children's Event**

This is a retelling of several stories of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection from the perspective of Mary Magdalene. Some poetic license has been used in shaping these as Mary's memories. Each story includes a focal object taken from a "memory basket." All numbers in brackets are referring to stories from the Shine On Story Bible, found here - www.commonword.ca/go/152.

My name is Mary. And Jesus was my friend. He was an amazing man, a man full of surprises. I remember so many stories about Jesus. Some of the stories I know because I heard them over and over again, but some of them I know deep in my heart, because I was there.

This is my memory basket, there are special things in here to help me tell you some of the surprising stories of my friend's life.

Jesus's birth (164) - Baby doll, swaddled

Jesus's life was surprising right from the start, because he was born in a barn, a stable. He was the one we had been waiting for, our Messiah, our king, but he was born in a barn surrounded by mooing cows and baaing sheep. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus at the temple (174) - Hebrew Bible

When Jesus was 12 years old, he traveled with his family and his neighbours to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. When the celebration was over his parents began the journey home. After a full day of travel they looked for Jesus, and they couldn't find him. They thought he had been walking with his friends, but he was nowhere to be found. Mary and Joseph traveled all the way back to Jerusalem, and there they found Jesus sitting in the temple, talking with the priests and elders. Jesus was answering their questions about the scriptures, and they were all amazed by his wisdom. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus was baptized (178) - Dove sun catcher

Many years later, Jesus found John, who was his cousin, baptising people in the river. Jesus asked John to baptize him. But John said "no, no, you are the one we have been waiting for." And Jesus said "yes, you need to baptize me." So John did and when Jesus came up out of the water, the Holy Spirit came down on him like a dove and a voice that seemed to come right out of the sky said, "Jesus you are my son in whom I am well pleased." It was quite a surprise.

Jesus called disciples (184) - Sandals

Well, after that day, Jesus began to walk and walk. I never knew anyone who walked as much as Jesus. And he knew he wasn't meant to walk alone so he stopped on the shoreline where some fishermen were repairing the nets on their boats. Jesus said to them, come, come and follow me. The fishermen laid down their nets, they left their family business and all that they had ever known, and they joined Jesus in his work. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus healed the man lowered through the roof (192) - Burlap for a mat

One of my favourite stories of Jesus took place in Capernaum where Jesus had a home base. Jesus had just returned and was settling into his house with his disciples. Jesus was staying at a house in a village with his disciples. People heard that he had arrived and began to gather around the house. They crowded the doors and hung in through the windows. Countless bodies were pressed together, all trying to see Jesus.

Well, there was a man in that village could not walk. He spent all his days lying on a mat. His friends felt so bad for him that they picked him up on his mat and carried him to see this man, Jesus. Maybe Jesus could heal him. When they arrived, there was no way to get in the door. So they climbed onto the roof and made a hole in it. They lowered their friend through the roof right in front of Jesus' feet. Jesus looked up at the friends and down at the man on the mat. Then he reached out his hand to the man and said, "get up and walk." And the man got up, rolled up his mat and walked. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus taught – love your enemies, give, pray, fast, don't worry (196, 198, 200) - Painting of two people, pray together, folded bird and flower

Jesus used to gather us all around and tell us important things, things he knew we needed to know.

He said, love your enemies. It's easy to love your friends, but I want you to love all people. The sun shines and the rain falls on everyone. So try, try to love your enemies.

He said pray. Pray like this Our Father...

And he said don't worry. The birds of the air and the lilies in the field, I care for them, I'll care for you too. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus told stories (203, 223) - Rock and sand in a jar

And Jesus told us stories, I loved his stories. This was one of my favourites. It was about two men. One man, he decided to build a house and he built it on a rock. And when the rains came, and the winds blew, and the floods rose, his house stood firm. But the second man, he built his house on the sand. And when the rains came, and the winds blew, and the floods rose, his house went splat! He told us that story so we could learn to build our lives on his teachings. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus fed people (210) - Loaf of bread (break up and share while telling the story)

Sometimes the crowds followed Jesus and his disciples around so much, they barely got a break. I remember one time they were trying to find a place to rest, but people recognized them and surrounded them, wanting Jesus to teach them. So he did. After a while, it was getting late and the disciples told Jesus they needed to send the crowds away to get food. But Jesus said,

we will feed them. The disciples were shocked, they didn't have food for thousands of people! But they came up with five loaves of bread and two fishes and somehow it was enough. Somehow, when everyone was fed, and was full, there were twelve baskets of food left over! It was quite a surprise.

Jesus blessed children (238) – Picture of the children present (taken earlier and printed)

Back then, the most important people in every town, were the men. Women and children, not so much. One day while Jesus was teaching, a group of us women came to him with children who wanted to meet him. The disciples, they stood between us and Jesus. They told us that Jesus was busy, too busy for women and children. But Jesus heard them and became angry. He said no. He was never too busy for us. He welcomed us. He gathered all our children to him and talked with them, and played with them. Then he looked at the crowds and said, “listen, let the children come to me. The kingdom of God belongs to people like these children, they can show us the way to receive God's love.” It was quite a surprise!

Jesus rode a donkey (248) - Cloak

Jesus made an impression on those children. Not long after, Jesus was riding into Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. And he was riding on a donkey! We were all so confused. We knew Jesus was an important teacher, and we were pretty sure he was the one we had been waiting for, the one who would save us from the empire, but if he would be our king, why would he ride on a silly little donkey? But the children remembered Jesus' kindness, we remembered his teachings and his healings, and we cried out Hosanna, save us. We laid our cloaks on the ground and waved our palm branches for our king... on a donkey. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus washed feet and ate with the man who would betray him (260, 264) - Basin and towel

Jesus and his disciples gathered in the upper room of an inn to celebrate the Passover together. As they were about to eat, Jesus got up. He got a basin and tied a towel around his waist. He knelt in front of Simon Peter and began to wash his feet. Simon Peter was shocked. Respected teachers did not wash people's feet! But Jesus said, I need to wash your feet. I need you to know that one person is not better than another. We are all meant to help and serve each other.

Then they ate. And while they were eating, Jesus said, something bad is going to happen soon. People have been getting angry at the things I have said and done, it won't be long now. Soon, I will die, but something amazing and beautiful will happen between God and all people when that happens. The disciples were shocked again. They said "no, no, Jesus don't say these things." But Jesus knew it was true. It was all quite a surprise.

Jesus is arrested and says NO to hurting one another (266 as well as Luke 22) -

After the meal, I saw Jesus go out into the garden to pray. He brought along three of his disciples to keep watch over him. But they kept falling asleep. Jesus prayed and cried. He didn't want the bad things to come. While he prayed, some soldiers and priests came. Jesus asked them who they were looking for, and they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said, "I am he, leave my friends alone." He wanted to protect them. The soldiers stepped forward to arrest him, but one of the disciples grabbed a sword and cut off a priest's ear. Jesus cried out, "no, don't! When you use a sword, everyone gets hurt." He reached out and healed the priest and allowed them to take him away. It was quite a surprise.

Jesus dies (269) - Cross on leather rope

The crowds who had celebrated Jesus became afraid. There were soldiers and priests who said Jesus had done things he shouldn't. They started to call for Jesus to die. I felt lost. How could everyone turn against Jesus like that? It was a mess and I couldn't figure out what was going on at all. And then, I saw Jesus with a crown of thorns on his head. They took him out to a hill and raised him up on a cross. He was hurting. I could see it and I knew he had never hurt anyone. I stood with his mother and cried. What had gone wrong? It was horrible to see, but we couldn't leave him. We watched until he stopped breathing and they lowered his body to the ground. He was gone and we were devastated. It was the worst kind of surprise.

Jesus rises! (273) - Empty basket

The next day was the Sabbath. We did not work on the Sabbath or travel. So all we could do was sit and be sad. My heart felt so heavy. I didn't know what to do. Jesus was my friend, and he had died.

The next morning I went out to the tomb of rock where they had put his body. The stone that had been rolled in front of the tomb, was rolled away. I thought someone had stolen Jesus' body

so I ran back to the house to get Simon Peter and the others. We raced to the tomb. Simon Peter looked inside and the cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus lay on the ground. He wasn't there. The tomb was empty.

I went into the tomb to see for myself, but what I saw were two angels. They asked me why I was crying and I tried to explain but I couldn't stop the tears. Then a man spoke to me. He said, "Woman, why are you crying, who are you looking for?" I thought he must be the gardener, so I turned around to speak to him. I said, "If you have taken Jesus, please tell me where you have taken him!" The man said, "Mary." It was Jesus! He was alive! It was the best surprise of my life and I ran to share the good news with all who would listen.