Preschool–Grade 6

Jesus Dies on the Cross

Sunday School Lesson for Preschool (Ages 3–5), 20–30 minutes

Main point: Jesus loves me so much that He died for me.
Bible passage: Luke 23. Read Luke 23 and Matthew 26:36–27:61 yourself before class.
Memory verse: "Christ died for us." *Romans 5:8 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, 8–10 small paper hearts, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: hide the paper hearts around the room. Put a bookmark in your Bible at Luke 23.

1. Opening game: Heart Hunt (5 minutes)

Kids hunt for the hidden hearts. Each time a child finds one, everyone says, "Jesus loves me!" Say: "Today we will hear a true story about how much Jesus loves us."

2. Bible story (5 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Luke 23. Say: "This story is true. It is in God's Word." Use a soft, quiet voice. Read each line slowly and do the motion. When you see **Say it with me**, the kids say the line back to you.

Jesus loved people. He helped them and taught them about God. *(Hug yourself.)*

Jesus prayed in a garden (Matthew 26:36). *(Fold your hands.)*

Some men came and took Jesus away (26:50). *(Walk in place.)*

A ruler said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). Jesus did nothing wrong! *(Shake your head no.)*

Say it with me: "Jesus did nothing wrong!"

But they put Jesus on a cross (23:33). *(Make a cross with two fingers.)*

Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them" (23:34). *(Fold your hands.)*

Say it with me: "Jesus forgives!"

The sky got dark (23:44). *(Cover your eyes.)*

Jesus died for our sins, because He loves us (23:46; Romans 5:8). *(Hand on your heart. Be quiet for a moment.)*

Say it with me: "Jesus loves me!"

A man named Joseph put Jesus in a tomb, a room cut in a rock (23:53). *(Make a cave with your hands.)*

Jesus said He would rise again (Matthew 27:63). *(Hold up three fingers.)*

Say it with me: "Next week: happy news!"

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3. Questions to ask (3 minutes)

1. Did Jesus do anything wrong? *(No, Luke 23:4)*
2. What did Jesus pray? *("Father, forgive them," 23:34)*
3. Why did Jesus die? *(For our sins, because He loves us, Romans 5:8)*

4. Memory verse (3 minutes)

Say: "The Bible says, 'Christ died for us.' **Christ** is Jesus." Teach the motions: point up for "Christ," make a cross with two fingers for "died," and hug yourself for "for us." Say the verse with the motions three times: in a normal voice, in a whisper, and in a happy loud voice. Then say "Romans 5:8" and clap three times.

5. What this means for us (3 minutes)

Say: "God loves you! Everyone has done wrong things. That is called sin (Romans 3:23). Jesus is God. He came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins. He was buried. Then He rose again (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us what to do (Acts 2:38). We repent: we tell God we are sorry, and we stop doing wrong. We are baptized in Jesus' name, down under the water, and our sins are washed away. And God gives us the Holy Ghost. That is God's own Spirit in us. When people are filled with the Holy Ghost, they speak in other tongues, words God gives them (Acts 2:4)."
Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Love Heart (5–10 minutes)

Give each child a take-home sheet. In the drawing box, help them draw a big heart and a plain cross inside it, then color the heart red. While they color, ask: "Did Jesus do anything wrong? Why did He die? Who loves you?"

7. Prayer

Say each line, and the kids say it after you:
"Thank You, Jesus, for loving me.
Thank You for dying for me.
Help me forgive others. In Jesus' name, amen."

Tips for little ones: keep your voice calm and warm, and end on hope: Jesus said He would rise again, and next week is the happy news.
Left out on purpose: Judas, the soldiers making fun of Jesus, the beating, the two men crucified with Him, and how a crucifixion was done.
If a child is sad, scared or asks whether it hurt: say gently, "Yes, it hurt. But Jesus chose to do it because He loves us. He is not hurting anymore. He rose again, and He is alive!"

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