

# Palm/Passion Sunday

As Lent draws to a close and we walk with Jesus into Jerusalem, we come to this Sunday that is a mixture of images and emotions. We tend to love the parade on Palm Sunday and join with the crowd singing "Hosanna!" But we often wish to avoid the end of Jesus' journey, when the crowds reject him and the shouts turn to "Crucify him!"

This week our studies will focus on two of the last sayings of Jesus from the cross. Parting words carry weight and deep meaning, and these in particular have a special connection for vulnerable children. Today we will explore Jesus' words to his mother and John, creating a new family.

## Read John 19: 16-27

Even in his own terrible suffering, Jesus uses his strength to provide for his mother after his death. This mental agony of knowing the grief and future suffering of loved ones left helpless is weighing heavily on Him in his final hour.

Jesus has taught that God's family is wider than just blood relatives, and that "all who do the will of God are my mother, brothers and sisters." (Mark 3:33-35) He demonstrates this by uniting his dear disciple, John, with his mother, Mary, by this time assumed to be a widow, saying "Woman, here is your son...here is your mother." And from that hour, the disciple took her into his own home. (John 19:27)

Motivated by the witness of Jesus, Zoe Empowers staff see the children's deep pain and loss. At their first meeting together, Zoe participants are told they are beloved children of God. Together they will experience life-changing trainings, work in mutual help activities at each other's homes and farms, do business together, and share their life stories. A new family is formed, as with Mary and John, based upon the foundation of God's love, and their mutual grief and needs.

The young people form deep bonds of friendship and kinship that help to heal their pain and isolation. These empowerment groups, at the core of the program's effectiveness, continue to serve as extended families even after they graduate from the program. Group members have acted as "parents" at a young person's wedding, or as a protective older brother, walking younger women participants to their home or fields in safety.

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Many times, once they have experienced the welcome of their group, Zoe participants invite other vulnerable children in the community to join their group, or mentor them in skills to help improve their lives. The love of Jesus spreads into a wider family!

Let's meet Boniface in Kenya and see how the new Zoe "family" changed the lives of these grieving, isolated young people.

[Launch Video](#)

The critical role of the Zoe Empowerment group supporters is also very important in the lives of these children. They refer to their sponsors as "parents" because they have fulfilled that role which their parents would have done. They remember and speak often of their sponsor's love and prayers, and pray for them. You can see this in the sample letter below, written by the Ejoheza "Bright Future" Empowerment group in Rwanda for their sponsor church at the time of their graduation from Zoe.



Dear Parents,

The whole group Ejoheza, we thank you, our sponsor First Methodist Mansfield for the aid you gave us that changed our lives positively.

Honestly, dear parents the help you gave us has played a great role in our daily life; we were able to get knowledge and skills from different vocational trainings hence, we become empowered and we continue to progress. We started helping other people living in miserable life by giving them lessons on how to save money from the small projects.

Dear Parents, we promise you that we will never disappoint you abusing your kindness for us; the battle of poverty reduction will continue! We can't end talking about your boundless generosity, only may God give you more.

Beautiful parents, First Methodist Mansfield, we cannot find the best way to express our gratitude based on what you have done to us. May God continue to bless you and fill your tank.

Thank you enormously and blessings on you!!

Le 31/08/2021

Rwanda  
Amageffe  
Ruhango  
Ntongwe  
Nyarabungo

Impamvu - Gushimira

Babyeyi Mwadurashize First  
Tubashimiye Irukungu Mwaduteye n'ubugwaneza  
Mwabikoranye byatumye tugira aho twa naho tugera.

First Methodist Mansfield Irukungu Mwaduhaye  
yatunye tugira ibyo tugeraho banawe bize imyuga,  
Abandi bakora imyuga itandukanye. none twize  
Imbere ubu twakataje mu iterambere biturutse  
ku bugwaneza bwanyu. Natwe twabigiyeho turi  
gufasha abandi banenze nkuko twari tumaze  
Tubigisha kwizigwirira bahereye ku mishinga  
myugufi bakiteza imbere bakagera kuri byinshi.

Babyeyi beza kubwinezwa  
Mwatuginye bigatuma tugira aho twa naho  
Tugera tubasezeranyiseho Tutazabatunguhwa  
Murugendo rw iterambere mwatweretse.

Babyeyi beza First Methodist  
Mansfield ntawatwaga ineza yanyu ngo ayira-  
ngize Imana i komeze kubongerera ibasubiri-  
tize aho mukura.

Murakome Imana ibabere imigisha.  
Ryari Itsinda Ejoheza  
Dusubi

Similarly, during the visit of supporters from Belmont UMC to Rwanda, they met their group and Esperanza offered a poem and a prayer to say thank you.

[Launch Video](#)

## Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What do you notice in these young people's stories? What roles does the group play in their lives?
2. How has your extended family helped you in life? Think back to your youth? How have you supported your children, grandchildren or other young people in their life journeys?
3. How do the supporters of Zoe groups help to fulfill the role of parents for these orphaned children? What are the blessings for each?

## Prayer

*Gracious Parent of all, Father of the fatherless, We thank you today for the witness of Jesus' sacrificial love and care for his mother and his disciple John. Thank you for all the ways our families and church families have helped and cared for us. Forgive us for often thinking our "family" is only made up of our own relatives, when your definition of family is so much bigger! Give us more love for all God's children, and the generosity to share so all may have the abundant life you came to give. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Action

Make a list of all the people you count as family. In gratitude, place an offering or IOU in your Zoe box for each one. Be thankful for how they have impacted your life.

Prayerfully explore becoming a Zoe group supporter, as an individual, small group or church. More children need your help on an ongoing basis, and you will be blessed by enlarging your "family"! See below how you can get more involved in changing young people's lives.