

Good Friday

Psalm 69:1-3, 19-21 and John 19:16-30

Today, on this most holy day of Jesus' sacrifice for us, we focus upon his final parting words from the cross in John's gospel. Jesus expresses his full humanity in his primal, anguished cry "I thirst." With this simple phrase, he joins himself to all the yearnings of humanity at the most basic level—the physical thirst for water, the critical substance that supports all life.

Clean, safe water is often such a struggle for children living in poverty, with hours each day spent walking several miles to fill a bucket or jug from a river or communal well. In times of drought, regularly experienced in countries like Zimbabwe, one can see water cans lined up at the well while the slow drip-drip fills the first can in line. Children are often sickened by impure water, having no knowledge of water-borne diseases, and often a lack of proper toilet facilities.

Zoe Empowers teaches the children to boil their drinking water, build latrines, use dish drying racks, install rainwater containers, and how to do proper handwashing to prevent diseases. This knowledge has a tremendous impact on family health.

Let's visit Dennis in Kenya and see how health teaching and the support of his group have impacted this family's life.

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In India, Zoe helped Jayasri gain knowledge about hygiene that has helped her and her family who live in an urban slum.

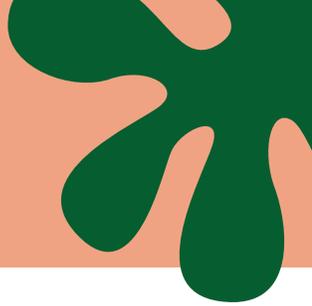
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Water is also necessary for the success of many of the Zoe young peoples' projects, especially in the dry, rural areas of Zimbabwe. Let's visit some families there now and see how the gift of water has improved their lives.

Meet Jonah, whose biblical name already connects him to water!

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This family of orphans in a very remote area had land but no water or farming knowledge or seeds to have a garden.

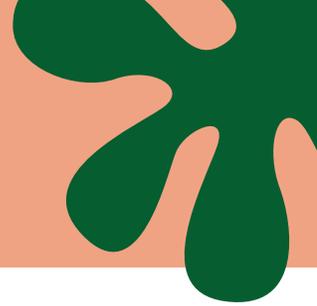
Come and see what Tariro and her family have achieved with Zoe's help!

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Physical thirst, however, is not the only thirst that Jesus experiences on the cross. He also thirsts for spiritual connection with God, for emotional support from his now deserting followers, and especially for the acceptance of his mission of love to the world. It is a deep, piercing thirst in which all human and divine companionship has been stripped away and he is left alone and rejected in God-forsakenness.

Prior to joining Zoe, vulnerable youth have also experienced this kind of despair and spiritual, emotional, and relational thirst; rejected, isolated, stigmatized, and cut-off from their community. They thirst for the lost love of parents, and the support of friends and neighbors.

Jesus' final words "It is finished" are not resignation, but the affirmation that, despite the pain, suffering, and rejection, he has completed his self-giving mission of love to the world. Now, empowered by his spirit, it is our task to carry it on in his name.



Questions for Reflection & Discussion

1. What are you thirsting for most in your life right now?
2. What struck you in the stories of Dennis, Jayasri, Jonah, or Tariro?
3. How is the thirst for community connection fulfilled through the Zoe model? How can we incorporate this method in our own lives and communities?

Prayer

Creator God, you have given us the gift of life through water. Forgive us for our waste of this precious resource, and our failure to help others have what we take for granted. Thank you, Lord, for speaking out in solidarity with all those who thirst for water, love, family or hope. In your name we pray, Amen.

Action

Be conscious this week of conserving water! Whenever you turn on a tap, or take a shower, or get a drink of water, pray for those who labor for hours to get clean water. Add a gift to your Zoe box for each water tap you have in your house, inside and out! Be thankful!

EASTER IS COMING! Add up all your gifts and IOUs and prepare your gift to offer on Easter Sunday in worship or online, giving thanks for the gift of new life through Jesus Christ and the Resurrection! Your generous gift will help bring new life and hope to children who need it most! You may also give your Easter offering online at www.zoeempowers.org/donate. (Checks can be made to your church with memo: Zoe Empowers, or made out to Zoe Empowers and sent directly to the address below.)

Happy Easter! May God bless you!

**Zoe Empowers
PO Box 28839**