

# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

## Week Six

### Prepare

Take a moment to center yourself for communion with God. You may do so by lighting a candle, signifying the presence of the Spirit with you, singing a hymn, saying a prayer, or simply sitting in silence before God. Invite the Holy Spirit to come and speak to you through these words of Scripture and time of meditation and reflection.

### Read

Matthew 21:1–11

Additional Scriptures for this week: Psalm 118:1–2, 19–29

### Reflect

Palm Sunday tends to be a well-celebrated event in the church's calendar. Many churches have long-standing traditions of incorporating palm branches in the worship service in order to remember Jesus' procession into Jerusalem. It is also an exciting way to incorporate children into the stories of Jesus. However, sometimes when we get so wrapped up in the tradition, we forget the power that lies in the story itself.

Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, as outlined in our Scripture passage from Matthew, marks the beginning of Jesus' last days, what many churches choose to commemorate during what we call Holy Week. When we stop to think about it, this scene, which we have likely reenacted and read through many times, is quite provocative. Rather than avoiding the danger that he knew awaited him in that city, Jesus chooses to face it, and face it boldly.

This peasant, ragamuffin prophet, who had been stirring up crowds and challenging the status quo everywhere he went, comes processing into a city imitating the arrival of a king, on one of the most common, lowly animals: a donkey. In addition to the use of this less-than-majestic animal, his path was paved with leaves of tree branches and the cloaks given by people in the crowd. In this powerful moment, Christ again chooses to embody and endorse the meek life of common folk, creating a stark contrast to the way of the elite and challenging our notion of what true kingship looks like.

This story poses challenging a question to us all today: would we have been among those in the crowd who laid their cloaks down on the dusty road, recognizing this common man as our king and Savior? Or would we have stood back, watching from afar and remaining in our comfortable place of skepticism? For our modern minds, it is often much easier to place our trust in ourselves or in authorities who have earned the respect of most of society. However, Christ subverts these authorities and challenges us to look beyond worldly designations to the unchanging source of truth and justice.

Zoe Empowers believes that orphans have something profound to teach us, not in spite of their material differences from us, but because of them. Though we may have very dissimilar lives from these orphans on a surface level, we are united with them in Christ and in our call to be his disciples. They are our brothers and sisters, who have much to teach us about the kingdom of God. Moses Mugendi, a Kenyan orphan, provides one example of how Christ's hallowing of the ordinary, as seen in the story of Palm Sunday, can be emulated by his people today.

After losing both of his parents at the age of 14, Moses had to take on the responsibility of caring for himself and his four younger siblings. Though he inherited land from his parents, he did not know much about how to use it for cultivating crops, and instead worked for neighbors to receive small wages that barely provided enough food for his family.

After partnering with Zoe Empowers by joining a Working Group in his community, Moses was provided with the tools as well as learn the skills needed to cultivate his own land, and he fell in love with the work of farming. Zoe Empowers gave him a goat to provide fertilizer, which has since produced multiple kids. Today, Moses stands proudly beside an acre of abundant, drought-resistant crops that feed his family and provide a sustainable source of income. Though being a farmer may seem like an average, un-extraordinary life to us, Moses found God in the every day work of tending his crops, and now is bursting with joy that he wants to share with others. He teaches other children in his community the skills he learned as he became empowered, while most importantly sharing the love of Christ that transforms ordinary life to be extraordinary.



**Reflection questions:**

1. Imagine that you were standing in the crowd of people as Jesus was processing into Jerusalem. How would that scene have made you feel? Empowered? Insulted? Awestruck? What does this say about the kingdom of God?
2. How can you make your work, whether at home or in other spheres, a hallowed, sacred space? What aspects of ordinary life might be opportunities to worship the God who became a common human being?

**Pray**

Respond by speaking or writing out a prayer to God, or use the prayer below as a starting point:

Most holy God, thank you for coming down on our level in the particular person of Jesus, whose glorious kingship was revealed in processing on a donkey along a humble path of tree branches and dusty cloaks. Thank you for this gift which guides our notion of glory and power, and reveals to us your hallowing of the mundane and ordinary details of life. Help us to surrender these realms of life to you, so that we might be wholly conformed to the pattern of Christ. Amen.

**Act**

The stories of Palm Sunday and Moses Mugendi show us that God has the power to make ordinary, unsuspecting places and routines sacred. Though we don't often think of our daily lives as opportunities to worship or proclaim God's name, all work can be transformed by the love of Christ. Consider discussing with family and friends how your work (this includes more than just your "job") can become ways of serving Christ and sharing him with others. Gardening, volunteering, attending church, doing housework, exercising... all of these can be viewed as opportunities to connect with God and glorify God. One way that Christ actively hallowed the ordinary was through sharing meals with those very different than him. This might be a transformative activity for you to try in your community as well.

**Learn**

To learn more about Zoe Empowers and the ways our organization partners with orphans in Africa, visit [www.zoempowers.org](http://www.zoempowers.org)!