

“He Chose to Die”
By Brother Parrish Lee
Sunday, April 20th, 2014

What a beautiful time of worship! This Easter, the Spirit of God leads to all of the above. Thanks, Kirk, for mentioning about Easter. You know, everybody makes it where they want it to be a real great worship on Easter Sunday, after all, it's EASTER! “We only get this opportunity once a year; we want to raise the roof off this thing! We want to tear the floor up off this thing, because it's Easter!” And, you know, if things don't go exactly according to the plan, all you have to do, is go all the way back to the first Easter, and on the Easter, I guarantee you, there was only One who knew the plan. Everybody else said, “Hey, it ain't supposed to happen like this! This isn't supposed to happen! No, we don't supposed to run; we're supposed to stay by His side. We're not supposed to be persecuted and chased around and laughed at and scorned and we become the outcasts! No, that's not the plan! The pan is supposed to be something far more rosy and daisy and dainty! Angels are supposed to e singing as we walk around! That's OUR plan!” But God had another plan. By and large, saints, we just want to be with God's plan, whatever His plan is. His plan is to know us; His plan is to bring us closer to Him. His plan is for us to be able to see what nobody else on the Earth is going to be able to offer. It's between me and Him, and not anybody else. We're shoring this thing up.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Parrish Lee. Andy Giebler—the guitarist guy—he and I help lead the fellowship here, under the auspices—under our general pastor, Pastor Paine, who was here just a few weeks ago. He's still, and we are both still lit up from that visit. And under the auspices from him from under the Holy Ghost, our one and true leader—our true leader—who leads us and guides us in the paths that he would have us to go.

We've taken up this particular month that we wanted to talk about “The Way, the Truth, and the Life,” John chapter 14, verse number 6, where

John 14:6 *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

That's the theme of the month.

Giving honor to that same Lord, the risen Savior, the One true and wise God, Who is our everything, our reason for even being. Who is the words in our mouths, Who is the thoughts in our heads, Who is the beating of our hearts, Who is the vision in our eyes. Giving honor to Him, to Whom all praises belong, anyway. Giving honor to those who have gone before us: Our founding pastor and his family, our general pastor and his family, the pastors and elders that have stood in the gap and made up the hedge, giving honor to where honor is due. And, giving honor to all of y'all, who have taken out the time to prepare your hearts to know the Lord. “I expect to receive something from You. I have come to worship You and You alone. Yeah, any other time is great, but this time is special.” Giving honor to all of y'all.

As we said, the theme for the month has been from the Book of John, chapter 14 verse 6. Brother Chris, he talked about that first part, Jesus Christ being the Way, of course. Last week we talked about the Truth, and this week, we're going to talk about the Life.

John 10:10-11 *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

John 10:15-18 *As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father*

If you could bow your heads with me for just a minute. Lord, we are in amazement at how good and wonderful and rich, how awe-inspiring, how we come into Your presence, God, and look at Who You are and what You do. God, we only come before You to thank You and to lift up praises to You and to receive from You that which You would have for us. We thank You for the time of praise. We thank You for our young people, God. We thank You for the spirit of fellowship, here, God. We thank You for the spirit of worship. God, we thank You for the Spirit, period, that You allow to dwell and comfort and move and guide us every single day of our life. Lord, this day, we particularly remember the price that was paid that no one was willing to pay for us but You. For You sent Your only begotten Son to the world to die for us, Lord, to die for us. We thank You; we thank You for that price that was paid. We only ask that we could walk worthy, walk into Your presence, walk every day with You. When we fall, Lord, You pick us up. God, when we stumble, You go ahead and make the difference for us. God, when we find ourselves in a situation where, maybe we're too weak, or whatever the case might be, we ask that You come and show us how. When we're too weak, God, please give us strength. God, when we need direction, please open our eyes, open our hearts to be able to be mindful, Lord, to go in that direction. Lord, when we have a problem that we can't seem to overcome, we want a blessing that's so powerful we don't know how to share it, Lord. We ask, God, that You fill us and lead us and show us how to really accomplish Your Will. God we just say that You are so good to us. At this time of this service, Lord, that we gather together, it is the time of the going over of Your Word, and we ask, God, that, as it said in Your Word, that Your Word would not go out and come back void, but would surely accomplish that to which You sent it. God we honor that and we claim that, as we gather to worship and praise and receive, in Jesus' name. And everyone said, amen.

Amen, saints, what a beautiful day! Hey, it's seventy-something degrees outside! Less than a month ago—last week it snowed! It snowed! So, I know we got an amen in the house on that. Aaaaammmeennn! It wasn't so long ago, we were wondering if this day would ever come. So, we're thankful for that. We're thankful for all those young people. Young people, if you came up here and did something, would you stand up? All y'all young people. Yeah, you know who you are. Amen. It's good to give credit where credit is due. What a wonderful time with our praise and worship team. I help out the praise and worship team sometimes, but,, when I get a chance to sit down and listen, I can feel it coming in. That new song that y'all did, you played it; I've heard it practiced once or twice, "Oh How He Loves Us?" Good gugga-mugga. Because you've got to ask how He loves us. You got to ask, sometimes, Lord, I just need You to show me more of Your love. I hear people talk about it; you know, I talk about it myself, but, sometimes, Lord, when I'm going this way or that way, when I'm so tossed about, just grab me and throw me out in the middle of Your love. Let me be submerged. Let me have so much I don't know what to do. Bring me to that kind of place in You, God. Then I can talk about, yeah, how He loves me. He loves all of us, yeah, but I know for a fact what it's like when I move in that love. I know what this thing is. Yeah, give me some of that." It's just been a wonderful tie to be here. If we left right now, it would be awesome, but, if you do, I'm going to ask you why.

So, last week, of course, was Palm Sunday,, and last week, Palm Sunday, we talked about the Lord was in Jericho. In Jericho, there were several things that happened. In Jericho, one of the things that happened, there was a blind man on the side of the road, and the blind man was healed. Yeah, he was calling out to Jesus, "Thou son of David, have mercy on me!" and he was healed. Everybody was telling him, "Shut it up! Don't be crying out to God like that," but he didn't pay them any mind; after all,

he knew he was blind. They weren't doing nothing for him, "I need to go to Jesus." We talked about Zacchaeus, that little short guy of stature, who because of the press, because of all the people around him, he couldn't get to see Jesus, but he knew Jesus was on that road, coming that way, so he prepared himself and ran on ahead. As the Lord came that way, He said, "Tonight, it's going to be you and Me; I'm coming to your place, because you're the only one—yeah, there's a mess of people hanging around—but you're the only one who prepared yourself." In Jericho, also, was the disputing among the disciples about who would be great—"Yeah, yeah, somebody's going to sit on Your right and on Your left. We want a little more esteem; we want to be a little closer, we want some position in the Lord." Yeah, that sounds like a lot of churches today, "Yeah, give me the badge, give me the position, give me that title... I want to be endued with power from on high." I, I, I. Yeah, Jericho, the place of the stronghold; the place where we build walls.

The trip doesn't stop there at Jericho, before He gets to Jerusalem. Our Lord continued on, and He came to a place called Bethany. Now, these things that happened in Jericho, they were great, and they were good, and they were wonderful, and they something to talk about, but they weren't really bothersome. They weren't something that was going to get up under the grill and cause conflict. I mean, you know how He healed the blind guy? That's awesome! The disciples were having a dispute, and He quelled all that; he explained that. And, Zacchaeus, even though Jesus chose the short guy over all the rest of all the people that were there, yeah, we can deal with that. It was only the one time. But, as the Lord travels on, before he gets to Jerusalem, He gets to Bethany.

Now Jericho was oh, about 15 and 17 miles, depending on the reference that you look at, away from Jerusalem, Bethany was a whole lot closer. Bethany was a little over a mile and a half from Jerusalem; it was pretty close, and some specific things happened in Bethany, also. Bethany was a place where Jesus had some good friends: Mary and Martha, to be exact. Mary and Martha were in Bethany, and they had a brother. He also lived in Bethany. Their brother's name was Lazarus, and there was a really good relationship between them and the Lord. It was told to Jesus and His disciples before they had gotten there, "Hey, that guy that you like, you know, that friend of yours? He's pretty sick; he's really sick. You need to come over there and do something special for him." Jesus said, "Okay, I heard you. This sickness isn't unto death; it's all under control." They came to Him a second time and said, "He is really, really sick! You either come now, or it's going to be about over." Jesus said, "I heard you. I heard you before." Then, the Lord said, "Lazarus is dead." The Lord said that. It wasn't two, or three days later, it was four days later that the Lord shows up. Now, Mary and Martha, I can imagine what they were feeling. "Lord, you know, if you had been here, our brother wouldn't have died. But, you know what? I think, anything You ask of the Father, it can happen." (John 11:21-22) Jesus said, "Believest thou?" "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." Then her other sister comes, "Jesus, if You had been here, my brother wouldn't have died. But, you know, even now, even now, I've got the faith to believe that if You ask god, it's going to happen." He says, "I Am the Life and the Resurrection, by the way. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. Believest thou this? I know it's been four days, but do you believe what I'm telling you?" "Oh, yeah, yeah, Lord." But, see, this had never been done before, and this was for a reason. This was for a reason. One or two days, they might have thought they were dead. Three days? that's the most. After four days, you start rotting away, and, you know, everybody knows you're dead by the fourth day. So, the Lord comes over, and says, "Show Me where you're laid him." They knew He loved him; they knew He loved him. He comes over, and He tells them, "Roll the stone away." So, they say, "You know what? if you roll that stone away, we ain't got enough napkins to keep the smell out of our noses. If we roll that away and he gets a little upset..." Jesus said, "Said I not unto you, that if you would believe, that you would see the works of God?" "Well, okay, we've got Him stirred up now. Roll the stone away, guys." And they roll the stone away and the Lord prays, and the next thing they know, he who was bound in grave-clothes walked out. This is a big deal.

So, if Jericho represented the places that we build our strongholds, we build our walls, we put ourselves in a place where we don't want nothing to get in, then, Bethany represents a place where things happen to us that we just can't handle, where things come to us that try to take us out. Challenging—you know, I've heard a lot of talk about the 'economic downturn.' I know a lot of people that lost their jobs; I know a *lot* of people that lost their jobs, and it looks dismal, it looks bad. That's a Bethany right there. "We need a miracle; we need something that hasn't been done before—God, we need You to intervene!" We had a chance to pray with a lady that had cancer, and, she was just praying for a reprieve. We gathered together, a few of us, in a little hotel room. We took our time and just called on the name of the Lord. God answered our prayers. She went in for treatment, and she came out all lit up. She said, "I know God did something for me, here; they didn't find anything else." She made a bond. I talked to her last week, by the way, and she said, "You guys are my prayer partners, because nobody else prays like you guys do. When you pray, God hears it." There ain't nothing special about us; there's only special about the One who we pray to. That's it; that's it; that's it. So, Bethany represent the place where something happens that you cannot handle. That's your Bethany. When Bethany comes up, the Lord is showing you that He has something for you. The Lord is waiting for that opportunity for Him to show Himself strong. This isn't even the crux of the message. But, because of this, you see, we have a problem; He's teaching this new kind of doctrine. He's teaching this, and the established people are kind of like, "You know what? We don't much care for Him, because people are starting to follow Him like crazy. He fed four thousand, seven thousand people with a couple of fish and a couple of pieces of bread. Can we do that? no. We got to do something about this." But, that only lasted for an evening. But some of those people are still hanging around. And He healed some blind people, and one of the blind persons went into the Temple. He said, 'Hey, how did you receive your sight?' He said, 'Hey, a man that's called Jesus made a clay, and He anointed my eyes, and I came forth seeing.' He said, "Would you also be His disciples?" They said, "You were altogether born in sin, and would you teach us?" and they kicked him out. So, healing the blind couldn't do it. That didn't shake things up. But this guy, this Lazarus guy, this guy was dead. Everybody knew he was dead for four days. So, when Jesus raised him up, the established aristocracy, they say, "You know what? this is different. This is a game-changer. If this guy can raise the dead, what are we going to do? We can't duplicate that! He obviously has some answers that we don't have! We need to get rid of Him. This is the straw that breaks the camel's back!" And, you know what? it's not just Him. That guy that got that blessing, that Lazarus guy? we got to get rid of him, too. We've got to get rid of all that evidence saying that He is greater in power, that He has something more than what we have. Every time we try to trap Him in His words, He always gets the best of us. This is different." Now, the Bible says, in chapter 11, "Don't you see that the whole world is following after this guy? Even the Gentiles are following after Him. We must go see Jesus. we must go see Jesus." Now they take counsel, "Let's kill this guy."

You know, it's no different, really, from today. You want to see a real knock-down, drag-out fight? You want to see a real one? Get a bunch of different religious people from different churches, and different synagogues, and different mosques, fill a room up with four or five from each one of them, and tell them, "The one that worships the true God, we're going to give you guys some money or whatever. If you guys can prove it, then we'll help the whole world to know." You want to see a real fight. Get that to happen. Get some good religious people in a room. Anybody ever see a religious fight? I mean, you ever hear it? Whooo! Yeah. If I wasn't religious, I wouldn't want to be after that. This isn't really different with the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the Scribes, yeah, and the lawyers come after Jesus. It isn't different when they get put to shame. There's no difference in that spirit; that spirit still exists in the world today, outside of Jesus. Outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Matthew 26:39 *And He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

Yeah, the Lord knew what was coming. The Lord knew exactly—He knew they were going to beat Him senseless, because it says in Isaiah that His visage was marred more than any man and that His form was changed more than the Sons of men. He knew that was coming; He knew they were going to whip Him, because the Bible said that the chastisement of our peace was going to be upon Him. He knew that was coming. He knew that they were going to take His robe and cast lots for it. The prophets had already prophesied that. He knew all that was coming, and yet, He chose to die. He knew all that was coming, and He said if it were possible, the cup would pass from Me, if it were possible. But, you see, saints, there was no other option. There was no angel that was strong enough to come along and take care of His back, rip things apart and say, “Lord, I have restored...” A whole cadre of angels couldn’t do it. There was no way to reverse the curse and go back in time and go back to eating and pretending like none of that ever happened. No, there was none of that. Even us dying ourselves wouldn’t take care of that, because, when we die, it might stop what we did, even if we didn’t mean to do it, but it doesn’t take care of what we’ve done in our life already. So, there was no other way. It all came down to a choice, and He chose to die.

For anyone that's ever been spat on, beaten, treated unfairly, left out, lied on, left out—just discouraged in your heart, everybody abandoning you—for anybody who's ever felt that, anybody who's ever felt, “It's been a long time since I had some quiet.” Anybody who's ever felt that, the Lord went through that. Not because He didn't have anything else to do; the Lord went through that for us. He knew all this was coming, but so did His saints. Job said, “You know what? I know it's coming. I know that My Redeemer liveth. All the days of my appointed time will I wait, 'til my change comes.” David said, “You won't leave my soul in Hell.” Isaiah stepped up, and he said, “You know, unto us, a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Yes, it's coming, and I'll be able to receive it, because God ain't going to leave me out.” Everyone who has been through that, He chose to die for us. It's only fitting that this whole world would take out a single day to say, “Okay, we'll have this special deal, we'll have special services, we'll have a special sale...” But, people who have received the Lord know this is an everyday thing.

When I was a young kid we used to play baseball in—I'm originally from a place called Baltimore. It's a real urban place. If you've ever been there, there's no mistake about it, it's real urban. One time, we were playing baseball—we played all kinds of sports—but, this one time we were playing baseball—when we were playing baseball, we didn't have a lot of parks and stuff, because there's a lot of concrete, asphalt, that stuff. Believe it or not, that's the stuff that gets me going. I love it. I was raised on it. It my head a couple of times on it. Lost a tooth. Yeah, love concrete and asphalt—I just love it to death. Anyway, we played baseball in the parking lot, or whatever, and sometimes the catcher would miss the ball, and it would go out into the street. And, sometimes, it would out in to the street and over into the gutter and then down into the sewer. Whenever that happened—we didn't have a ton of money, we were just kids—somebody had to go get the ball, or we had to stop playing. Well, one time there was no big kids around, and no adults, and we lifted the manhole and, I was game, I jumped in the sewer. Jumped in the sewer to get that ball, darn straight; we're going to continue this game. You know what? it seemed like a good idea at the time. I jumped in, I was able to get the ball, but, now I'm in the sewer, and it is well over my head. Now, we got the ball out, but there's no ladder, there's no rope... All I can see is this little opening, it seemed like waaaaay up there. We kept discussing what we were going to do; no belts were long enough to reach me and everything. It was getting kind of crazy, and I was starting to get a little scared. I couldn't jump that high, and, even if I could, it was a sewer, so there was a bunch of trash and garbage. In the middle of that—I don't know how long I was down there, ten or fifteen minutes, I don't know—there came walking by, a man. Just walking by, he asked the kids what was going on, they said, “Our friend, he's down there in the sewer hole.” This man—

never seen him before in my life—got down on his knees, and reached all the way in there, and pulled me out with one arm. All of the sudden, I'm so glad to be out of that filth, I don't care about playing baseball, I'm just happy to be delivered. I was in there, and I couldn't get out. This what the Lord did for us.

I heard this story about this woman that went before the judge and they told me that the judge pronounced sentence on her, lowered the gavel, boom! She had this big fine to pay, and if she didn't pay this fine, she was going to be incarcerated; she was going to jail. They were locking her up, and it was there, and she started crying, and she said, "Judge, I'm trying to tell you, I don't have any money. I don't know anybody with money, I don't have any friends with money, none of my family can help me. I'm in a plight, and I can't be delivered." The judge said, "Your fine is so much. Either pay the fine or go to jail." She started crying laboriously, making tears and making noise. I've heard some people crying, and it's a sight to hear. She's crying and crying, and the judge said, "Pay the fine or go to jail." She said, "I can't! I don't have any money; I don't have anything I can sell. I don't have any help coming my way." The judge lowered his gavel one more time, then he laid his gavel down, stood up, took his robe off, hung it on the chair, walked down from behind the bench, all the way down there to where the woman was, and he puts his arm around her, and he says, "Here, honey, it's going to be all right." He reaches into his pocket, pulls his wallet out, and gives her the money for the fine, tells her it's going to be okay. The walks back up the steps, back behind the bench, puts his robe back on, gavel in hand, sits in his chair, and says, "Pay the fine, or go to jail." The woman is dumbstruck, because she didn't do anything to deserve the judge—she didn't earn that money, and she couldn't pay it, anyway. But, now, since he paid the price for her, she was able to go free. I've heard it put several different ways, but the truth of the matter is, there is none like Him. Nobody could have gone to the cross like He did.

Luke 24:1-7 *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

So, here we see that the disciples were going around, and they were looking for Jesus to come back, and they found the stone rolled away. Yes, it was very early in the morning because, you see, death could not hold Him any longer then absolutely necessary. There was only so long that even death was going to be able to have its score. And it goes on and it says they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. They wondered what was going on. They couldn't figure it out; they were perplexed. So guess what happened next? Nobody in this world could tell them what had happened. It had to be the angels. They came to break it down, they said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" So often, we see ourselves, and other people, in situations, and you say, "You're looking at this the wrong way. Here's the situation, you need to put the Lord first in all that you do." "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The angels gave them a clue to the whole answer. In verse number 6, "He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee," and the key word here is, 'remember.' Remember what the Lord said. Remember every time that He's given you a blessing. Every time He has saved you from some situation. Every time he has encouraged your heart. Every time He has filed, and interceded, and interjected, and come along and done things that nobody else could have done. Remember everything that the Lord has done for you. Remember, remember, remember.

Remember how good God is. Remember where God is. Remember the important thing, and that is that it was a choice. He chose to die. Amen.

