

The Thief on the Other Cross by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

I don't belong here. I really don't. Paradise is the last place I expected to end up after all I've done. Let me tell you my story.

I am— I was — an armed robber, I guess you'd call it. Me and Jake and the others would live in caves in the Judean hills near the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. We made our living by violence. We wouldn't take on people in the big groups that passed. They traveled together for safety. But a family alone would be an easy mark, as well as anyone fool enough to travel by himself.

Brandishing a strong staff would usually do the trick. Threaten them with a beating and they'd give up without much of a fight. But I've been known to break a few bones in my day, God forgive me. I don't think I actually killed anyone, but then I never stayed around long enough to find out.

The first time I meet Jesus is when I am invited to a party in his honor in Jericho at the home of a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus. I am introduced, we shake hands, and Jesus looks me in the eye for a long moment. He can see right into me, who I am, every crime I have

ever committed. Then he smiles this big friendly smile. "You know," he says, "there's forgiveness for you in my Kingdom. How about it?"

I drop my eyes, say something non-committal, and shuffle away. The next day I'm in the crowd, hanging on every word he says. Jesus is talking about his Kingdom, comparing it to a mustard seed, calling it the Kingdom of Heaven. I want so much to go up to him after he has finished and take him up on that forgiveness thing, but I just can't bring myself to do it.

I wish I had. It isn't much later when me and my friend Jake -- the guy on the third cross -- get caught by a Roman patrol. The others run off, but they catch us, beat us silly, drag us into Jerusalem, and throw us in prison. No mercy for the likes of us.

And so it happens that on the same day that they crucify Jesus, they crucify me and Jake -- one of us on his left, the other on his right. This isn't any normal crucifixion. Mobs of people are there just because of Jesus. Self-righteous Pharisees are swaggering and mocking. "If you're some kind of messiah," one sneers,

"come on down from that cross. If you're a savior, save yourself — *if you can!*"

Jake begins cat-calling, too, if you can imagine that. I yell over at him, "You miserable thug, don't you have any fear of God? Can't you see that we're going to die just like he is? Show a little decency! We're getting exactly what we deserve, but he ain't done nothing wrong."

Jake quiets down and the Pharisees lose interest. But I can't get Jericho out of my mind. I can't forget Jesus' eyes, his words, his invitation. And so I call over to him, though it's getting hard to breathe and talking makes it that much harder.

"Jesus!" I say. He turns his head towards me. "Jesus, I was there in Jericho. I met you at a party at Zacchaeus' house. Remember?"

He looks at me for a moment and then nods his head just a little. He *does* remember.

"I never forgot what you said. I wanted to say yes, but just couldn't. And now look at me — look at us!"

(continued on next page)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ March 5 - Christian Women's Fellowship
- ◆ March 6 - Chapel
- ◆ March 15 - Emmaus Gathering
- ◆ March 15-16 - Breakaway Conference
- ◆ March 21 - 3rd Thursdays for Women
- ◆ March 30 - Help Squad
- ◆ April 2 - Christian Women's Fellowship
- ◆ April 11-13 - Men's Retreat
- ◆ April 18 - 3rd Thursdays for Women
- ◆ April 19 - Chapel
- ◆ April 21 - Easter

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The Thief on the Other Cross (continued...)

He is in bad shape — exhausted, in excruciating pain, back oozing, breath labored. He isn't going to last long. I can see that. But somehow I can see *beyond* all that. He *was* the Messiah, *is* the Messiah, no matter what those priests and Romans and Pharisees have done to him. And when he dies, he will be with God. In a few hours, maybe less, he will be vindicated. He will reign in that Kingdom he told us about.

"Jesus," I call again, quieter now.

He opens his eyes. They are the same eyes, the same piercing, loving, honest eyes.

"Jesus," I say, "when you come into your Kingdom, would you remember me?"

His words are labored, his lips parched, but I can still hear him pretty well. "Truly, I say to you...." His voice cracks, then is stronger for a moment. "Truly, this very day you will be with me in

Paradise."

His eyes droop. He is fading quickly now. But I believe him. *I do!* That's what gets me through those next few hours until they break my legs to kill me. *I do* believe him!

And then I find myself here in heaven, in Paradise. I sure don't deserve to be here, but here I am anyway. I guess that's what a man like me gets when the King himself grants a pardon. Full forgiveness. Pretty amazing, don't you think?

God the Spirit

“YOU KILLED THE
AUTHOR OF LIFE, BUT
GOD RAISED HIM
FROM THE DEAD. WE
ARE WITNESS OF
THIS.”

ACTS 3:15

The Holy Spirit has an unmistakable presence all throughout the Scriptures. However, the Holy Spirit is often understood today as some distant, unnecessary creed. What is the Holy Spirit? What should I understand about the Holy Spirit?

If you would like

help with these questions and to dig a little deeper into this subject, then our upcoming class, God the Spirit, is for you. This class will encourage you as we learn the grave significance of the third member of the Trinity, God the Spirit.

There will be two

upcoming classes offered. The first one will be on Sunday mornings during second service from March 24th through April 7th. The second class will be on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 p.m. from April 24th through May 8th. Sign up today via the app.

Men's Retreat

Calling all men! Are you looking for a chance to get away for a couple of days? Mark your calendars now for April 11-13!

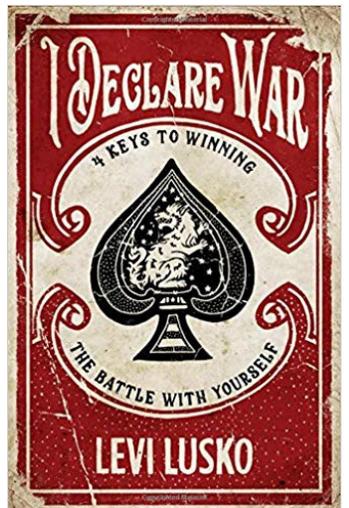
Plan to invest these couple of days by joining us for our annual Men's Retreat. The retreat will be held at Lake Williamson Retreat Center in Carlinville, Illinois.

This is a great opportunity to meet others, laugh a lot, enjoy some down time, and eat some good food. Most importantly, it is our desire that you will be

encouraged as we open up the Scriptures and see how they can be applied to our everyday lives. Our theme this year is "I Declare War" and is based on the book by Levi Lusko.

The all-inclusive cost is \$140 per person. This includes transportation, lodging, all meals and any supplies needed. We will be leaving Thursday afternoon and returning on Saturday afternoon.

Be sure to sign up today!



Easter at Cross Lane

Service Times: 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m.

If you would like to help us keep our costs down and start receiving The Voice as a pdf via email, please send an email to:

tracy@clcchurch.com

Volunteer Spotlight - Nathan Foxworthy



Meet Nathan Foxworthy. Nathan is currently a student at Ivy Tech and plays a big role as a volunteer here at Cross Lane.

On Sunday mornings, you can usually find Nathan leading worship for the Under Rowers. He then

usually finds his way back to Kidz Adventure where he volunteers with the elementary students.

The kids love Nathan and we love his big heart and willingness to serve here at Cross Lane. Thanks Nathan!

“AND BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO DEATH—EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS!”

PHILIPPIANS 2:8

ROMANIA 2020

In April of 2020, Cross Lane is planning to send a team to Oradea, Romania to work alongside The Smiles Foundation. The 10-day trip will give team members the opportunity to visit Eastern Europe while spreading God’s love to the people of Romania.

As a Ministry, The Smiles Foundation has three main objectives. To advance

the Christian religion World-wide by the promotion of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to relieve poverty and to advance education. While in Romania, the team will work with various ministries within The Smiles Foundation that could include working with the local gypsy communities, homeless community, children outreach ministries, educational projects and

elderly or disabled care ministry.

The trip will end with an opportunity to explore Budapest, Hungary, cited as one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

There is still plenty of room on the team. Anyone interested in more information about the trip should contact Tracy Sutliff.

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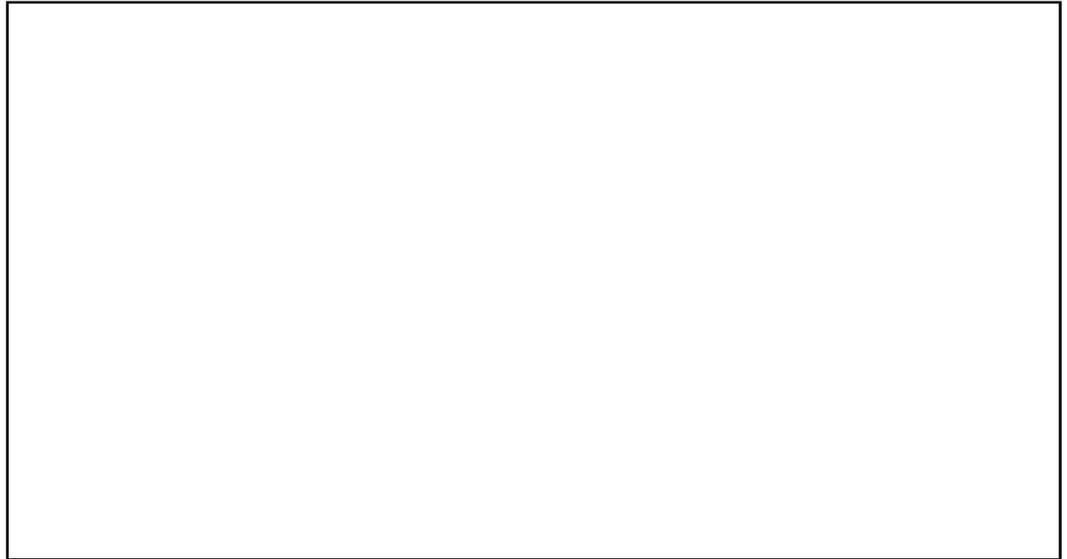
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OUR MISSION:

BRINGING PEOPLE TO
JESUS SO THAT THEY
CAN GET CLOSE TO
GOD, MAKE FRIENDS
WITH ONE ANOTHER,
AND INFLUENCE NON-
BELIEVERS.



Third Thursdays for Women 2019 Schedule

Third Thursdays for Women is a fun and easy way for women to meet new friends, share stories, and make new memories all in a casual, low stress environment. The Third Thursdays group meets on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m.

Following is their schedule for 2019:

March 21st @ Church

Study: Me and My Big Mouth
(Lesson #1)

April 18th @ AMC Theater

Movie (TBD)

May 16th @ Church

Study: Me and My Big Mouth
(Lesson #2)

June 20th @ Church

Bring a dish to share for a summer picnic at the church shelter.

July 18th @ Church

Study: Me and My Big Mouth
(Lesson #3)

August 15th @ Moggers

Burgers, Fries & Friends!

September 19th @ Church

Study: Me and My Big Mouth
(Lesson #4)

October

Ladies Retreat (TBD)

November (No Meeting)

December 19th

Christmas Caroling & Hot Chocolate



Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
8 a.m. - 4 p.m.