

# *Come and Die*

**September 3, 2017**

Setup: What If Everyone Cared?

Closing: Call Me Higher

## **Introduction**

As you know, this has been a horrific two weeks for the people in south Texas and Louisiana who are suffering through the worst natural disaster in US history. As images of devastation from Hurricane Harvey have streamed across the TV and the internet this week,

### **(Images of Hurricane Harvey)**

I couldn't help but ask myself, "How are these people going to get out of there? Who's going to come to their rescue?"

I know some of us here today have family and friends who have been in extreme danger in Houston and the surrounding area. My daughter-in-law Cindy's parents were without power and water as they waited out the storm in their boarded up house in Victoria, Texas. One of Joseph St. George's family members had 10 inches water in her house and had to be evacuated. For some of us, this catastrophic event has become very personal and hits close to home.

I'm sure many of us this week have prayed for the victims of Hurricane Harvey and asked God to provide aid and send help. But let me ask you this: what if God wanted YOU to be the answer to your prayer? What if God wanted you or me to be the person to meet the need? Would we shrug it off and ignore it? Would we be willing to make a sacrifice? Like a big one?

Twelve years ago this week, there was one person who did just that. His name was Ken Bellau, This 10th-generation New Orleans native took his fiberglass fishing boat and spent three weeks on the water in the chaotic aftermath of hurricane Katrina, coaxing people into his boat, dodging their bullets, rescuing their pets and breaking into their houses for supplies when the city was dark, dangerous and uninhabitable. His efforts have been credited with saving more than 400 lives, a feat that prompted the Louisiana State Museum, to put his boat on permanent display outside its main entrance in Jackson Square.

**(pic: Ken and his boat)**

“Every day he went out there, he was sacrificing his life,” says Alan Miranda, a California National Guard corporal and Iraq war veteran. “God knows how many people would have died without him.”

Everywhere he went, he saw old people, the infirm,

stray pets, all of them walking the streets dazed, with no way to get to safety.

He spent days negotiating with people throughout New Orleans to come out of their homes into his boat, even though he was a stranger and didn't have a good answer to the question: "Where are you bringing me?" He'd just say, "a better place."

That was Katrina. That was 12 years ago this week. Not long after Katrina hit, the St. George's and the Thomason's traveled down to Crosspoint Church in Gulfport, Mississippi on behalf of North Heartland and delivered a check for \$50,000 to provide the church there with much needed financial support to assist people whose lives were ravaged by Katrina. North Heartlanders made a big financial sacrifice for the people of Gulfport. Ken Bellau made an unbelievable sacrifice for the people of New Orleans. That was then. This is now. But here's the bottom line: the need to sacrifice

never goes away. In fact, the bible says that true religion is all about sacrifice and surrender.

In the book of James chapter 1 we read:

*Anyone who sets himself up as “religious” by talking a good game is self-deceived. This kind of religion is hot air and only hot air. Real religion, the kind that passes muster before God the Father, is this: Reach out to the homeless and loveless in their plight, and guard against corruption from the godless world. James 1:27*  
*The Message*

One of the problems we face today is that many people think that when they become a Christian, they simply add Jesus to their life. In other words, they keep living their lives for the most part as they want it, with Jesus now added into the mix. Oh, they've changed a few things perhaps but it's still their lives and their will and their ways. They listen

to Christian radio and speak the language and hang out with Christian friends but it doesn't go much farther than that.

Is this what Jesus has in mind for His followers? Not according to the bible. Jesus himself taught just the opposite. He taught that if we are going to be one of his disciples, it's going to take some radical commitment. You see, the first call that Jesus issued to his followers was "come and see." But his next call was "come and die". "Come and see ... come and die". That's the journey of a truly mature follower of Christ.

If that's true, and I believe it is, then we all need a radical change in mindset. We need a paradigm shift in our hearts. We need to re-orient our lives under a new banner, the banner of sacrifice and surrender. We need to learn the meaning of "come and die". That's what I want to talk about in

today's message.

## **Review**

Before we get into the meat of the message today, I want you to know that what I'm talking about today isn't directly tied to any of the messages on our values that Rick has been giving the last few weeks. As you know, he's been going through a series called "Building Something Great" where he's talking about the six biblical values that our church is built upon and how those very same values apply to any organization you are a part of, whether it be work, family or ministry. You can view these messages on our app or church website.

Now sometimes it's amazing how God works. When I was given the option to speak on a standalone topic, little did I know that the subject I chose would be in direct contrast to the topic of

self-care that Rick spoke on last week. In fact, the topic of sacrifice and surrender which we are talking about today is just the opposite of the topic of self-care from last week

If you remember in last week's message, Rick said that we need to put the first things first and that the "first thing" is ourselves. We call that value "taking personal responsibility for your spiritual health". He went on to say that putting yourself first sounds quite selfish. But it isn't. He wasn't talking about being selfish in a self-centered or self-satisfied way. What he was talking about is sustainability because

**a lifestyle of giving yourself away like Jesus did requires that you first have a life and a self to give.**

Or, as we say all the time around here: you can't give away what you don't have. The bottom line of



Rick's message was that self-care is a high priority in the Christian life if you want to have a sustainable life and ministry.

But this week we are talking about the exact opposite. This week we are focusing on the concept of surrender and sacrifice, and just in case you are wondering, the topics of self-care and self-sacrifice aren't mutually exclusive. They don't cancel each other out. On the contrary, self-care and self-sacrifice are mutually inclusive and work together. You can't do the later without the former. There's no way you can deny yourself and sacrifice for others unless you live life in a sustainable kind of way.

Just to be clear: this idea of self-sacrifice is of equal importance to the idea of putting yourself first. During the ministry of Jesus on this earth, he repeated a phrase whenever He went from city to

city. This phrase was repeated over and over again because his disciples needed to constantly be reminded what it meant to be a true disciple.

**Jesus said “Come and die.”**

The command is repeated in every one of the gospel writer’s books in the New Testament.

*Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. Matt. 16:24, 25 NIV*

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Mark 8:34*

*Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. Luke 17:32*

***Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. John 12:25***

Jesus was not interested in casual Christians; in reality there is no such thing. To be a Christian is to march under the banner of sacrifice and to deny yourself daily and follow him.

Implied in the command to “come and die” is the idea of stepping away from our “comfort zones”. Now the enemy of our souls wants us to do just the opposite. Satan wants us to get so comfortable where we are in life that we won’t want to follow Jesus when he tells us to go this way or that.

But here’s the bottom line: we can’t follow Jesus if we aren’t willing to “come and die”. And in order for us to “come and die”, there must be two factors

present in our lives: sacrifice and surrender.

Before I get into the rest of the message, I want to give credit to Perry Noble who was a huge inspiration to me. I want to acknowledge that some of the content contained in my message came from him.

## **The Sacrifice Factor**

With that said, let's begin by looking at this factor of sacrifice. I want to illustrate this concept of sacrifice by looking at the life of Joshua in in the Old Testament.

Joshua was the successor to Moses and he was charged with taking the nation of Israel into the Promised Land. Long before Joshua took over the leadership of Israel, God used Moses to miraculously deliver the Israelites out of bondage and captivity in Egypt. For 40 years, the Israelites wandered in the wilderness due to their

disobedience until God finally allowed their children to enter the Promised Land. At that time, God appointed Joshua to be the new leader over the nation.

So as we come to chapter 5 of the book of Joshua, we find Joshua and the nation of Israel camped on the front lawn of the Promised Land. This is what we read in verse 1:

*As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.*

The enemies in the land had heard of Joshua and the Israelites were coming and they were scared to death. But what God does tells Joshua next defies

all logic from a human point of view. Verse 2:

*At that time the LORD said to Joshua, “Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time.” Joshua 5:2 ESV*

In the verse I just read, God had something to say about sacrifice. God wanted to challenge Joshua’s thinking (and ours as well) about any false notion we may have about “living the comfortable Christian life”.

So Joshua does exactly as the Lord commanded because in verse 3 we read:

*So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. Joshua 5:3 ESV*

Let’s pause for a second. Imagine you were Joshua.

Imagine you are just about ready to go into battle and you get this word from the Lord and you have the unenviable position of communicating this to all the guys back in the camp.

“Uh guys. There’s something I need for you to do before we go into battle”. How many of you think the men responded, “Wow. That’s awesome. That’s the key to our success! We are going to win. We are going to take the Promised Land.” More likely they said, “Man are you smoking crack? That’s the craziest thing we’ve ever heard of.”

Now listen carefully to me or you’ll miss this the main point of this passage:

**If we want to get where God wants us to be, there is always sacrifice involved.**

Jesus didn’t say take up your mattress and follow

me. He said take up your cross and follow me. So in this text, we see that there's sacrifice required to follow God, and if we aren't careful, we can get so in love with our comforts, that we lose sight and miss what God is calling us to do at any given moment.

The last thing I want to do in my life is to lose sight of my calling, but in order to pursue my calling, I've got to step out of my comfort zone. Because just like Joshua, for us to take our Promised Land, we've got to be willing to obey God even when he asks us to do things that are incredibly difficult.

I love being comfortable just like the next guy. I'm no different than any of you. One of the toughest things for me to do is to get out of bed in the morning, especially when it's cool outside and I'm under those nice warm sheets. But if I stay in bed all day, I never step into what God has for me and



neither can you.

In order to step into what God wants you to do, you've got to be willing to go through the painful process of allowing God to shape you and mold you in places where you thought were untouchable. But when you allow God to do that, you are one step closer to the Promised Land. This is what God was showing Joshua and this is what Jesus meant for us when he said "come and die". This is what it means to sacrifice.

Let me ask you this: How comfortable is your life? What is God asking you to let go of something so that he can put something else in your hand? If we just want to be comfortable, we will never step into the area of sacrifice that God is calling us to.

Several years ago when I was working for Hallmark Cards, we were living in Overland Park and our friends were trying to plant a church in

Liberty at the time and we were driving 35 mins one way once or twice a week to help them. One day as I was driving to Topeka to teach a class for Hallmark, I felt the Lord prompting me that we should leave the comfort zone of our home in Overland Park and move to Liberty. We were in a nice house at the time and our kids were young and well-adjusted to life there. Norma's family lived close by. In all aspects, we were living the American dream.

But as I was driving that day, I felt God telling us it was time to make a sacrifice and leave the comfort of Jo Co and move to the northland where there was more unknown than known. I remember that day because I called Norma to get her thoughts. I'll never forget her reaction over the phone. "That makes me sick to my stomach!" Now to her credit, she did go back and start praying about it. And about two weeks later, she said, "Ok,

I'm ready to go if you think it's the right thing for us to do." We both had to struggle with deciding to stay where it was comfortable or leave our comfort to follow the calling of God in Liberty. If you want to get where God wants you to be, there's always sacrifice involved. That's part of what it means to "come and die".

### **The Surrender Factor**

There is a second factor that's involved in dying to ourselves. And that's the factor of surrender. If I asked you if you were surrendered to Jesus right now, most of you would say, "Sure I'm surrendered. I showed up for church today, didn't I?" But let me ask you this: Has there ever been a time when you THOUGHT you were surrendered but you weren't? Sometimes we think we are surrendered but we aren't and we won't know for sure until God puts us to the test.

Let's go back to the story of Joshua and pick up the action in v. 13.

In v. 13, we find Joshua on the outskirts of Jericho, the first enemy stronghold that must be taken out in order to lay claim to the Promised Land. Verse 13 says:

*When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped...Joshua 5:13-14a ESV*

This is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus. In the book of Revelation we see a similar reference to Jesus as the commander of the army of the Lord. So this is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

Now as soon as Joshua understood who he was talking to, he fell to the ground in worship.

The very next thing Joshua says is vs. 14 is:

***“What does my lord say to his servant?”***

***Joshua 5:14b ESV***

Now Joshua was probably getting ready to say, “Lord, do you want me to attack this city? Do you want me to do something big? Do you want me to do something great? Do you want me to do something awesome?”

***And the commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, “Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.”***

***And Joshua did so. Joshua 5: 15 ESV***

Now listen carefully because I don't want you to

miss this point:

**We can't lead or serve effectively until we are surrendered privately.**

God basically was saying to Joshua, "Well yes, I'll have you do some big things, but the first thing I want you to do is to take off your shoes."

If I was Joshua, I would have said, "Excuse me? I'm sorry. There must be something in my ear. Did you say, 'take off my shoes?' Did I hear you right?" And God replied, "That's exactly what I said."

Now why in the world would God ask Joshua to take off his shoes? The first thing I want to point out is that shoes haven't changed much since back then. The foot sits here and the ground sits here and in between there's something small, something very thin called the sole that separates the foot from the ground. Now to us, that little piece of leather

seems like a little thing, but it's a big thing to God. And God knew that if Joshua didn't take off his shoes, he wouldn't lead God's army into battle in the way God wanted him to.

**Before God can trust us with something big, he's going to trust us with something small...like taking off our shoes.**

Maybe today some of you need to confess that this is what's holding you back from a posture of surrendering to God. Maybe today you just need to take off your shoes. If he can't trust you to do this, he can't trust you to do something bigger.

Maybe for some of us, taking off our shoes may be something as small as surrendering your \$5 coffee a few days a week so that you can take that money and start giving consistently and regularly to the

work of God. Maybe for some of you, it's surrendering one night a week watching TV at home so that you can spend consistent time with a small group of people who will challenge you and encourage you in your walk with God. Maybe for some of us, taking off our shoes means giving up our regularly scheduled weekend of travel or time at the lake so that we can regularly volunteer on a serving team here at NHCC.

Surrendering to God's agenda may mean sacrificing our children—or our goods, reputation, comfort, convenience, and a whole list of other things we hold so tightly in our hands as well as those things we hope and plan for.

The Apostle Paul once said.

*I will most gladly spend and be spent for*



*your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?*  
*2 Corinthians 12:15 ESV*

I think it's time for you to ask yourself, "What is one thing that God wants me to surrender to him but I'm holding back?" If you are feeling unnoticed or disconnected or disillusioned here at NHCC, maybe it's because you aren't willing to surrender and sacrifice anything that might inconvenience you or mess with your comfort. Remember: Before you can lead or serve effectively, you must be willing to surrender privately.

## **Conclusion**

As we bring this message to a close, let me ask you a question: Do you want to see God do something significant in your life? Do you want your life to count for something? If you answered yes to these questions, then you have to let go of your

comfortable life.

Look at this guitar right here. Now this guitar is nothing special. But let's pretend that this guitar represents your life...laid out in front of God completely surrendered to Jesus and you allow God to work the instrument like it was intended to be used. At first it may look really simple. I'm going to be a greeter at the front door, or take care of a kid....or volunteer in the office, or lead a small group...I'm going to re-locate to be more available to serve, And it's a little messy at first but God still uses it. And before we know it, God is playing some beautiful music with our lives. Don't you want God to do more than this in your life? (play one note over and over)

It has to do with you being willing to surrender and sacrifice. It's all about you saying to God, "I'm your instrument. I've been created for your glory. Call me higher. Do whatever you want to do in me,

with me and through me.”

In Philippians 2 it says:

*He made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Philippians 2:7.8 NIV*

Jesus voluntarily emptied Himself of anything and everything that stood in the way of being fully available to God.

It's the same for us. Sacrifice and surrender means putting the Lord first above self and even family. Denying ourselves is an act of submission and a willingness to pay the price and do whatever God asks. This is what Jesus meant when he said, “come

and die”. In your life the best is yet to come if you are willing to sacrifice and surrender and trust God and say, “Yes Lord. Do whatever you want to do with my life.” Let’s pray.