

Sermon for Lent Midweek #2

Date: March 13, 2019

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Genesis 22:1-18

Epistle Reading: James 1:12-18

Gospel Reading: John 11:47-53

Sermon Text: John 11:47-53

Sermon Title: Caiaphas the Schemer

Introit: Psalm 16

Hymns:

LSB 439 – O Dearest Jesus, What Law Hast Thou Broken (v1-3)

LSB 543 – What Wondrous Love is This

LSB 437 – Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed
Called to Remember (*Tune 637*)

LSB 422 – On My Heart Imprint Your Image

LSB 563 – Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness

Liturgy:

Divine Service: Special



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin
Twitter.com/StJohnsAustinMN
FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau



Text: John 11:47-53

The chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council. They asked, “What are we doing? This man is performing a lot of miracles. If we let him continue what he’s doing, everyone will believe in him. Then the Romans will take away our position and our nation.” One of them, Caiaphas, who was chief priest that year, told them, “You people don’t know anything. You haven’t even considered this: It is better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”

Caiaphas did not say this on his own. As chief priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation. He prophesied that Jesus wouldn’t die merely for this nation but that Jesus would die to bring God’s scattered children together and make them one.

From that day on, the Jewish council planned to kill Jesus.

NOTE: Copyright information.

Bible Translation: GOD’S WORD®, © 1995 God’s Word to the Nations. Some readings have been adapted to better reflect the original Greek or Hebrew.

Credit for Images:

Pronunciation for difficult words are contained in { }

© 2018 James Groleau.

Permission is granted to use these sermons for any non-profit purpose. I only ask that credit, as to their origination, be noted appropriately.

Grace you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Many villains can be found in the last few weeks of Jesus' life. I suppose you might be hard pressed to pick who is the worst of them all. We might think it was Judas, from last week. He used his friendship with Jesus to destroy Jesus. He saw an opportunity to profit himself at the expense of everyone else around him. He was going to show them all that he was the only true wise man among them. He thought he, and he alone, would be the one who could fix everything through sly and underhanded ways. In his ignorance and arrogance he, in a cowardly act of selfishness, betrayed the One who cared about him most. Judas might be the worst, the most vile, the most wicked.



...or was it Pilot. Pilot questioned Jesus, talked to Jesus. He knew Jesus was innocent. He like Judas was just looking out for himself. He was a new governor and he needed to prove he could keep the peace. He had the power, he had the authority. He could have declared Jesus innocent. The point is he didn't. For the sake of political peace, and to earn the favor of a few Jewish betrayers of their own people, Pilot condemned Jesus to death in an act of weakness and greed. So Pilot might be the worst, the most vile, the most wicked.



There is another person to consider. There is another person, who doesn't have a lot of speaking parts in the Passion of Jesus' last weeks, but when he talks things happen. His name is Caiaphas. He was the schemer. He was the one who came up with the plan. He was the one who showed all the others how to bring Jesus down. Without Caiaphas, Judas, Pilot, and all the others would have been irrelevant. It was Caiaphas who was truly the worst. He was truly the most vile, the most wicked.



He was the high priest, the most powerful religious leader among the Jewish people. His most important job was to know and study the Scriptures, and to teach the people about the coming Messiah. His job was to show them how they would recognize Him. He was anything but that great example.

The reason for Caiaphas' corruption was largely due to the fact that he had no right being the high priest. He was appointed to that position, not by the rules and rites written down in God's Holy Word, but rather by Rome, for whom he had done many favors. Rome knew that, for the Jews, if you controlled the religion you controlled the people. The result was Rome removing or killing the Temple Authority and replacing them with their own choices; with people who would be more amicable to the Roman way of thinking.

Caiaphas was put in that office by the governor before Pilot. Caiaphas had done some favors for him, and the Roman government, and was rewarded with a position of affluence and influence. A position he used in any and every way he could to ensure he kept that power and prestige. Caiaphas liked his power and he would do anything, turn against anyone, to keep it.

That is the real reason Caiaphas acted. He would have lost everything had Jesus continued His ministry. Jesus was doing uncountable miracles of helping, healing, and feeding the people

physically and spiritually. Jesus was building a following so large that it rivaled anything else the country had seen. As the people heard and learned from Jesus, they were starting to understand more and more how corrupt the Temple Authority had become. The people were learning the truths and promises of God, as well as the corruption and greed of the, so called, religious leaders.

So Caiaphas saw he was losing on two fronts. Jesus was building a following of people that would rival Caiaphas' earthly authority. Jesus was also teaching the people the truth of Scripture, which was tearing down Caiaphas' religious authority. Caiaphas was desperate to get Jesus gone, quickly.

He had to fight back. Jesus had already drove the money changers and marketers from the Temple. He had preached openly about the lies and corruption of the Temple Authority. Even Rome was starting to notice this Jesus of Nazareth, and that meant Rome was starting to watch Caiaphas, and question whether he was the right man for the job.

Now how could Caiaphas be so corrupt? It is hard to believe. He had all of Scripture available to him. He had access to more of God's Word than anyone else. He could read the words. The common people relied upon him to read those words for them. It was not possible to have a copy of God's Word in the home. It was not possible to know what God said. The priests were supposed to read it and teach it. How did Caiaphas get so far away from the truths of Scripture that his job of showing the people the Messiah had become killing the Messiah when He came?

Caiaphas was a Sadducee. He didn't believe all of those miracles in the Old Testament happened. Creation – nonsense. The Flood- silliness. The plagues of Egypt – stories to scare children. He did not believe people had a soul. He did not believe in Hell, or Heaven for that matter. He denied the existence of angels, or most anything in the spiritual realm. He cared nothing about sin or salvation. All that really mattered to the Sadducees was what he could gain in this life. Can you imagine a pastor in the Christian Church today believing such things? Can you imagine a pastor in the Christian Church teaching such things?

The really painful and horrible truth is pastors, even whole denominations, are teaching those same things today. They deny the miracles of the Bible. They deny Jesus' death. They deny Jesus' resurrection. They have reduced God to being what they want Him to be. They try to control God by claiming culture and conscience determine what God is, and what God teaches. In doing so they condemn themselves to God's judgment.¹

The result is the same for them as it was for Caiaphas. Having lost the truths and promises of God and His Word, they got wrapped up in politics and self-help sermons. They push aside the teachings of the Bible for teachings on earthly concerns. The real truth is they, like Caiaphas, try to kill God and get Him out of their way, so they can peruse their own goals and their own priorities. The evils of Caiaphas are sadly alive and well, around our own lives today.

Caiaphas would not be denied his position, and so he plotted and schemed to shut Jesus down. Caiaphas chased after any and every unscrupulous, sly, scheme he could concoct through

1 Matthew 23:1-12; Mark 9:42; Mark 12:37-40

clever but devious calculation. He would get rid of Jesus no matter what the cost. His plotting and scheming started long before that fateful Friday. He had been planing Jesus' demise for a very long time.

He was sending spies out to pretend to be Jesus' students. Always asking questions to try to trap Him. They would sit together and try to come up with endless questions that would make Jesus out to be an enemy of the people, regardless of the answer He would give. Time after time Jesus saw through their ploys for personal power, and their contempt for the peace and healing He brought to the people. Each time they failed, and each time they steeled their resolve all the more to destroy Him. Each time they became more and more desperate.

Finally Jesus had become a concern for much of the Sadducean council. So they met together secretly to determine what they could do to shut Jesus up. Caiaphas came with a plan. A plan that would solve everyone's problems. So long as it was executed properly. It was execution that was on Caiaphas' mind when it came to Jesus. The problem was the council was afraid to act. They were afraid of the people, afraid of Rome, perhaps a few of them still had some conscience and were afraid of God. Killing a man was for some going a bit too far. They would have to be motivated to act.

Caiaphas addressed the counsel. He had to choose the right words. He had to convince them that Jesus' death was the only way. He knew religious motivation would be useless. The Sadduces as a whole had already thrown most of the Bible out and labeled it as nonsense, or words for another time and another people. No his words would have to appeal to their earthly desires. He pulled at their patriotic duty. That would be the motivating factor that would get them to act. Caiaphas addressed the counsel. "Do you not realize that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, rather than the whole nation perish?"²

One man or the whole nation, he made it sound like these were the only two choices. His speech and rhetoric were skillfully smithed to keep their minds of those two choices alone. It took little time for the decision to be made. They chose the "one man" over the whole nations. Jesus' execution would seal their authority, and save their prosperity.

There is the irony in it all. They believed that Jesus' death would save them, when in fact it was Jesus' death that could save them. Caiaphas believed his scheme was working. Little did he know then how God was using his evil plans to plan something wonderful. Caiaphas spoke his words as a villain, a betrayer, and a schemer. God made those evil words a prophetic promise to all who believe. Caiaphas had murder on his mind, God had salvation in His plan. The counsel decided to kill Jesus, just as God had planned before the creation of the world.³

So the words that led to Jesus' execution contained a wondrous and beautiful promise, Jesus died "for the people." He died for the Jews, the Romans, for me, and for you. He even died for the Sadducean council, and even for scheming Caiaphas. Jesus died for the sins of the whole world.⁴ It is only a persons rejection of that free gift that now condemns them. Nothing can take them from God's almighty hand,⁵ except their own contempt for God.

2 John 11:50

3 1 Peter 1:20

4 1 John 2:2

5 John 10:29

The council and Caiaphas thought they were saving themselves for a lifetime of power and position. It bought them neither. Within only 40 years all of them would be dead, and the city of Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed. The vast majority of that council would live to see their own demise come from the crushing blow of a Roman army ending their scheming ways. Their kingdom came to an end. Jesus however, died and rose to a kingdom which has no end.⁶ When Jesus died, as the Heaven's sent substitute for sinners, He died for our sins, paying our penalty. One man, the God-man, died for, on behalf of, and in the stead of, all people. In that way, the most wicked deed ever perpetrated, the crucifixion of the Son of God in the flesh, was turned into the greatest good ever given to humankind, the eternal salvation of repentant sinners.

May that truth fill your hearts and mind with a peace that surpasses all human understanding. Amen.