

In Spite of the Chaos, Jesus is King
Matthew 26:57-68
Pastor Tom Newell

Good Morning! Well, it's great to see you here today! It's been quite a week or at least the last 72 hours! We have seen fear, worry, uncertainty, nervousness, happiness from no school, and everything in between.

I read an article this week written about how college senior athletes who are missing their final sports season. Many are understandingly disappointed about missing out on their last chance on being a student athlete. Interestingly enough, a friend of one of the students pointed out this amazing truth. "This is a great lesson in accepting the unpredictability of life. There is so much we cannot control. No matter how hard we may try to create an ideal path, plans go awry. The author added that no matter how much we want our kids to experience happy endings in life, they're never guaranteed." This is so true for where we are today. No matter how precise and prepared our plans are, there is so much outside our control. We don't know what the tomorrow holds, but we know the Lord is King, on the throne, and in control.

This passage today is so appropriate for what we are experiencing today. We have been going through the book of Matthew and we have followed the life of Jesus and seen some amazing encounters that He has had with people. Today, we are going to see another encounter that He had with some people who didn't like Him too much and actually wanted Him dead. So, then you may be asking Tom, then how is this passage so appropriate for what we are experiencing today?

Well, there was a lot of chaos going on then (kind of like today) and Jesus still triumphs. His purpose, plan, and identity were revealed. I pray that you will see Him in a new light and realize that He is with you through the chaos! And most importantly, He is King and reigning over everything.

Well, let me give you a little context of where we are in the story. And just so you know, putting the 4 gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) together, gives us a more complete picture of the life of Christ. Each author takes a little different approach when following Jesus. So, Jesus had just been arrested and last week Pastor Scott talked about Peter, one of his disciples cutting off the high priests' servant's ear and then Jesus healed him. Jesus told him that those that take up the sword, die by the sword. They have just walked from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem and have spent time with Annas, the old high priest and Annas was frustrated with Jesus and has now sent Jesus to his son in law Caiaphas, who is the current high priest to be tried in the court of law. It is now around 1am in the morning. A perfect time of day for a trial. 😊

Let's pick up the story.

⁵⁷ Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. ⁵⁸ But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as

the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

They are now at the court of the high priest to put Jesus on trial.

We have Jesus, the accused

We have Caiaphas, the high priest who was the religious leader of the Jews appointed by the Romans. He was also the head of the Sanhedrin and supposed to be an impartial mediator since the Romans had appointed him to that role. His position should have been respected and he should represent fairness and justice.

Next, we have the scribes and the elders which when you see these terms in Scripture refer to the (Sanhedrin), which was the ruling body, basically the supreme council of the Jews headed by a High Priest and having religious, civil, and criminal jurisdiction. The local sanhedrins were made up of 23 men, but this was the Grand Sanhedrin which was made up of 71 men (70 plus the high priest) who were the governing body of the Jews. Remember, this ruling body, was supposed to be impartial, ruling with justice.

We also have some people outside the court, in the courtyard. We have the officers who arrested Jesus and Peter, one of the disciples, who is following along at a distance. We will talk more about Peter next week when we talk about his denial.

Well, what was this scene like...picture our sanctuary as the court with everyone in here and our new access hall being the courtyard. It's all open so Peter and the officers are outside the court, but able to observe what is going on inside.

Before we continue, I want to give you a little more info on Caiaphas, the high priest... This is not the first time we have seen him in Scripture. Caiaphas was introduced in the book of John when Jesus had healed Lazarus from the dead. If you remember the story from John 11, Lazarus had died and Jesus came 4 days later and brought him back to life. It was an amazing miracle. Many people followed Jesus and turned to Him. As you might expect, not everyone was thrilled with this including Caiaphas and the pharisees. Let's pick up the story in John 11: **John 11:47 Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, "What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. 48 If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish." 53 So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.**

So what do we learn about Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin from this passage:

First, They had a plan to kill Jesus a few months prior to him being arrested. They are not impartial and have already determined what they want to do to Jesus..kill him. In fact, earlier in Matthew 26, the chief priests, elders, and Caiaphas Himself “plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him.” This was in no way going to be an impartial trial. They had an agenda and that was to find Jesus guilty.

Second, Caiaphas thinks that by killing Jesus, it will stop the political unrest. He was worried that now that all of these people are following Jesus that Rome would get upset and want to crush this upheaval by force and Caiaphas would lose some control and influence. Caiaphas was also not happy with Jesus when Jesus overturned the money changers in the temple. They were profiting from that and Jesus was stopping it. Jesus called their temple, a den of thieves. Jesus was exposing them for who they were.

Returning to this passage in John, there are two more verses I want to read because I think they are crucial to understanding our passage in Matthew.

⁵¹ Now he (Caiaphas) did not say this [m] on his own initiative, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, ⁵² and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

Did you catch that? Caiaphas, even in his sinfulness, is speaking about things that God will bring to pass. Caiaphas’s motive is sinful to kill Jesus and his prophecy is right. Jesus will die, but not because of Caiaphas, but because of the will of God, the Father to make a perfect sacrifice for the payment of sin. I find it pretty amazing how the Lord can use sinful, evil men to accomplish His purposes and reveal the truth about who He is. We are going to see this happen a few more times in this unfair trial. God has a way to make His purpose, plan, and identity known and revealed through sinful men.

Ok, we’ve talked about the characters of this story and their motives, now let’s talk about their methods. Even reading this story for the first time, you probably realize that this trial has something shady about it. The more I researched what a normal, proper Jewish trial was supposed to look like, the more I realized that this was a death trap.

So here is what a proper Jewish trial in Jesus day was supposed to look like

Proper trial

- During the day
- Cannot take place during a Feast
- Arrest cannot be based on a bribe
- If any false testimony, the accuser faced the same punishment
- Person can’t incriminate themselves
- The accuser cannot seek out false testimony

- Sentence cannot be pronounced until the day after the accused has been convicted
- High priest/sanhedrin judged with impartiality
- 2 or more witnesses

As we will see, all of these trial laws and religious rules except the last one were abandoned in this trial for Jesus.

How could Caiaphas get away with this? He probably could just say it was in the best interest of the people and of religion. And In order to put a Jew to death, they had to have an official trial and reasons had to be formulated. So the death sentence could be carried out by the Romans (specifically Pilate).

Let's read through this "mock trial":

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole ^[a]Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. ⁶⁰ They did not find *any*, even though many false witnesses came forward.

So think about that...they aren't looking for truth...they are looking for false testimony! Isn't a court supposed to be looking for truth??

They already know what the verdict is going to be...they just need to find some charge to stick.

They couldn't find any false testimony even though many false witnesses came forward. No 2 witnesses could agree on what Jesus had done.

And what's ironic is that even though they have had time to plan this whole charade of a trial, they still couldn't even muster up some false testimony (not true testimony, but false testimony!).

Let's continue in vs. 60

But later on two came forward, ⁶¹ and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the ^[a]temple of God and to rebuild it ^[b]in three days.'"

Caiaphas saw his window of opportunity.. finally, they found 2 witnesses whose testimony worked together.

However, if you go back to Jesus' exact words when He cleared the temple of moneychangers. In John 2: 19 Jesus said, **John 2:19 Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."**

Do you see the difference in the wording?...Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." They changed His words to "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to

rebuild it in three days.” His emphasis was on rebuilding the temple while their testimony was on Jesus tearing down the temple. By changing Jesus’ words, they charged Jesus with defamation of the temple, a serious charge.

Well, Caiaphas is happy now because now he finally has his two witnesses and a charge on Jesus that may stick so he stands up and challenges Jesus.

62 The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?” 63 But Jesus kept silent.

Notice Jesus stays silent here! This is amazing to me to see the character of Christ...he is silent! If we remember back to Isaiah 53..He was silent like a lamb going to slaughter.

If someone was bringing these unfair charges against me I’d be speaking up and telling them that they are full of it and defending my honor. Jesus could have said that isn’t true, he could have argued, objected, but rather he waits because He knows that the purpose of this trial is not to vindicate the right, but rather to allow the wrong to temporarily triumph. Let me say that again.....The purpose of this trial is not to vindicate the right, but rather to allow the wrong to temporarily triumph

Now, the question here is for us? Are we supposed to stay silent when someone accuses us wrongly? Are we supposed to let injustice be victorious? I would say in short, No...There is a time and a place to speak up and fight for truth. However, many times we are just doing it to save our own hide. And we may do it out of anger, manipulation, or hatred. There is a way to stand up for truth and justice, but we need to represent Christ in the way that we do it.

When I was a youth pastor at my old church in Pennsylvania, there was a division amongst the leadership of our church. And while I had some wrong in the situation, there were definitely some things that were done against me that were untrue and unfair. I so wanted to tell everyone about the injustice that was happening. I remember talking with my wife about it and we knew that if we shared what we knew that it would have hurt the church at large. It was hard not to say anything, but we consistently prayed and asked the Lord to trust Him and also hoped that the truth would eventually come out. Eventually the truth came out and God used a tough situation to bring about reconciliation and forgiveness. Now, I know my situation is nothing like Jesus’..it wasn’t life or death and I’m a sinner, while Christ is perfect. But, it was still a time when I needed to be silent and trust the Lord’s timing.

So, Jesus had every right to stand up to the injustice of this trial, but He knew His purpose and plan and could see the bigger picture of what God was doing here.

Back to the trial.... Of course his silence really frustrates Caiaphas.

He is now flustered and a little worried that Jesus will not do what he wants Him to do. So Caiaphas has to ramp up the emotion and now starts acting as the chief prosecutor. He changes the subject and challenges Jesus in vs. 63

63 And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God."

Notice that he doesn't ask, he rather commands Jesus.

To "adjure" someone is basically a command or solemn oath. It's a demand requiring a response.

Caiaphas is trying to box Jesus into a corner.

He demands..."Tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God."

Caiaphas knows that if Jesus says yes, he's got Jesus for blasphemy because Jesus is claiming that He is the same nature as God. If Jesus says no, Jesus is an Imposter/fraud and Caiaphas can discredit Him for His phony claims!!

I find it pretty amazing in the Lord's orchestration of this trial that He is again using Caiaphas' own words.. "Christ, the Son of God"..this is exactly who Jesus is and how Christ has been identified in Scripture. He is the Christ or the Messiah/the Savior, and the Son of God!

Even in Caiaphas' evil intent to discredit and arrest Jesus, God uses Caiaphas's words to reveal Jesus's identity.

[Slide here of picture from A Few Good Men..maybe the scene of Cruise and Nicholson](#)

This whole scene reminds me of one of my favorite court scenes in the movie...A Few Good Men...when Tom Cruise, the prosecuting attorney interrogates Jack Nicholson, a general who ordered a soldier to be mistreated in a command called a code red. Of course, Tom Cruise wants to ask him the question directly, but he knows that's risky. Jack Nicholson could refuse to answer the question and the whole case could go out the window. The interrogation escalates until Cruise screams, "Did you order the code red?" And Jack Nicholson responds with a not so pg level expression..."You bet I ordered the code red!" If Cruise doesn't ask the question, the truth doesn't come out. In the same way in this trial, Caiaphas' question brings out the truth of Jesus' answer. The question produces the truth. Could God have done it a different way? Of course, Jesus could have said whatever He wanted to whenever He wanted to. But interestingly enough, in Jesus' ministry, he rarely explained who he was in such strong, plain language.

Listen to Jesus' amazing response to who He is. This is the truly the best part of the whole trial.

Vs. 64 ⁶⁴ Jesus *said to him, “You have said it *yourself*; I love Jesus’s words....You have said it Yourself...kind of mocking/sarcastic...you already said it, I am God and you already know it even if you don’t want to believe it.

But, Jesus will say it again and then go further!!

Nevertheless I tell you, ^[v]hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

These words, these titles probably don’t mean much to us but they are packed with meaning and the people back then would have been immediately struck by what He was implying.

This reference to the Son of Man is many times how Jesus referred to Himself. This was another claim that Jesus was God. In the book of Daniel, which the Jewish people would have known and read regularly, it speaks of a Son of man coming and ruling with the Ancient of Days.

¹³And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.

¹⁴“And to Him was given dominion,

Glory and ^[v]a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and *men of every* ^[v]language
Might serve Him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one

Which will not be destroyed.

Jesus Himself is claiming to be this very Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. What do we notice about this Son of Man from the Daniel passage? He’s given dominion, glory, and a kingdom so He’s a king and a ruler. And he rules forever and nothing will cause it to pass away. And his Kingdom will not be destroyed..not by anything, no other kingdom, no other ruler or politician, and not even the corona virus.

Nevertheless I tell you, ^[v]hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

After Jesus claims to be the Son of Man, He says, Sitting at the Right hand of Power...this is a reference to Jesus sitting on the judgment seat next to God the Father. What is ironic is. That Caiaphas thinks he is judging Jesus, but Jesus is telling Him that eventually He will be on the throne and ultimately judging Caiaphas.

Next, notice Caiaphas’ reaction and response to Jesus’ claims

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his ^[w]robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶ what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!” ⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others ^[x]slapped Him, ⁶⁸ and said, “Prophecy to us, You ^[y]Christ; who is the one who hit You?”

Look at their response...Theatrics! The high priest tears his robes for a dramatic emotional moment and incites the mob/crowd with his words. You have heard the blasphemy, now what do you think? And their predictable response...He deserves death!! Caiaphas now has the response he needs to charge Christ and ultimately put Him to death.

They then proceed to spit in his face, beat him with their fists, slap him, and start mocking him by hitting him and then making Him guess who hit Him. If you claim to be Christ, you should be able to tell us who hit you!

Jesus was hit once before when He was standing before Annas (Caiaphas’s father in law), but this is where the physical abuse and mockery truly escalates for Jesus and it will get considerably worse as He journeys towards the cross.

The famous passage from Isaiah 53 comes to mind here,

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. ⁴ Surely our ^[a]griefs He Himself bore, And our ^[b]sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, ^[c]Smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was ^[d]pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our ^[e]well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To ^[f]fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away;

We just saw an incredibly unfair trial and how Jesus stood with truth and love as He bore the brunt of intense pain and terrible injustice. God revealed the identity of His Son through an awful, unfair trial.

How does this story apply to our own lives? First, you have to answer the question what is your response to Jesus’ claim?

Is your response like Caiaphas who thinks that Jesus is a fraud, an imposter, or a liar?

Well, I pray that if that is what you believe, that you will continue to search the Scriptures and realize that Jesus is who He says He is. As God, He came down to earth to live a perfect life as a man, died on the cross for your and my sin and then rose 3 days later to conquer sin and death. All He asked is that we surrender to Him...admit you are a sinner and put your trust in Him and then when you see Him face to face you can say, You are the Christ, the Son of God, and my Savior and my Lord. If you have any questions on this, I would love to talk to you about this.

On the other hand, if you know this Christ and believe that He is who He says He is (the King), then no matter what goes on in our world today, we have HOPE that the Lord is Sovereign and His plan is being worked out accordingly. As we saw today, He even uses sinful men and bad choices to accomplish what He loves (bring about his purposes).

This is such a perfect message for us to be reminded of today.

Maybe the idea of being confined in your home for the next 3 weeks with your children who are normally at school makes you feel overwhelmed and out of control. This is not your normal routine. Jesus is the King and in control!

Maybe, you're afraid for your parents who are in their 80's and in a very bleak situation if they were to contract the virus and your heart is full of fear...Jesus is the King and has conquered death.

Or maybe, your portfolio is plummeting and your job has been affected and you might not get a paycheck for the next month...Jesus is still King and provides for our needs.

Or maybe, you worry that distancing yourself from social gatherings will be isolating and lonely, remember Jesus is King and He is with You.

Or maybe as a student, you don't get to participate in a spring sport or your concert or play is canceled, remember Jesus is King and He Satisfies above all else.

Jesus is King and He is in control! I trust that you will hold on to this truth this week and love Him, serve Him, and worship Him even in the midst of chaos.

Prayer

As we leave here, let's not keep this truth to our self. We have a king who is in control. Enjoy time with your family and look for ways to serve your neighbors and co-workers this week pointing to the king of kings.