

## A Surprising Prophecy John 11:49-53

We have been going through this section just after one of the most incredible miracles of Jesus up until this point and that is the resurrection of Lazarus. He had been in the tomb for four days and through the authoritative voice of the Creator of all he had to obey and come forth. And we often think if people just saw signs and wonders they would believe. But such is not the case. The human heart is truly dead before God in trespasses and sins - incapable and not wanting or desiring Jesus. And you can see this in the text before us. Some that saw this miracle went and told the chief priests and the Pharisees what had taken place. They aligned themselves not with Jesus and his followers but with the enemies of Christ.

And you can see that there was an official meeting of the Sanhedrin. And here you can almost hear the panic in their voices as far as how to respond to Jesus. They do not deny that he does miracles. I mean these miracles are so glorious and complete there is no way to deny them. But here is their problem: if he keeps doing these signs and wonders more people will believe on him. Then there is going to be a rebellious spirit in Israel so much so that the Romans will come and take away all that we hold dear, maybe even the temple worship. They are at a loss. They are panicking and not knowing what to do.

But organizations and groups always have a leader, and they hold great sway over the group. They can either turn the whole group in one direction or another. Their opinion and counsel has weight and force. Often when they begin to talk, people listen. They listen for the wisdom and direction that they seek. In our text, that wisdom comes from Caiaphas who as we see in this text was the high priest that year. The High Priest in that day was installed by Rome, usually for a certain amount of money, and they were usually loyal to Rome.

And the answer that he gives is critical for a couple of reasons. One is because his words really go to the heart and the mission of Jesus - why he came and what ultimately he accomplished. It is an astonishing statement that is so clear and it comes from such an unlikely source and for an ungodly purpose. We have the gospel spoken by Caiaphas in such a comprehensive and short form, and the meaning of Jesus' death is beyond doubt.

The other critical thing we see here is that there is again someone else at the helm of all the events of life that is determining what is going to come to pass, and he has reason and purpose behind everything that takes place and happens. And so often people will oppose you, or they will do what seems like pure evil or hate or whatever. There is just no way else to describe it. And it is so tempting to interpret those events or that person as somehow beyond God's controlling and directing hand because they are freely doing what they want to do. But this text says that God is the ultimate director of all. His will - will be accomplished. And this verse again reinforces for us the truth that we know in Romans 8:28, **"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."**

Yes there are evil intentions that man has. It will be painful to go through, but there is a God who even controls the evil of man, and will somehow and someday

make it work for our good and his glory. This text screams out that the ultimate purposes of man, even though they seem to win will in the end bow to the glorious purposes of our great God. And therefore this text in the midst of such wicked devices and schemes of man teaches us the glorious and grand nature of our redemption and also that God can be trusted with the sorrow, distress and pain that are afflicted on us by the hands of others. You can trust in our God. It teaches how to interpret our own lives and suffering where God is always active. So I want us to see the evil plot and then the good intentions of God.

1. We need to see the evil plot. Vv. 49-50.

The words that others say against us, whether it is an evil plot or just plain old gossip and slander, or someone even examining our motives - words hurt. Many times we respond in anger and even want some form of justice against the perpetrator. We might even give up on serving and ministering to others. Well if this is the way I am going to be treated, I am done! But you know the amazing thing about the text? Jesus knows everything. He knows that even the good of his miracles will instill a greater hatred and defiance to his personhood, but instead of inflicting vengeance and anger, he keeps going to the cross. We forget as we serve Jesus, people will oppose and might plot evil and at least say all manner of evil against you. Remember the words of Jesus in Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:11-12, **"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."** This many times is a sign that we are on the right path and not on the wrong one. If they plotted evil against our Master why do we think that people will not say and plot evil against us?

So look with that in mind, look at the words of Caiaphas in verse 49, **"You know nothing at all."** Here, the thoughts of the council are directed all over the place. They are worried that all people will believe on him, that they will lose their position, that the Romans would even destroy the temple and nation. And when he says, "You know nothing at all," it is both a rebuke to them, and but he also wants them to see the simplicity of the conclusion. There is certainly some arrogance in his words, but the conclusion of what should take place was so obvious. If you are fearful that Rome is going to take our place because all people believe on Jesus, then there is only one thing that can take place. His logic as far as a worldly wise man is spot on.

Look at what he says next, **"Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish."** The solution is simple. Eliminate the threat and all will continue as normal. Listen what A.W. Pink writes on this as he emphasizes the wisdom of Caiaphas, **"If this popular Nazarene be slain not only will suspicion be removed from us, but our loyalty to the Roman Empire will be unmistakably established. The execution of Jesus will not only show that we have no intention of revolting, but rather will the slaying of this Man, who is seeking to establish an independent kingdom, plainly evidence our desire and purpose to remain the faithful subjects of Caesar. Thus our watchful zeal for the integrity of the Empire will not only establish confidence but win the applause of the jealous power of Rome?"**

It is amazing to look at this debate and there are many things that we could point out that is wrong with this answer and conclusion and this whole debate that is going on among the council with Caiaphas at the head. And one is so obvious that it should leap off the page. And it is that these are religious men who say that they believe the Scriptures but this whole debate as far as what to do with Jesus is godless. And no I do not mean that they are breaking the commands by plotting murder; although that is included in what I mean. But their whole debate and even conclusion never mentions God. Their whole debate is godless. If he is God, and he is ruler and his word is sufficient then why is there no mention of him and his word? Remember when Israel was about to enter the Promised land. This is the land of giants and large cities and people that are stronger than Israel. And Moses instructs the people in Deuteronomy 4:7-8, **“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?”** What nation has a God like your God? What are the Romans compared to God and his power and his might? What other nation has been given statutes and commands that guide us how to act, feel and do, and regulates how we trust in him?

All their counsel is godless counsel, and therefore it will end in a way that seems right to man but has no trust and no glory to God. And Proverbs 14:12 could not be more true of what took place because these men followed this advise, **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”** Jesus is put to death. Even more people come to Christ. Many of those who become Christian and who really are the backbone of the nation leave because of persecution. There arises a rebellious and a Messianic fervour to follow anyone claiming to be him. They rebel against Rome, and the nation and the temple are destroyed in AD 70. There is a way that seems right to man but will end in destruction. For those who plot and even speak evil against God’s children, they do not need our vengeance but our pity. God’s purposes and ways are indestructible. He will in the end turn their plots and plans on their heads. And he will use even the hurtful things of life to mature us into the blessed image of Christ and prepare us for glory.

But there is a deeper significance and reason that Caiaphas spoke these words.

## 2. We need to see the good intentions of God. Vv. 51-53.

It is amazing to see how this comes to pass in Scripture than man plans his evil but what comes to pass is none other than the will of God. Think of: it could be Haman in the Book of Esther who sets up a gallows to execute Mordecai the Jew who is a righteous man, only by a twist of fate and a king who cannot sleep during the night, and the dry chronicles of his kingdom read to him, to find a plot from years ago against him that was discovered by Mordecai but he was never rewarded to him. The name of God is never once mentioned in the Book of Esther but he is on every page directing every course of the events. He is a God of absolute control.

Or remember wicked Ahab who was told if he went into battle with Syria he would lose his life. So he disguises himself and sends Jehoshaphat into the battle dressed in full array as the king. Yet we read in 1 Kings 22:34, **“But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor**

**and the breastplate.**” Just a random bow goes up but it is directed by the Lord. Man plans his evil but God’s will is what will come to pass. There is nothing random about that bow. That man was exactly where God wanted him to be, to fire at the exact moment and strike where God had purposed. All the things that are necessary to have that bow strike are just so astronomical, that there is only one conclusion that you can come to. This is the Lord’s doing.

And to have such a wicked High Priest to be over Israel who is to be the representative of God and speak these words against our High Priest Jesus is nothing but planned and purposed by God for our instruction. Look at what he says here and glory in God’s sovereign goodness who can take the most diabolical and evil and wicked plans of sinful man and bring his glorious plans to pass. John gives us these words of interpretation in verse 51, **“He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation.”** The meaning of not of his own accord does not mean that he was in some sort of trance and speaking what he didn’t mean or did not understand. He spoke freely and spoke purposely. But the Lord arranged all of that what was spoken was exactly what God wanted spoken. It was a prophecy of what Jesus would accomplish on the cross. So even though he didn’t mean it the Lord had him echo a truth of Jesus’ mission that he did not mean.

So we have to look back and see the prophecy with this new interpretation that the Lord purposes. Caiaphas’ purposes will not come to pass, but the reasons that God had him utter this will come to pass. What an amazing God! Look at what Caiaphas says again, **“it is better for you that one man should die for the people.”** There is so much truth for us as believers in this one statement that we could take the next number of Sundays and just discuss it. But let me give a few of those truths. One is that this is a substitutionary death. Jesus is dying, as John explains the words, for the nation and the people. It is substitutionary. He is not dying for himself to complete something lacking in himself but for the sins of man. Here is the high priest of Israel announcing the coming death of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The truth cannot be more clear and echoed from such a wicked man.

Not only that notice one of the major themes through this gospel and that is the doctrine of eternal election. He will die for **“the people.”** He doesn’t say that he will die for all those who will trust in him, if any trust in him. But it is people who have been chosen from the foundation of the world. There is a specific people who are in view here. Christ dies for a definite and specific people. His death was efficacious or effective in purchasing that salvation. The truth echoed by Caiaphas indicates that he will die for the people. He will purchase their redemption or salvation. He meant salvation from the Romans but God meant salvation from his wrath placed upon man because of sin.

And the words of Caiaphas even go further than we could ever think or imagine, because his words actually prophecy of our salvation, our being brought into his presence, and being forgiven, being made new creatures in Christ, indwelt by his Spirit, being conformed into his likeness, being preserved every day, being so close to him that nothing can ever separate us from his love in Christ, and being given the hope of his kingdom and his glory. Look at what John says here, **“and not for the nation only,**

**but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.”** Notice again the name that John gives by inspiration of the Holy Spirit the ones who have been scattered abroad, the one as Ephesians 2:12 describes and tells us to remember, **“remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”** Yet, here we are called the children of God even before we ever come to Christ. Again, this prophecy, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, Jew or Gentile, you are included in these words. It speaks of God’s mercy and speaks nothing is left to chance when it comes to the salvation of his children. Do you believe that? Do you believe based on this text in the absolute sovereignty of God for your good and his glory?

Here is the greatest evil that has ever been hatched against the most innocent person that has ever lived, and what is brought forth is none other than the greatest good. We will spend an eternity with God because he brought this prophecy in the wicked intentions of man to pass, with God’s good purposes always coming to completion. Peter sees the same truth when he preaches in Acts 4:26-28, **“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ — for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”** God is in perfect control when the whole world seems to be crashing down. This is the message of the gospel. God can be trusted.

And this does not exonerate Caiaphas because his intentions are evil. His intentions are not honourable. He is an evil and wicked man who hates Jesus and wants his life terminated and will celebrate when he dies on the cross. But the principle is stated clearly by Joseph in Genesis 50:20, **“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”** The nations may rage, people will plot and plan and maybe even celebrate as they see their evil come to pass, but ultimate what comes to pass is the goodness of the Lord.

Look at verse 53, **“So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.”** You have to see in these words more than just the plans of man, but you have to see the indestructible sovereign control and love of God. And as the people of God, as we live in terribly broken world, we might not be able to see all that God is doing, but we can know - he is good and he is sovereign and he can be trusted. God’s purposes and all his promises will come to pass. No nation, ruler, or person can stand against his purposes. Take great courage, not in yourself but in your God.