

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
www.lutheranlccf.org
Septuagesima, February 1, 2026

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 245, 237:1, 377:1-6, 358, 196:1-2.

Lessons: Psalm 2, Romans 5:1-11, Matthew 26:1-5.

Sermon Text: John 11:45-57

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead, at a town named Bethany, about 2 miles from Jerusalem. And so John tells us "***Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.***" God was glorified, and at this point, "***many***" believed on Jesus.

But not everything was going well for Jesus. We read: "***But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.***" There were unbelievers who went and told the Pharisees what Jesus had been doing. They told the truth about what Jesus had done, but they did it with the intent to harm Jesus, which is certainly breaking the 8th commandment, because talk which comes out of a false heart is "bearing false witness".

As a result, we are reminded that

ONE MAN MUST DIE FOR THE PEOPLE

1. **Caiaphas had in mind the preservation of the Jewish nation.**
2. **Jesus did die, and not only for the Jews but for the whole world.**
3. **God uses men and their ideas and deeds to further his causes.**

The matter of raising Lazarus from the dead was considered so important that the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jewish leaders met almost immediately. In that meeting, the chief priests, who were Sadducees, and their enemies, the Pharisees, came together with the goal of getting rid of Jesus. When they were assembled, they asked: "***'What are we accomplishing?' 'Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'***" They could not deny the fact that miracles were being performed by Jesus, but they still hardened their hearts against Jesus. Their concern was the possible consequences, first to themselves and then, they claimed, to the Jewish nation as a political state. They saw a danger that all the common people would believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

Then there was a danger that they would seek to make him king of Judea, and this, in turn, would result in these leaders of the Jews losing their political power and standing. The secular historian Josephus reports that Annas and then later Caiaphas were appointed high priests by Roman leaders. This ignored God's appointed way of a hereditary high priest who served for life. They feared that the Romans would simply come and destroy the city and lead the people away into captivity. They wanted to preserve an earthly nation, which was destroyed about 40 years later anyway by the Romans.

They reasoned that if they didn't intervene soon, Jesus would have virtually everyone believing in him, which would diminish their authority. But even worse, if the people followed Jesus as their leader, the Romans would come and punish them. They could lose everything. Their first concern was for their place of authority and

power over the Jewish people. They acknowledge the power of Jesus, recognizing that men will follow him. But they fear that the Romans will take away their power.

The Romans should not have been jealous about Jesus, for he taught men to give tribute to Caesar, and not to resist evil, but to take up the cross of suffering for the truth of the Gospel. Even Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, at his trial, could find no fault in him.

When men are more concerned for their own wealth and power more than for the truth, then earthly wisdom has certainly taken hold of them and God's wisdom is set aside.

The history of the visible Christian church on earth has certainly shown that to be true. Many leaders of so-called Christian churches have shown that wealth and power have become more important to them than proclaiming the truth of the Word of God.

Because of sins like jealousy and envy and fear for their position, the leaders of the Jews knew that they had to get rid of Jesus.

On Palm Sunday as the people welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, "***the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!'***" (John 12:19)

Two days before the Passover, as we read in Matthew 26, as we heard in our gospel lesson: "***Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. 'But not during the Feast,' they said, 'or there may be a riot among the people.'***" (v. 3-5) But God had other plans. Jesus was to be the ultimate Passover sacrifice, and it was right in the middle of those celebrations that he was crucified.

Caiaphas, the current high priest, made a statement which he thought would solve the problem. He told them: "***You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.***" Caiaphas, the high priest "that year" spoke up. This tells us something about God's people rejecting and ignoring his laws, and choosing to obey only those laws which suited them. The high priest was supposed to be a life-time calling. But it had become very political, and frequently changed. The religious leader of the Jews was concerned about power for himself and his cronies.

He thought that the most expedient solution, that is, the most appropriate solution, especially for their own interest, would obviously be to have this one man die. After all, in their opinion, Jesus was responsible for agitation and unrest among the people. Caiaphas has been called a heartless person, cold and calculating. Here was cold-blooded craftiness. His solution evidently was to have Jesus put to death as quickly as possible. By sacrificing Jesus, they would both rid themselves of a troublesome person and give to the Roman authorities an evidence of their alleged loyalty.

"So from that day on they plotted to take his life." The members of the Sanhedrin from this time on were united in their goal of putting Christ to death. We find here a fulfillment of the words in Psalm 2, our Old Testament lesson today: "***The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One.***" (v. 2)

Caiaphas explained that it was expedient to get rid of Jesus. Better that one man die than all of them die. His concern was political, but God made his words prophetic. The words of Caiaphas were an unconscious prophecy which would fulfill the will of God. They pointed to exactly what God intended.

Jesus, Caiaphas' intended victim, came to establish a kingdom that can never be destroyed – namely the kingdom of God's children found everywhere in all times.

Jesus would die as a sacrifice for everyone in the world so that all who believe in him are joined in his Holy Christian Church, the Communion Of Saints.

However, Caiaphas had in mind only to avoid a disastrous rebellion. The gist of his advice was, in short, that Jesus must be put to death. Caiaphas does not simply seek to have Jesus silenced, imprisoned, or banished, but he must die. This kind of cruelty is not uncommon among those who have set themselves against Christianity.

Yes, it was truly expedient for us, too, that Jesus die.

Jesus should die, not only for Israel, but for the whole world. His death would result in a gathering and uniting into one great spiritual communion of all who would believe on him and thus receive the benefit of his death. In all nations of the earth are those who will become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. As the

preaching of the Gospel reaches them, they turn to the living God and become members of the invisible Communion of Saints, the Holy Christian Church

People looked up to Caiaphas, and so God chose to put this word of prophecy into his mouth rather than into the mouth of anyone else. But Caiaphas was really the last high priest over the Jews. With Jesus' sacrificial death, the Old Testament Levitical priesthood would end. There would be no further need of sacrifices such as the Levites and priests had done since the time of Aaron.

Jesus would gather together in one invisible body the children of God who were scattered throughout the world. All believers are part of the Holy Christian Church. This was a fulfillment also of Isaiah 49 where God says: ***"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."*** (v. 6)

All believers are one with him, one body, one spirit, and one with each other in him. All the saints in all places and ages are gathered together in Christ. Sadly, this unity is often destroyed by men. But God preserves those who are his.

"Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, 'What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?' But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him."

The stage was set for the plot that was soon to unfold to kill Jesus. But the hostile Jews could not succeed in killing Jesus until God's timetable allowed it, so Jesus left Jerusalem. He went to Ephraim, a village in the wilderness. But when the time was right, the plot to kill Jesus was fulfilled and reached its climax.. It included the betrayal by Judas. It led to a trial before this same man, Caiaphas. It led to a trial before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. It led to death on the cross.

God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, contrary to their own intentions. God can restrain them from doing the mischief they want to do, and instead to lead them to do the service he wants them to do.

Jesus would die for the Jews, and for all mankind, and yes, even for you. And because God the Holy Spirit has worked faith in you, you look with eyes of faith on these evil words of an evil man. John reminds us again later in his gospel that ***"Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people."*** (John 18:14)

God's purpose in all of this can be summed up in these words from Romans: ***"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Romans 5:8)

And you know what's really the greatest thing about this incident in Jesus' life? Caiaphas was right. It is better that one man die for all mankind than that all mankind perish eternally in hell. It is better that Jesus Christ died for the sins of all mankind than that all mankind perish eternally in hell. That is exactly what happened. Believe that, and you shall be saved eternally! Thank God! Amen.