

Home Group Leader's Notes

Week of October 10, 2021

The Pharisees' Death

John 11:45-57

Sermon Series: *Death & Life*

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

We have hundreds of television shows, movies, books, and stories about people who commit murder. What do you think is involved in someone deciding to murder another person?

This feels like a morbid topic, right? Our world views this topic as a form of entertainment. Hollywood has glamorized detectives, bad guys, and murder. But this week, we are looking at a group of very religious people who decided to murder the Son of God, the Messiah, the only sinless man.

What is involved? The first murder (Cain and Abel) was over jealousy. Other murders in the Bible are about holding power over someone, someone was in the way of their goal. One of the most famous was David wanting to cover up his sin with Bathsheba.

In many examples, shame, jealousy, power, passion, or selfish view of life is involved. At some place, people have to make a decision that they rule over life and death. This is what we see this week – religious leaders who are taking God's place.

LEARN FROM THE BIBLE

Last week, we read about Jesus raising a close friend from the dead (Lazarus). This amazing act of love and power had some dramatic reactions. (You can read the back story in John 11:1-44) Read through this week's passage of God's Word, John 11:45-57.

What are the two different very reactions of those who observed this miracle? (11:45-46)

- One group turned to Jesus in faith
- One group turned to human leaders, Pharisees. These people considered themselves God's judges of what is right and wrong, what is of God. They, in turn, went to the chief priests who were power people with the Sanhedrin.

What were the reactions of those in high and powerful places in Jerusalem? (11:47-53)

(Note: "Pharisees" were an influential religious sect of the Jewish community who often taught in synagogues. "Chief priests" were officials serving to oversee the temple practices. They were descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, who was the first high priest. The "Sanhedrin" was an eclectic group of some 70ish men who oversaw Jewish affairs under Roman authority. The "high priest" was chosen as the leader of the Sanhedrin. He was to remain as the leader throughout his lifetime, but sometimes politics changed their tenure.)

- They were alarmed, feeling threatened that Jesus could upset their rule, the temple, and their own "places," and the nation. (48)

What do we learn about how these religious leaders were responding to miracles of Jesus (i.e. His "signs")? (47)

They recognized that Jesus was performing miracles / miraculous signs and they were not making progress to stop him (see "If we let him go on ..." in v. 48)

What concerned these leaders? (48)

The Romans would become alerted and interfere with their place and the nation.

What was Caiaphas argument? (49-52)

He offered that the solution was the death of Jesus. He believed that this would aid the Jewish nation, those on location and those scattered.

Some believe that Caiaphas' prophecy had a double meaning, one for his own purpose and another for God's purpose. How might this be true? (50-52)

God had another purpose planned: that Jesus would die for the nation and the world.

What conclusion did these religious-authority people reach about what to do about this miracle worker? Why? (47, 53, 57)

He is a threat, so they plotted to "take his life." Their first step was to arrest him at the appropriate time.

How was their fearful conclusion the complete opposite of what Jesus promised to the disciples, Mary, and Martha? (see 11:4, 15, 25-26, 40, 45)

Jesus promised them that as they trusted in Him, that is, that they placed their faith in Him, they would see the glory of God. These officials were taking matters into their own hands instead of trusting in God.

Somehow, Jesus knew about their decision. (This is unexplained.) What was His response? Why? (54)

Jesus knew from the beginning that He was going to offer up His life. However, He also had a strategic plan which included time, location, and who would be present.

In conclusion, what is the difference between religion and following Jesus?

Religion can be a human invention, a way of trusting in yourself. Jesus said "Follow Me" and "Come to Me." God's plan is to live in a trust relationship with God. Religion is following a system of rules and practices.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

The men plotting to kill Jesus were well known as the authoritative religious figures of their time. How could these passionate and religious men have arrived at their conclusion?

Religion teaches us to be self-made, self-achieved, and self-directed. These men became passionate about the wrong things and for the wrong reasons. Jesus said, in the previous passage, that if we lived in trust/faith, we would see the glory of God. This is something that religion will never produce.

What is the difference between being religious and following Jesus? (See Mark 1:17-18; Matthew 11:28-30; Ephesians 2:8-9)

Religion

- Self-directed and
- Earned rewards
- We are the supreme rulers, agents
- Motivated by ambition, fear, envy, jealousy
- About self instead of God and others

Knowing, Trusting, Following Jesus

- Relationship with God, trusting in and loving Him
- Directed by and for God
- Growing in the character of God (love, holiness, etc.)
- Living for His glory (to Him, about Him, experiencing Him)

What are the dangers of religion? How do we sometimes drift into these dangers today?

Religion focuses on earning status, on self. This produces the danger of focusing on earned position and leads to self-glory, pride, and fear.

All of us can turn to law, to religion instead of relationship, fear instead of faith. God created us to know and rest in Him, to see His glory (not ours), and to live in love.

How are we to live when we see people in the world opposing Jesus and us, His people?

Good question for today. Public and private opposition to Jesus is growing in our worlds. So how does Jesus teach us to live?

Love and grace to you,
Steve