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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
March 30, 2014  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Hebrews 10:1-14; Passion: Trials before Herod and Pilate, Barabbas

Hymns: 388; 156; 158; 173:1-2 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 11:47-57

47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."  
49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. 54 Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. 55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, "What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?" 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: “Expedient”

That is the key word for our meditation this morning. It is defined as “suitable for achieving a particular end in a given circumstance. Opportune, especially: governed by self interest.”

From that definition especially the part about self-interest, you can easily surmise that when something is expedient, it isn’t always nice, or good and proper. It often leads to trouble, especially when people feel they are in a jam, and need a way out. It becomes expedient to do things that might not otherwise be considered. Basically, when you say with a little too much enthusiasm, “That works for me!” That is when something is “expedient.” It may be someone else picks up the tab at lunch, or for you kids, Mom says, “You can skip doing homework tonight,” you will find that expedient, you would quickly agree, “That works for me!”

So in our text we have an important man, a leader of the people, not only a secular leader, but a spiritual leader declaring that –

**THEME: It Was Expedient that One Man Should Die.**

Of course the Man that was being talked about was Jesus, that it was expedient for Jesus to die;

### **I. So the Jews Thought, Perceiving Jesus as their Rival**

**John 11:47-50, 53** Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is

expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” ... 53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.

The chief priests and the Pharisees normally didn't get along well at all, but they shared a common frustration. Jesus was growing in popularity. He had recently raised from the dead Lazarus of Bethany, the brother of Mary and Martha.

Many people had been present at the funeral, and its subsequent mourning period. Many people had accompanied Jesus with Mary and Martha to the grave. They all knew that this was the fourth day following Lazarus' death. There was no question that he had died, and there was even a fear that when the sepulcher was opened a stench would flow from the grave. But they opened the sepulcher, and Jesus called to Lazarus that he should come out of the grave. And these many people saw Lazarus who had been dead come out alive! The news of this miracle was widely spread because Bethany was very near to Jerusalem.

The result of all this was that many people were believing in Jesus. The established religious leaders were worried that everyone following after Jesus would endanger their role in governing the Jews, and even endanger the stability of Jewish society. They perceived Jesus to be not only a spiritual rival, but a political rival as well. This is when Caiaphas, the High Priest, took charge of the assembly. Caiaphas saw what had to be done. Caiaphas understood that the only **expedient** thing to do was to be rid of Jesus once and for all. He had to die. It was better for one Man to die than to have the whole nation perish at the hands of the Romans.

Caiaphas was thinking of social and political expedience. He regarded the others surrounding him to be fools because it was so obvious what had to happen. After Caiaphas spoke it appears that there was a consensus. **“From that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.”**

The evil that we see in Caiaphas is easy enough to pick up on -- in Caiaphas. It is not always so easy to pick up on the evil of **“expediency”** in the world, or in our own lives, especially when we are taking the broad and easy path of the world for our own

convenience, for reaching our temporal goals, to serve our self-interest. It often comes down to misplaced priorities.

So much of what goes wrong in people's lives is not that they have chosen to fill their lives with that which is inherently evil, but that they have placed such an emphasis on reaching temporal goals that it is **expedient** to be rid of Jesus, at least for a little while. Oh, certainly we can see this when other individuals are caught up in sin in their lives. We see it in the common rejection of marriage, both in people ending marriages with an unscriptural divorce, or with others postponing marriage, and simply living together in fornication.

Those types of examples make it too easy for us to point the finger of guilt and shame at others while not examining our own lives. Think of how Caiaphas was simply trying to maintain political order and keep his respected position in society. In that context he saw it was **expedient** to be rid of Jesus. So, what goals do we have in this life for ourselves and our children that may be described as temporal goals or ambitions, things that the world may even see as commendable, but which make our lives so busy or so focused on the earthly that it becomes **expedient** to forget about Jesus? Material possessions, or sports and recreation, or business success have all been a part of the lives of many Christians. They are not evil, however they all offer the opportunities to find Jesus an inconvenience, a rival for my time, an opportunity to find that it is expedient for one Man to die, at least as far as one's earthly life is concerned.

It is because of the sin in our lives, and the gracious good will of God to save us from our sin that **God also saw it as expedient that one Man should die**, and --

## **II. So the Spirit Declares, Presenting Jesus as Our Savior.**

**John 11:49-52** “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’ 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for

that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.”

Caiaphas prophesied! In spite of the hardness of his heart, and all of the wrong spiritual ideas he not only held but promulgated, Caiaphas was used by the Holy Spirit because he was the man who held the office of High Priest. The High Priest was designated by God as the one who was to present sacrifices to God, and then bring God’s message of peace to the people. Caiaphas prophesied: he proclaimed the will of God for our salvation when he declared, **“You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”**

It is expedient for us, it is down right advantageous for us that one Man, this Man, the One who called Himself the Son of Man, the One who was the only begotten Son of God, **that He should die!** It was in our best interest for Him to die that the whole nation, the people of God, should not perish. **“That works for me!”**

That is the only way that we might live. It all comes back to Eden and the fall into sin. Adam fell, and we inherited the sin and death that came from it. It is as the Scriptures clearly teach us in --

**Romans 5:12,18** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— 18 ... even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.

Death reigned! Death had us securely in its clutches. Sin had passed upon all men. All have sinned. We have sinned. There was only two possible results. The first that we would all die, and not only physically, but that we would remain spiritually dead, and eternally damned. God intervened and put the second option in play, that the One Man, Jesus Christ should die that we should have life in His name. He died so that the many, the rest of the world might have life. This life is there, freely available for all who believe. And so the hymn writer wrote of this wonder of salvation:

**TLH 369:5** “As by one man all mankind fell And, born in sin, was doomed to hell, So by one Man, who took our place, We all received the gift of grace.”

This is the truth that Caiaphas unwittingly proclaimed, and the leaders of the Jews **immediately** began to plot Jesus’ death. They fully intended to put Caiaphas’ words into action, “**it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people**” (v.50).

### **III. So Jesus Understood, Timing His Sacrifice for Sin.**

Jesus knew what was in their hearts. Jesus knew all that His enemies were plotting against Him, --

**John 11:54-57** Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples. 55 And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?” 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.

People wondered, “Where is Jesus? Is He going to come to Jerusalem for the Passover this time?” People knew about the plot against Jesus because the priests had put the word out on the street, if anyone knew where Jesus was they were to report it. Would Jesus run and hide? He went across the Jordan, out into the wilderness country. He went to a small town out there and stayed there. Jesus wasn’t running scared. Jesus wasn’t afraid of what His enemies might do. They wanted to be rid of Jesus **before** the Passover festival. Jesus wasn’t about to let them set the timing of the sacrifice He was to make for sin. Jesus maintained control of all things, including the timing of that sacrifice which He alone was able to make. It would be made at the time of the Passover festival.

The Passover was not only a celebration of past deliverance from the slavery in Egypt; it was a symbol of the deliverance from sin and death that God was providing in the Lamb of God who was to

take away the sin of the world. Jesus shed His blood that the angel of death might pass over us, and we might be spared from the death that has fallen upon all men. Jesus set the time of His sacrifice so that it would correlate perfectly with the Passover, that He might celebrate the last true Passover supper with His disciples and then fulfill all that the Passover promised for our salvation.

Jesus offered Himself, because “**it was expedient for us that one Man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish**” (v.50). Truly – “that works for me and you.”

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.