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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 6, 2022  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Romans 5:6-11 Passion History: Betrayer Revealed  
Hymns: 155; 369; 380; 173:1

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

Sermon Text: John 11:49-53

“And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> 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.’ <sup>51</sup> 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, <sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

<sup>53</sup> Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Veiled Truths from the Passion --

Veiled Truths from the Passion is the theme of our Sunday sermon series this Lenten season. In a recent service we read Paul's words in 2 Corinthians: *“If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. ... <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

(2 Corinthians 4:3,4,6)

We will be looking at statements made by individuals who didn't believe in Jesus or didn't understand the nature of His mission as the Christ. Statements were made by people that expressed more than they could possibly realize. The truth was veiled to them by their unbelief. It is the Holy Spirit that lifts the veil so that we are able to see the glory of the gospel of a crucified Savior. And so, throughout this Lenten season we pray that the Holy Spirit would shine in our hearts with the brilliant light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ even as He suffers and dies.

This morning we begin this series of veiled truths with the words of the High Priest Caiaphas:

**THEME: "It is Expedient for Us that One Man  
Should Die for the People."**

Let us first consider --

**I. What Caiaphas Was Thinking.**

We need to put the High Priest's words into context. There was an immediate context, but there was also a greater context. The greater context had to do with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha. They lived in Bethany which was only a few short miles from Jerusalem. It was only a relatively short time earlier that Jesus had been summoned by Mary and Martha because Lazarus, their brother and Jesus' friend, had fallen ill. Jesus delayed going to Bethany that the glory of the Lord might be revealed. When Lazarus had died Jesus went to Bethany, and we know how Jesus called Lazarus from the grave on the fourth day after his death. There were many who witnessed this miracle, and with Bethany's close proximity to Jerusalem, well you might say the news of Lazarus being raised back to life after being in the grave for more than three days spread like wildfire. Many believed in Jesus because of this miracle.

That is the greater context. The more immediate context was a meeting of many members of the Jewish council. They were in a bit of a panic. They felt insecure in their position of power and influence. It hadn't been that long ago that the Romans had displaced Annas the High Priest and put his son-in-law Caiaphas in that position. Members of the Sanhedrin were afraid that Jesus' popularity might cause the Romans to take away their power of self-governance, perhaps even give it to Jesus. Their speculations were wildly exaggerated, but that is how insecure people may think. It was in this meeting, amidst these wild speculations, that Caiaphas made this declaration, beginning with, "*You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> 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.*" (v. 49-50)

Those opening words by Caiaphas are telling indeed. He looked at the assembly of the elders of the Jews and thought to himself they didn't have the brains or the backbone to do where they needed to do! This Jesus had to die. If they could get rid of Jesus then their position, and the status quo of society would be secure. Caiaphas looked at how people were following Jesus and couldn't help but think of it all in political terms. Jesus was too popular. Caiaphas couldn't imagine that Jesus' motivation for His ministry, for His entire life was spiritual. Even though Caiaphas was the High Priest, his own spirituality was shallow. For him everything was all about this life, and we know what Paul wrote regarding those whose hope is for this life only; they are of all people the most to be pitied. (1 Cor 15:19)

So, what was Caiaphas thinking? It was all about maintaining the order of things as they were, with him in power, and the Sanhedrin the chief center for whatever self-governance Rome would allow. It was all about this life. Caiaphas won the day. He swayed the Jewish council to his way of thinking, and it was with this mindset that things went forward. *"From that day on, they plotted to put (Jesus) to death."* (v.53)

However, they did not know the mind of God. They were supposed to be presenting the truth of God to the people as that truth was revealed with the daily sacrifices and prayers and temple worship, and the fast-approaching Passover. All these ceremonies and rituals were ordained by God to present the gospel of a sacrifice for sin in the coming Messiah. Many people believed Jesus to be the Messiah. Jesus revealed Himself to be the Messiah. But for Caiaphas and the High Council of the Jews the gospel was veiled. Indeed, the gospel truth that Caiaphas had inadvertently proclaimed was lost to them. In their spiritual blindness they couldn't see the truth right before their eyes, and they couldn't hear the truth even when it was spoken by the mouth of the High Priest.

Let us consider --

## **II. How Caiaphas Proclaimed God's Truth.**

Our text reports: *"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,<sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad."* (v.51-52)

Caiaphas had his political power, and his personal influence over the assembly, indeed over the Jewish nation. He thought himself to be wise, but he was in fact foolish and powerless against the authority of God.

Caiaphas, though an unbeliever, indeed the farthest thing from a disciple of Jesus Christ, proclaimed God's message concerning the Christ. Caiaphas **prophesied**, (that is Caiaphas served as God's mouthpiece,) not because of his stellar character, but because he held the office of High Priest. The words Caiaphas spoke proclaimed a far greater truth than Caiaphas would ever know. Jesus would die for the nation. In fact, Jesus would die for all the children of Abraham, not only those who had Jewish blood in their veins, but all those who were called by God to possess the faith of Abraham. Jesus died for the sins of the world that God might call together His people from the ends of the earth.

*“It is **expedient** for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”* (v.50) Think about these words. When I read them the first thing that enters my mind is the power of understatement. It is *expedient* for us. Yeah! No kidding! It is good for us, it is definitely advantageous for us that one Man, the God – Man, died for the people and that we **live!** We were all children of wrath. We were under the curse of the law. We were on the road to perdition. The perishing that lay before you and me is as far beyond our conception in its horror as the bliss and glory of heaven is beyond imagining in its wonder. It is expedient for us that Christ loved us with such a great love that He endured the cross and died in our place so that we might be reconciled to God. He saved us at the cost of His own life. He delivered us from the horrors of eternal death and secured for us eternal life in His presence.

This is the veiled truth Caiaphas proclaimed, a truth that has been revealed to us by the Holy Spirit lifting the veil, that we with eyes of faith may see the glory of our salvation in the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**AMEN.**

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