

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

JOHN II.49-57



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets,

He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Luke 24.27

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Gospel of John: John 11.49-57
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Introduction to *John 11.49-57*

The curtain opens on the final act of Jesus' earthly sojourn. All the players are on stage – Jesus, His disciples, the multitudes, and the religious leaders. We are plunged into the uncertainty of the situation, and all its accompanying affections.

Yet we are certain that Jesus knows what He's doing, and He's doing what will glorify God and accomplish our salvation. No scheming or violence of men can keep Him from achieving His goals.

And nothing about that has changed.

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1 Bully Pulpit

Read and meditate on John 11.49.

Those who are captive to the Lie, and who hold places of prominence and power, will often seek to bully into submission those who don't see things as they do, and who therefore may impede their plans and schemes. Caiaphas is exhibit 1.

⁴⁹Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said to them all, "Now I can see that you know nothing."

- John 11.49

Reflect

1. It's important that we understand the situation as it had come to be among the Pharisees and priests. It's clear they were threatened by Jesus (v. 48). Why? What could Jesus do to them? Is Jesus a threat like this to people yet today? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, help me to understand why some people are threatened by You, so that I...*

2. A small cadre of the Jewish leadership was driving the effort to destroy Jesus. They were led by the high priest, Caiaphas. From what you know from the Old Testament about the role of the high priest, how was he regarded by the rest of the people of Israel? What was his place in the nation with respect to the people and their relationship to God and His Law? Why was it important that John single out Caiaphas as the ring-leader of this conspiracy against Jesus? *Lord, I think about the people who are in places of authority in our day – in the media, universities, politics and government, pop culture, and business. I pray for them, Lord, because...*

3. Notice how Caiaphas opened his remarks to his colleagues. He basically told them they were ignorant and blind. Do you suppose anyone present would have taken umbrage at such a charge? But would he have dared to *say* anything? Why? *Lord, do not allow me to cover under the bullying charges of those who prefer the Lie to the truth that is in Jesus, lest...*

4. Caiaphas didn't care what anybody else thought about Jesus. He was not open for discussion about the matter. He knew what he intended to do, and so he peremptorily silenced any other opinions, throwing his weight against the question raised in verses 47, 48, and leaving no room for alternative views. Does this not have a very contemporary ring to it? Explain. *Everywhere, Lord, those who occupy the bully pulpits of this land have silenced those who might speak out against the Lie and stand for the truth that is in Jesus. Lord, do not allow me to...*

5. Put yourself in this situation. Even if you were like Nicodemus, inclined to believe in Jesus, or at least to give Him a fair hearing, it's not likely you would have said anything to challenge or contradict the high priest. The high priest, throwing his authority around and bullying all present into compliance, imposed a spiral of silence on any Jesus-sympathizers. This is how the Lie works to assert itself, even against powerful evidence to the contrary (v. 47). Many Christians today are trapped in a downward spiral of silence concerning their witness for Christ, because they have been bullied into silence by those who occupy places of authority. Do you agree? How can we break out of this spiral of silence? Bring together into one the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"How is it that he is called the high priest of that year, when God appointed one hereditary high priest? This was owing to the ambition and contention of parties among the Jews themselves, which had ended in the

appointment of several high priests, who took the office in turn, year by year.... And sometimes there even seems to have been more than one in office.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

The sin which had corrupted the office of high priest was ruling the soul of *this* high priest, who may have been nearing the end of his tenure, and was determined to stop Jesus. Sin corrupts not only human souls, but human institutions, and can turn them against the truth. Do you see this happening in our day? Explain.

Closing Prayer

How long, LORD?
Will You be angry forever?
Will Your jealousy burn like fire?
Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You,
And on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name.
For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his dwelling place.
Oh, do not remember former iniquities against us!
Let Your tender mercies come speedily to meet us,
For we have been brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation,
For the glory of Your name;
And deliver us, and provide atonement for our sins,
For Your name’s sake!
Why should the nations say,
“Where *is* their God?”

Psalm 79.5-10

Psalm 79.1-11 (*Passion Chorale: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded*)

O God the nations all Your inheritance have spoiled!
Your City have they ruined, Your temple they have soiled!
Your servants’ bodies all to the birds of heav’n are thrown;
The flesh of all Your faithful the jaws of beasts now own.

The blood of faithful servants like water flows around;
And none are there Your saints to commit into the ground.
Our neighbors mock and scorn us: How long, O Lord, how long?
How long will You be angry and scorn our mournful song?

Pour out, O Lord, Your wrath on all who deny Your Name;
Who trust You not nor seek You, bring down to deepest shame!
For they have with great rancor Your precious saints devoured;
Lay waste their habitation at this late dreadful hour.

Why should the nations mock and say, “Where now is their God?”
Let there be known among them harsh vengeance for our blood!
Hear, Lord, our groans and sighing; preserve us by Your pow’r.
For we are fairly dying each day and hour by hour.

2 A Matter of Expedience

Read and meditate on John 11.50.

Right you are, Caiaphas, but as dead wrong as you could be.

⁵⁰“Nor do you consider that it is expedient to our cause that one man for the nation ought to die, and that the nation all be not destroyed.”

- John 11.50

Reflect

1. Caiaphas rendered his judgment concerning the “Jesus situation,” and there’s no degree of *slant* to it. Jesus must die. What motives were driving this judgment? What did Caiaphas hope to accomplish by this outcome? Complete this prayer: *People can be short-sighted when they refuse to bear Your Word, Lord. Help me to remember this always, so that...*
2. Caiaphas said it was *expedient* for Jesus to die, rather than he and his pals lose their place and nation. What does *expedient* mean? Caiaphas was looking for the most *expedient* way of preserving the status quo. Today, many Christian preachers and writers treat the Scriptures with a degree of expediency, bending the meaning of the Bible to suit their preferred ideas or agendas. Can you think of any examples? *Let me always bear Your Word clearly, Lord, and guard me against...*
3. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, and dispersed the people to distant parts of the Empire. At the level Caiaphas was thinking, his solution to the Jesus problem was effective only in the short-run. In there a lesson here for us? For those who prefer the Lie to the truth that is in Jesus? *Your Word is true, Lord, and Jesus is its message. Anything other than that, will be...*
4. On the other hand, Caiaphas had it exactly right. Explain. Peter offers insight to this situation in Acts 2.22-24. How was God working amid the wicked judgment of a corrupt high priest? Does God still work like this? *You are sovereign, Lord, and You do all things well. Therefore I can...*
5. There’s a lesson here about human institutions as well. God ordained the office of high priest. Men – like Caiaphas – corrupted it by using it to advance their self-interest, as they oppressed the people they were appointed to serve. But God honored the *institution* by putting a true word in the mouth of a *corrupt office-bearer*. How can this situation guide us in thinking about such institutions as civil government? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote from questions 1-4.

Summary

“Caiaphas makes a true statement, his words being verified not by the perversity of the people but by the power and wisdom of God.... Nevertheless, his language was made to indicate something true, spoken by one in the official position of a prophet. For he proclaims beforehand of what good things the death of the Christ would become the source. He speaks of what he does not understand, glorifying God (as Balaam did) under constraint, since he was holding the prerogative of the priestly order. The prophecy was given, as it were, not to him personally but to the outward representative of the priesthood.” *Cyril of Alexandria (375-444 AD)*

We must always remember that God is sovereign. Corruption may prevail in the human culture and society, and men may be determined to silence any word about Jesus. But God is sovereign, and He can bring good

out of even the most wicked conditions or intentions. How should knowing this encourage us as believers?

Closing Prayer

O God, why have You cast us off forever?
Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?
Remember Your congregation, *which* You have purchased of old,
The tribe of Your inheritance, *which* You have redeemed—
This Mount Zion where You have dwelt.
Lift up Your feet to the perpetual desolations.
The enemy has damaged everything in the sanctuary.
Your enemies roar in the midst of Your meeting place;
They set up their banners *for* signs.
They seem like men who lift up
Axes among the thick trees.
And now they break down its carved work, all at once,
With axes and hammers.
They have set fire to Your sanctuary;
They have defiled the dwelling place of Your name to the ground.
They said in their hearts,
“Let us destroy them altogether.”
They have burned up all the meeting places of God in the land.
We do not see our signs;
There is no longer any prophet;
Nor *is there* any among us who knows how long.
O God, how long will the adversary reproach?
Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?

Psalm 74.1-10

Psalm 74.1-11 (*Rockingham Old: O Lord Most High, with All My Heart*)

O Lord, why have You cast us off? Why does Your anger ever burn?
Remember now Your Church, O Lord, and to us let Your grace return.

Turn now Your steps to this sad ruin; our foes have damaged all within.
They roar throughout Your meeting place and raise the banner of their sin.

The wicked wield their ax within and desecrate our walls around;
Defiling Your abiding-place, they burn Your temples to the ground.

Within their hearts they plot and scheme: “Now let us finally bring them down!”
Our signs and prophets all are gone; they’ve burned our churches to the ground.

How long, O Lord, must they prevail and mock and spurn Your holy Name?
Why stay Your hand? Deploy it now, and bring Your foes to lasting shame!

3 Prophetic Word, Unlikely Prophet

Read and meditate on John 11.51, 52.

Caiaphas' word was prophetic, but not because he intended it to be. God is sovereign, even in the lives of those who contrive evil against Him.

⁵¹Now this he did not on his own authority proclaim, but he was shown it, and as high priest he did prophesy that Jesus for the people all would die, ⁵²and not for them alone, but also He would gather into one all who would be declared the children of the Lord, and who were scattered everywhere.

- John 11.41b, 42

Reflect

1. The word *authority* is not in the Greek text (as is evident from the fact that NKJV puts it in italics). The Greek says, "He did not speak this of (or from) himself." What does John mean by this? Why did John think it was important for us to know this? Complete this prayer: *Lord, in a very real sense, I want to speak nothing from or of myself, but...*
2. As the high priest, Caiaphas could serve as a prophetic vessel for the Lord, though it's doubtful he did much of that before this moment. Even here, he could not possibly have understood the larger significance of what he proclaimed. God has invested certain *offices* with the duty of proclaiming His Word. But those who occupy those offices are not always faithful to their calling. How can we know when the words spoken or written by someone in a place of authority are *prophetic*, that is, are words God has given? *Give me a heart of discernment, Lord, because if I do not exercise discernment...*
3. John interprets Caiaphas' remarks as pertaining to Jesus. Obviously, he did this after the fact, after the events of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, after the pouring out of the Spirit, and after John began to understand all things in the light of Jesus. The words Caiaphas spoke were true words on two levels, as we have seen. Should we expect to find true words in the mouths of unbelievers today? Is it our duty to discern those true words, and to relate them to Jesus? Explain. *Lord, let me see You in every true word spoken by anyone, for then I...*
4. John (v. 52), knowing more broadly the mission of Christ and the application of His redeeming work, took Caiaphas' prophetic word beyond what he intended, or what might be deduced from what he said. Explain. *Lord, I know they are out there, those children You have chosen and for whom You died and rose again. Give me grace and conviction to...*
5. We note that John attributes the saving and gathering of the "nation" of God to our Lord Jesus: "He would gather..." Yet all the apostles and early Christians were very active in proclaiming the Good News about Jesus. What are the implications of this for the work of evangelism? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you wrote for questions 1-4.

Summary

"Do you see the great power in the high priest's authority?... Even though he was unworthy of the office of the high priest, he prophesied, although he did not know what he was saying. Divine grace merely made use of his mouth, without touching his corrupt heart.... See how great the power of the Spirit is. It was able to

bring forth a marvelous prophecy even from an evil imagination.” *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

All truth is God’s truth, no matter the source from which it issues. And all truth finds its ultimate meaning and significance in Jesus and His work of redemption. Why is it important for us to understand this? How can knowing this serve us in learning about the world, culture, the issues of the day, and so forth? How can knowing this open doors of opportunity for talking about the Gospel?

Closing Prayer

Lead me, O LORD, in Your righteousness because of my enemies;
Make Your way straight before my face.
For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth;
Their inward part *is* destruction;
Their throat *is* an open tomb;
They flatter with their tongue.
Pronounce them guilty, O God!
Let them fall by their own counsels;
Cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions,
For they have rebelled against You.
But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You;
Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them;
Let those also who love Your name
Be joyful in You.
For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;
With favor You will surround him *as with* a shield.

Psalm 5.8-12

Psalm 5.7-12 (*Meirionydd: O Savior, Precious Savior*)

O Lord, Your lovingkindness escorts me in this place.
I bow before Your highness and praise Your glorious grace!
In righteous ways You guide me; Your pathway I will know.
No good will be denied me as I with Jesus go.

My foes would fain deceive me and crush me in the way;
Their lying tongues would grieve me and lead my soul astray.
Their guilt hangs on above them; their guile shall be their fall;
They spurn the One Who loves them: reject them, one and all!

Let those rejoice who seek You and shelter ‘neath Your wing.
Their tongues shall rise to speak to Your praise; Your grace they sing.
Your people You will bless, Lord, all those who to You yield;
Preserve them with Your best Word, and guard them like a shield.

4 Not Just Yet

Read and meditate on John 11.53, 54.

This, it would seem, was Jesus' moment of triumph. Surely now He would press on from Bethany to enter Jerusalem and take the city by storm? Well, no. Not just yet.

*⁵³So then the Jews
from that day forward, plotted to put Him
to death. ⁵⁴So Jesus went to Ephraim,
the country near the wilderness, and no
more would He openly among them go.*

- John 11.53, 54

Reflect

1. It was not yet the hour for Jesus' glory, so he turned north from Bethany and, as Luke records (Lk. 17.11), passed through Samaria into Galilee, the country of Ephraim. He still had much to do in preparing His disciples for their work, before He turned south again and began His final journey to Jerusalem (Lk. 18.31; cf. Matt. 20.17; Mk. 10.32; Jn. 11.55). We can see here some similarity to Joshua's conquest of Canaan. After initial victories in Jericho, Ai, and the south, Joshua marched north to defeat the inhabitants of the land in what in Jesus' day was Galilee. Look at Luke 17.11-37, which points to the shape of Jesus' ministry *en route* to and while He was in Ephraim (Lk. 18, 19; Matt. 19, 20; Mk. 10). Is this similarity to the campaigns of Joshua merely coincidence? Explain. Complete the following prayer: *Lord, Joshua secured the Promised Land for Israel, and You have secured the precious and very great promises of God for us, so that we...*

2. John records that, following their assembly in Jerusalem, and the prophetic words of Caiaphas, the Jews began to concoct and prosecute a plan to kill Jesus. No more confrontations. No more attempts to dissuade the people from hearing Him. No more meetings to discuss what to do. Jesus was to die. Why not at this time? Why did Jesus delay the inevitable (cf. Jn. 11.55; 12.1)? *Lord, as Your life was in Your hand then, so my life is in Your hand now, and I rejoice that...*

3. Jesus deliberately evaded the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, although He would yet have several encounters with Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes during His campaign to and in Ephraim. We know He wasn't afraid of them; He was simply forcing them to run on His schedule. Explain. Why would He continue engaging them, since He knew what they intended? What was the effect on the people as He took on these leaders? *You are the Lord of all time, Jesus, including my time, and how I...*

4. John says Jesus "remained with His disciples" in Ephraim, but he omits to tell us the details of what Jesus and His disciples did during this period. Quickly scan Luke 17-19, Matthew 19, 20, and Mark 10. Why do you suppose John didn't feel the need to include these significant events? *Let Your Spirit teach me Your Word, or Lord, by comparing Scripture with Scripture to give me...*

5. What John omits to tell us in these two verses is that, while Jesus was in Ephraim, He thwarted the intentions of His adversaries, continued to challenge their authority, trained His disciples, plundered the holdings of the devil, gained additional followers, and pointed to the coming of His Kingdom. Jesus didn't work the clock; the clock works for Jesus. Apply this to your own walk with and work for the Lord. Bring together your prayers from questions 1-4 into one prayer.

Summary

"Before they only looked for ways to kill him. Now they ratify their determination and get down to business in determining how to carry it out." *John Chrysostom (344-407 AD)*

Jesus is Lord of time and timing. Is He Lord of your time?

Closing Prayer

O God, how long will the adversary reproach?
Will the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?
Why do You withdraw Your hand, even Your right hand?
Take it out of Your bosom and destroy *them*.
For God *is* my King from of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
You divided the sea by Your strength;
You broke the heads of the sea serpents in the waters.
You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces,
And gave him as food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.
You broke open the fountain and the flood;
You dried up mighty rivers.
The day *is* Yours, the night also *is* Yours;
You have prepared the light and the sun.
You have set all the borders of the earth;
You have made summer and winter.
Remember this, *that* the enemy has reproached, O LORD,
And *that* a foolish people has blasphemed Your name.
Oh, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast!

Psalm 74.10-19a

Psalm 74.12-19 (*Rockingham Old: O Lord Most High, with All My Heart*)

Our God is King from long ago, Who works deliv'rance in the land;
He split the sea, He crushed His foes; against Him none can ever stand.

You opened the springs, fresh water flowed; to You belong both day and night.
You bound the seasons and the earth, and gave the sun its glorious light.

Remember this, O Lord, our God: a foolish people spurns Your Name;
Deliver not Your flock to them, nor leave Your holy ones to shame.

5 The Last Passover

Read and meditate on John 11.55.

The Passover was at hand. It would be Jesus' last Passover, and the staging-ground for His glory.

*⁵⁵At length, the Passover of the Jews was near,
and many from the country traveled here,
unto Jerusalem, to purify
themselves before the feast.*

- John 11.55

Reflect

1. Let's review the Passover. Read Exodus 12.1-28. We note that Passover was intended to mark a new beginning (Ex. 12.2). How is this significance for what Jesus was going to do? Complete this prayer: *Lord, every day with You is a new beginning! Thank You so much that...*

2. Central to the Passover was the lamb. What kind of lamb? Why? What was done with the lamb (vv. 6, 8)? Recall John 1.29. To what did the Passover lamb point forward? How did Jesus fulfill the purpose of the Passover lamb (cf. Heb. 9.27, 28)? *Thank You, Lord, that You have born my judgment, and that my sins...*

3. What was done with the lamb's blood (Ex. 12.7, 12, 13)? What did this accomplish? What does this tell us about the Lamb of God? How does God "see" His blood on us? *Nothing but Your blood, Lord Jesus, can take my sins away, and make me want to...*

4. Connected to the Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Ex. 12.14ff.). Blood protected them from wrath, while bread sanctified them unto the Lord (note vv. 18-20) and nourished them for the journey. Why *unleavened* bread? What did that bread symbolize for the people of Israel (Ex. 12.17)? Review John 6.35-40. While this refers primarily to the manna provided in the Wilderness, that manna recalled, and in a sense renewed, the unleavened bread of the Feast. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Bread of life (v. 35)? *Nourish me, Lord Jesus, for today's work, so that I...*

5. Jesus has been managing His time on earth toward this week, this Passover. This is when His greatest glory would come to light, and God would be most glorified in Him (cf. Jn. 17.1-5). Explain. Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

“‘And the Jews’ Passover was near at hand.’ They had resolved to celebrate that Passover by shedding our Lord’s blood, the blood that consecrated the Passover, the blood of the Lamb. There was a plot among the Jews to slay Jesus, and he who came from heaven to suffer wanted to draw near the place of his suffering because the hour of his passion was now at hand. Therefore ‘many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover to sanctify themselves.’ The Jews did so, following the command of the Lord delivered by holy Moses in the Law, which commanded that on the feast day of the Passover everyone should come together from every part of the land and be sanctified in celebrating the services of the day. But that celebration was a shadow of the future. It was a prophetic intimation of the Christ to come, a prophecy of him who on that day was to suffer for us. The shadow would vanish, and the light would come. The sign would pass away, and the truth would remain. The Jews held their Passover in the shadows, we in the light. Otherwise, why was it necessary for the Lord to command them to slay a sheep on the very day of the feast unless it was only because of him that it was prophesied, ‘He is led as a sheep to the slaughter’? Their posts were stained with the blood of a slain animal; our foreheads are signed with the blood of Christ.” *Augustine (354-430 AD)*

Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world. Give thanks to God for supplying this spotless Lamb, that you might be saved.

Closing Prayer

I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.
You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!
For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;
Nor has He hidden His face from Him;
But when He cried to Him, He heard.
My praise *shall be* of You in the great assembly;
I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.
Let your heart live forever!
All the ends of the world
Shall remember and turn to the LORD,
And all the families of the nations
Shall worship before You.
For the kingdom *is* the LORD's,
And He rules over the nations.

Psalm 22.22-28

Psalm 22.23-28 (*Darwall: Rejoice, the Lord is King!*)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

For He has not despised the anguish of our King,
Nor from Him hid His eyes, Who knew such suffering.
Let praise arise from all who love and serve the Ruler of the skies!

The suffering King shall eat and praise with us the Lord.
Forever we His praise repeat and trust His Word.
Praise God above, all you who keep His vows and who His mercies love!

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord;
All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.
The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

6 Jerusalem Astir

Read and meditate on John 11.55-57.

Everyone was looking for Jesus, some out of curiosity, some with murderous intent.

⁵⁵At length, the Passover of the Jews was near, and many from the country traveled here, unto Jerusalem, to purify themselves before the feast. ⁵⁶Once there, they tried to find where Jesus was, and spoke to one another in the temple: "Will He come for Passover, or will He not? What do you think?" ⁵⁷The Jews, meanwhile, had given to the people orders, that if anyone knew where He was, then he to them should come, and let them know, that they might seize Him.

- John 11.55-57

Reflect

1. The "they" of verse 36 refers to the "many" (v. 55) who were coming to Jerusalem from all over the country. Passover was the draw, but Jesus was the main event. Everyone, it seems, was looking for Jesus. Why? Are people looking for Jesus like this today? Explain. Complete this prayer: *Lord, are people today looking for You as well? What can I do...*
2. The Greek negative in verse 56 – *ou me* – should be translated *surely not* or *not at all*. What does this suggest about the people's expectations? Why would they think this way? *Lord, the threats of men did not cause You to fail in Your mission. Let them not cause me to...*
3. The Jewish leaders commanded anyone who knew where Jesus was, to report His whereabouts. It's not clear how they did this, but the effect of this on the people must have been disturbing. Anyone who obeyed would have been complicit in His death. Anyone who disobeyed such a command could have been regarded as a collaborator with Jesus, and risked being excommunicated (Jn. 12.42). In that light, can you see that the concern of the people mentioned in verse 56 might have been as much one of self-interest as for Jesus? Explain. *Lord, people act out of self-interest all the time, so when I talk with them about Jesus...*
4. We'll see where that self-interest will lead. The Jews intended to seize Jesus, but doing so would not be easy, because of what we know about Jesus' ministry in Ephraim (vv. 53, 54; cf. Matt. 20.29, Mk. 10.46, and Lk. 18.35, 36). What does this suggest about the enemies of Jesus and the visible presence of many who follow Him? *Lord Jesus, the greatest fear that men have of other men is on the part of those who despise You. If only we Your people were more consistent in our witness...*
5. Troubling. Hatred. Fear. Uncertainty. The prospect of violence. Emotions in Jerusalem were running high as the Passover – and Jesus – approached. Clearly, Jesus stirs people up. But He Himself was not deterred from His purpose by such emotions. Should we allow such feelings to render us silent in our witness for the Lord? How can we keep that from happening? Bring together into one your prayers from questions 1-4.

Summary

"Many who had come up from the country to Jerusalem in order to purify themselves according to the precepts of the Law before the Passover ... gathered together in the temple and discussed among themselves whether the Lord would come out of respect for the festival or would avoid coming in order to protect

himself from the ambushes of his enemies. These were the words of those who desired to see him. With good reason the crowd was close to him because of the miracles he had performed.” *Theodore of Mopsuestia (350-428 AD)*

Emotions always run high when Jesus is in view. But love for Jesus and commitment to our calling as His witnesses must override negative emotions, so that we, like Jesus, can finish our course in glory. How do you prepare to overcome fear in being a witness for Christ?

Closing Prayer

Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up;
Fighting all day he oppresses me.
My enemies would hound me all day,
For there are many who fight against me, O Most High.
Whenever I am afraid,
I will trust in You.
In God (I will praise His word),
In God I have put my trust;
I will not fear.
What can flesh do to me?...

In God I have put my trust;
I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
Vows *made* to You *are binding* upon me, O God;
I will render praises to You,
For You have delivered my soul from death.
Have You not *kept* my feet from falling,
That I may walk before God
In the light of the living?

Psalm 56.1-4, 11-13

Psalm 56.1-4, 10-13 (*Morecambe: Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart!*)

Savior, be gracious, gracious unto me!
Weary, I seek the shelter of Your wings
Till trouble passes, till my sighings flee.
I seek the Lord Who for me does all things.

When I'm afraid I'll put my trust in You,
You, Lord, Whose everlasting Word I praise;
I will not fear what foes to me might do,
But will in faith to You my crying raise.

I will not fear what foes might do to me.
I give You thanks, my vows will I renew.
You have redeemed me, set my spirit free,
And ever in Your light I'll walk with You.

7 The Final Act

Read and meditate on John 11.49-57.

The drama of Jesus' incarnation and ministry moves into its final act. After an intermission in Galilee, Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the last time, knowing full well what awaits Him – the glory of God!

⁴⁹Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said to them all, "Now I can see that you know nothing. ⁵⁰Nor do you consider that it is expedient to our cause that one man for the nation ought to die, and that the nation all be not destroyed." ⁵¹Now this he did not on his own authority proclaim, but he was shown it, and as high priest he did prophesy that Jesus for the people all would die, ⁵²and not for them alone, but also He would gather into one all who would be declared the children of the Lord, and who were scattered everywhere.

⁵³So then the Jews from that day forward, plotted to put Him to death. ⁵⁴So Jesus went to Ephraim, the country near the wilderness, and no more would He openly among them go.

⁵⁵At length, the Passover of the Jews was near, and many from the country traveled here, unto Jerusalem, to purify themselves before the feast. ⁵⁶Once there, they tried to find where Jesus was, and spoke to one another in the temple: "Will He come for Passover, or will He not? What do you think?" ⁵⁷The Jews, meanwhile, had given to the people orders, that if anyone knew where He was, then he to them should come, and let them know, that they might seize Him.

- John 11.49-57

Reflect

1. The relationship between Jesus and time is a recurrent theme in John's gospel, as we recall the times he mentions Jesus' "hour" (Jn. 2.4; 7.30; 8.20; 12.23), and as we see in this passage, when Jesus goes to Ephraim. How would you describe that relationship? What are the implications of this for us, as followers of Jesus? Complete this prayer: *You are Lord of time, Jesus, including my time. Help me to follow You in the time of my life, so that...*

2. God is sovereign over time, and in all the affairs of men and nations. Even when His enemies intend evil against Him, God will use their efforts for His glory. How can you see this in the remarks by Caiaphas? How should this encourage us in our walk with and work for the Lord? *No matter how bad things look or get, Lord, I*

know that...

3. This passage, together with verses 45 and 46, holds some lessons for us about the power of sin. Explain. What should we learn about the power of sin to guide us as followers of Jesus? *Lord, do not let me underestimate the power of sin, but always...*

4. Affections – fear, wonder, determination, anxiousness, resentment, rage, and so forth – are powerful motivators in the human soul. Which affections are in focus in this passage? How are they working? John seems to want his readers to be aware of the power of affections. Why? How did Jesus deal with affections, so that they worked for Him and His mission? *Guard my heart, Lord, so that my affections are always...*

5. Much is yet to transpire before the Jews *seize* Jesus and begin proceedings against Him. But John lets us know in no uncertain terms that the final act of Jesus' earthly sojourn has begun. Jesus will be seized, and He will die. The people who so enthusiastically accompanied Him to Jerusalem, and sang His praises as He entered, will give in to their fears and demand He be crucified. The Jewish leaders will get what they want. But so will Jesus, and so will our heavenly Father. John has not yet tipped his hand about Jesus' "hour." He'll let the Lord do that Himself in John 17.1. What's the most important lesson for you from these verses? Bring together into one prayer the prayers you composed for questions 1-4.

Summary

"But the true purification was not before the Pasch but during the Pasch, when Jesus died as the Lamb of God for those who were purifying themselves and took away the sin of the world." *Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

As the people came to Jerusalem to purify themselves for the Passover, so we come to Jesus, that He may purify us and adopt us into His Father's family and household. Rejoice in Jesus, Who purifies us forever, that we may know the glory of our God and Father. For what are you especially grateful to the Lord today?

Closing Prayer

I will bless the LORD at all times;
His praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.
My soul shall make its boast in the LORD;
The humble shall hear *of it* and be glad.
Oh, magnify the LORD with me,
And let us exalt His name together.
I sought the LORD, and He heard me,
And delivered me from all my fears.
They looked to Him and were radiant,
And their faces were not ashamed.
This poor man cried out, and the LORD heard *him*,
And saved him out of all his troubles.
The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them.
Oh, taste and see that the LORD *is* good;
Blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!

Psalm 34.1-8

Psalm 34.1-9, 3 (*Alleluia [Lowe]: Mighty God, While Angels Bless You*)

I will bless the Lord at all times; I shall praise Him evermore!
My soul makes its boast in Jesus – Him we gladly all adore!
Magnify the Name of Jesus!

Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I sought the Lord, He answered, and from fear delivered me.
Those who look to Him are radiant; shamed their face shall never be.

Magnify the Name of Jesus!

Let us lift His Name in praise!

When I cried to God, He heard me, and from trouble rescued me.
‘Round their camp His angel lingers that they may delivered be.

Magnify the Name of Jesus!

Let us lift His Name in praise!

Taste and see how good is Jesus; blessed are all who in Him hide.
None shall lack for any blessing who in Christ will e’er confide.

Magnify the Name of Jesus!

Let us lift His Name in praise!

The Gospel of John: John 11.49-57

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What do we mean by saying that sin *blinds* people? To what does it blind them?
2. Does it matter whether Jesus is the Lord of time, or Jesus merely uses His time wisely? Explain.
3. How does this passage remind us that God is sovereign? How should this encourage us?
4. Looking at these verses, how can we identify those who are enemies of Christ in our day? How can we make sure we're not found among them?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from John 11.49-57? How are you putting that lesson to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

Items for prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.