

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz
Lenten Vesper #2.
February 17, 2016
John 11:24-53



The Plot to Kill Jesus

⁴⁵ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. ⁴⁶ But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. ⁴⁷ 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 signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation." ⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life. ⁵⁴ Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples. ⁵⁵ When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. ⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

Children of our Heavenly Father-precious in His sight for Jesus' sake:

It was just over two years ago in a place called Olathe in Kansas. It was in a small house where a couple of guys lived – at about 3 in the morning – when the smoke alarms began their high pitched – ear piercing screaming sound. It was like, “Fire! Fire! Fire! Wake up and get out!” It was “Danger! Danger! Will Robinson, danger!” These two guys go running outside – in the dark – in the cold they run out. There is fire just about everywhere! It’s then that one of the guys realizes – back in the house is his what? His Xbox! Was it an original Xbox or an Xbox 360 or an Xbox One? I don’t know! Does it matter?! His Xbox back inside a burning building – and this guy goes back into the house – to rescue his Xbox! By the time more than a dozen fire fighters risk their life to put out the fire – it’s revealed the insides are pretty much destroyed! The building has been gutted! To risk being burned – to risk being burned alive – to save an Xbox? How foolish is that? And yet we live in a world – where again people risk their lives – even sacrifice their life – for “things and stuff”! It is one of the most powerful ironies of the Passion – that Jesus willingly gave up his life – so we might have eternal life. Today God’s Word is the Irony of the High Priest Caiaphas saying,

“It’s Better That One Man Die To Save Us!”

I. Jesus gave up his life for the lost sheep of Israel

II. Jesus gave up his life for everyone else, too!

When the Lord Jesus began his very brief – 3 year public ministry everybody loved Jesus! What was not to love? When He was only 12 years old – remember – Jesus stayed back at the Temple – while Mary and Joseph and all kinds of cousins, aunts and uncles headed back to Nazareth. Frantic – the 3rd day Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus – about His Heavenly Father’s concerns. The Rabbis – the experts – the little grandpas who copied and studied God’s Word were fascinated at the questions Jesus asked – the insight Jesus showed. In the beginning Jesus must have told them – showed them that His Father *desired mercy – not sacrifice*. That His Father was not obsessed and consumed with the minutia that had them – swallowing camels but straining out gnats! When Jesus’ taught at the synagogue in Nazareth where He grew up – Jesus pointed them to the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. ¹⁸ **“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to**

proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke chapter 4. Jesus quoted the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. Would we have heard that reading and known—*oh, that sounds like Isaiah?* Yes, by the grace of God—we would know that—if—by the grace of God—we read Isaiah all the time! That's all it would take—for us to say, "Ah, my friend Isaiah!" People in Nazareth knew Jesus was reading Isaiah—claiming to be the fulfillment of some 650 year old promises from our Heavenly Father—through Isaiah. Instead of spending so much time—hearing people literally scream and shout and call each other liars and worse—out of greed for earthly riches and earthly power—let us read God's Word more faithfully—and be more concerned that God's saving reputation is hallowed, God's kingdom comes and God's will is done among us also!

While most of our texts for Lenten Vespers 2016 come from holy week—from Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter...today's text comes from a little while earlier! Jesus' friend Lazarus—the brother of Jesus' friends Mary and **Martha, Martha** was sick in Bethany. People came and told Jesus "**Lord, the one you love is sick!**" Bethany was only 2 miles from Jerusalem. That's not far! That's like from my home to the Post Office! If I was at home and somebody was 2 miles from my home and they called and said, "Could you bring me Lord's Supper?"—I could walk there and it wouldn't be a big deal. But Jesus waited. Jesus waited until Lazarus was dead—dead and buried. I read in the Concordia Self-study Bible 11:17 *four days*. **Many Jews believed that the soul remained near the body for three days after death in the hope of returning to it. If this idea was in the minds of these people, they obviously thought all hope was gone--- Lazarus was irrevocably dead.** Jesus came to Bethany. God's Word says, "Jesus wept!" God's Word says Jesus told them to roll back the stone. Don't worry about the smell of death and decomposition. Jesus said, "**Lazarus, come out!**" Jesus said, "**Take off the grave clothes and let him go.**"

Jesus' enemies said, "**What are we accomplishing?**" they asked. "**Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.**" The Kingdom of God—is not a place! The Kingdom of God is not brick and mortar—not wires and pipes

and drywall and paint and carpet! The Kingdom of God is not about earthly riches or earthly or political power and authority. The Kingdom of God is the Gospel of Christ crucified and risen--powerful in the ♥s and lives of Jesus' blood bought lambs and sheep! Caiaphas was concerned about earthly and religious and political power. Jesus' kingdom is not about this world. If it was – Jesus' disciples would fight to prevent Jesus' arrest either by the Jews or the Romans. Jesus' Kingdom is the Gospel – changing ♥s and lives and eternity. All glory belonging to God – and to Him alone!

⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life. If you came to Adult Bible Class last Sunday – you were part of the study where Pastor Kiecker talked about the Jewish nation – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – the children of Abraham – as numerous as the stars in the sky – as countless as the grains of sand on the sea shore. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – Israel – the children of Israel. Moses told the mighty Pharaoh, **“This is what the LORD says, ‘Let my people go!’”** *I like to say that!* Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah – the Jews! Jesus is the Lion of Judah! The Lamb is also the Lion! When you study God's Word – the Old Testament – you see again and again – how the LORD – the Great I AM built a hedge around His people. They were separate – special – different – in the world but not of the world! You could tell the children of Israel were different. They looked different. They ate different foods and refrained from eating all sorts of foods. They were about God's Word and family and tradition. They were about worship – public and private. They were the chosen people – chosen by God Himself to be different from everyone else! Israel had a High Priest. The High Priest was supposed to serve for life – hence your ears perk up when you hear “but as high priest that year...” The Romans were messing in the Temple life! The Chief Priest offered sacrifices – **first for his own sins – then for the sins of the people!** The Chief Priest – once a year – on the Great Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur – went into the most holy place – with the blood of the Lamb – my the mercy seat – because of our wretched sin! When Jesus cried out from the ✠ , **“It is**

finished!” and then, **“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit –** remember Missionary Weiser reminded us, “God the Father doesn’t have hands – He is spirit!?” Jesus bowed His head and gave up His spirit – and that curtain in the temple – woven as thick as my hand was torn in two from top to bottom. Our sins were covered with the blood of the Lamb of God. We are forgiven!

⁵⁶ They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, “What do you think? Isn’t he coming to the festival at all?” ⁵⁷ But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him. How much difference can one person make? It’s hard to say. There is a man named Glenn-who lives in Massachusetts. It’s pretty hard to tell how old Glenn is. He has long gray/white hair. He has a long white beard. He has a cut – a scab on his nose. His eyes look so sad – so tired – so worried. It was getting to be -8° and Glenn was holding a sign that said, “*Any* help would be appreciated!” Have you been in such need that you held a sign saying *any* help from anyone would be a blessing? Andrade a single mom had just won \$200 in a scratch off lottery ticket – and thought – Glenn needs this more than I do! Then she thought – I wonder who else could help Glenn? A barber gave Glenn a haircut! People gave him warm food. People gave him warm clothes. Did you know – you dasn’t give homeless people clothes that are nice enough to be sold from a resale shop – or people will mug homeless people? Did you know that? Andrade found a place – a little motel where Glenn could satay for the next 3 nighs so he wouldn’t literally freeze to death! One person helping one person – perhaps 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 people helping one person in desperate need. Again – think what the Lord Jesus did! One – the Son of Man and the Son of God – this one – who died for the sins of every man, woman and child on the face of the planet in the history of the world. How many people is that? Do you remember? One estimate is 108 billion people have lived on earth in the history of the world. That would be about 6.5% of all people who ever lived are alive right now. Jesus knows exactly how many people – where they were born – all their names – their parents and grandparents and when and how they died. Jesus knows all their sins and

paid for them all – when he died on the cross to buy them back. How can we thank Jesus for that?

There was a terrible fire – a house fire the other day in Columbus, GA. Walter got out – along with 5 other adults and 3 children. Everyone was safely out – when they realized Walter had gone back into the burning building. What had he forgotten? What was back inside – that Walter thought worth risking his life? Some precious – priceless – irreplaceable heirloom? Something of great sentimental value? A couple of beers – most likely not even cold any more – being in the fire! A guy in Fresno, CA – named Bob – back into a burning home, too! What did he risk his life for? Barbecued ribs! It is foolish beyond words – to risk your physical life – for the “things and stuff” that a house fire can destroy. How far more dangerous to risk our immortal souls – in the forever flames of Hell! And once we have come to Jesus as our Savior and Redeemer – how could we go back again – to neglect God’s Word and worship and Lord’s Supper and more? How could we neglect Scripture and worship and in a sense – starve our faith? This Lenten Season by the grace of God – we can grow in faith – closer and closer beside Jesus until we are safe by the One who is at the same time – High Priest and Sacrificial Lamb – His blood spilled one time – to cover all our sins. Today and forever we say, “Thank you, Jesus, My High Priest!” Amen!

To God alone all glory!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rev. Anthony E. Schatz". The signature is written in black ink on a light blue rectangular background.