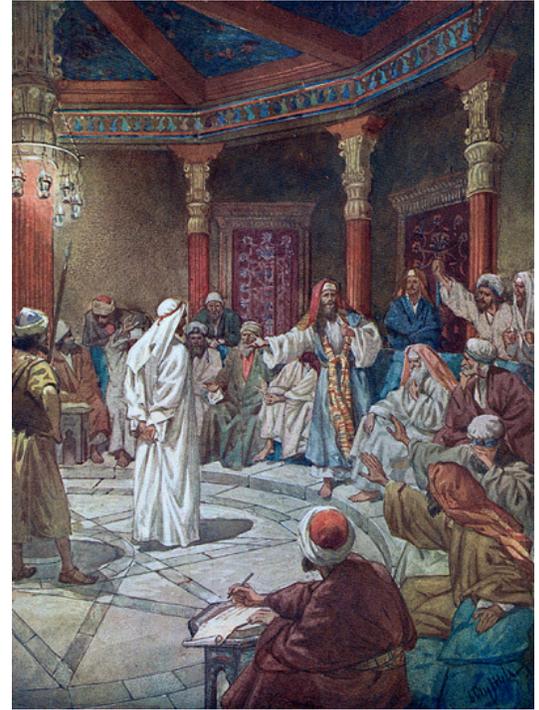


**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Lenten Vesper #2. February 29, 2012
John 18:19-24 ESV.**

¹⁹ The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. ²⁰ Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. ²¹ Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said." ²² When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" ²³ Jesus answered him, "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" ²⁴ Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.



Jesus is brought before the High Priest by William Hole

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

When I was 2 years old – there was what they call a tele-play – a play on TV called Twelve Angry Men! The play begins with instructions to the jury. The charge is made by an excessively somber judge. "I urge you to deliberate earnestly and thoughtfully," he intones with the low bass voice of an old preacher at a funeral. "You are faced with a grave responsibility."... It's a murder trial – a first degree intentional homicide trial. They vote – 11 votes for guilty – 1 vote innocent! When they discover who the innocent vote is – one juror cries out, "I've never seen a guiltier man in my life!" Throw in the fact that all the jurors are peach colored and the defendant is not – and all sorts of biases and prejudices come into play. Slowly but surely – by the power of undeniable truth – one by one – the jurors change their votes until the verdict of innocent is unanimous! It is a very power story! Today we have Jesus arrested and accused – being arraigned as it were before Annas – the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the High Priest that year – according to the tolerance of the Romans. If arraignments and trials are about discovering the truth God's Word reminds us today:

- Jesus' Cross Is No Secret!**
- 1. God's Word proclaims it**
 - 2. Unbelief stubbornly rejects it.**

Last Wednesday – Ash Wednesday – we saw Jesus' arrest by the Temple Guard – armed with swords and spears and clubs – as if to capture Jesus. Remember how Jesus asked them "Who is it you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground. Notice how Jesus is the one asking the questions. Jesus is the one always and completely in charge. Jesus allows himself to be arrested and tied up like a common even dangerous criminal. Jesus allows himself to be taken back inside the city walls – to stand before Annas. ¹⁹ **The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.** Would you be able to testify concerning Jesus' disciples and his teaching? Sometimes Jesus taught one

on one. Remember how Jesus taught Nicodemus, **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”** John 3:16-21 ESV. Sometimes Jesus preached to literally thousands – the sermon on the grassy hillside – on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. Early on in his public ministry – Jesus preached to people who loved him and believed in him – about putting their faith into practice! Jesus preached about fruits of faith – showing Jesus’ forgiving love in their marriage – in their day to day – exceedingly practical family life. Jesus said: ²¹ **“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’** ²² **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. Jesus said: ²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’** ²⁸ **But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.**

Even Jesus’ fiercest enemies – those who hated Jesus with a white hot anger – knew what Jesus taught. Jesus told them point blank to their face. Matthew chapter 23 – just a few days before Jesus’ arrest. ¹³ **“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. ¹⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.... ²³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴ You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! ²⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. ²⁷ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. ²⁹ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, ³⁰ saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ ³¹ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. ³² Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. ³³ You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? ³⁴ Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and**

persecute from town to town,³⁵ so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.³⁶ Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. Matthew 23 selected verses ESV.

When Annas demanded answers from Jesus – Jesus said to him: **21 Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said.** **22** When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, **“Is that how you answer the high priest?”** **23** Jesus answered him, **“If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?”** Someone slapped Jesus – smacked the holy innocent Son of God – in the face! No one could say a single word of objection – if Jesus had struck him dead – the moment the officer started to slap Him. But Jesus didn't. Jesus practiced perfectly what he preached. Sometimes we technically call this Jesus' active obedience. Not only did Jesus refrain from every sin – not every doing anything wrong. Jesus was always and completely active – doing – accomplishing everything good! Remember – again – the sermon on the grassy hillside? **38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’** **39** But I say to you, **Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.** **40** And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. **41** And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. **42** Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. **43** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,** **45** so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? **48** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Jesus practiced what he preached – and he is the only one who can make us strong enough – to do the same!

24 Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Only Jesus could see the High Priest's heart. That's important to remember – only Jesus could see his heart. And only Jesus would judge him! It is tempting – sometimes – to think that accepting Jesus and believing the Gospel somehow depends on the skill of the person preaching or teaching. It does not! Jesus himself – the sinless Son of God not only spoke the Word – Jesus *is the Word!* And still Annas and Caiaphas refused to accept it. The Apostle Paul was taught in a most wondrous way by Jesus himself – and people rejected Saint Paul. Peter and Andrew, James and John were Jesus' disciples – his students, followers and imitators for the 3 years of Jesus' public ministry. People who heard them preach and teach often rejected the Gospel from them, too! It is important to remember the fundamentals. The enemy is the devil – the father of lies – the murderer from the beginning. The devil succeeded in blinding many of the Scribes – the men who literally copied the Scriptures – knowing the words but somehow missing the point. We need to come to Church with ever increasing faithfulness. We need to read our Bibles at home. We need to talk about law and gospel with our children and our neighbors when we get up and when we go to sleep – when we are on the road and when we are at home. We need to grow in faith. Then we will bear the sweetest fruits of faith – the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control that will give glory to Jesus and build up the family of

believers! Then the Cross of Jesus will be more and more obvious in our hearts and our homes.
Amen! To God alone all glory!