

THERE IS NO NEUTRAL WITH JESUS

So we of course are going to be continuing in the Gospel of John

- Last week, Pastor Bill looked specifically at the passage where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.
 - And the key point that was emphasized was that Jesus operates in his own time.
 - Not when we think he should act.
 - And that we need to trust his leadership because he knows what He is doing.

The passage we are going to be looking at this morning is all about the reactions that people have to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

- Now I am going to tell you this was a public miracle that happens here.
- In fact it's indisputable. The Pharisees and the Sadducees they never dispute this miracle happening. It's impossible for them to do that. How do I know?
 - Because Lazarus is now walking around 100% healed.
 - People can not say "No way, Jesus did not do that!".
 - Lots and Lots of people saw him be put into the ground.
 - And many more knew he had been dead for 4 days.
 - So this is a big deal! Several people saw this and they know this is a fact.

Now what's also interesting about this scripture that we are going to be looking at, there is not a single word in this passage by Jesus.

- This is all John, stopping in the middle of all the reactions and sort of stepping back giving us this picture.
 - Allowing us to see this reaction and draw the truths out of it that come with this.
 - There are plenty of truths here.
 - Let's stop and read through the scriptures and then we will go back through and go verse by verse and help get a better understanding.

JOHN 11:45-57

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, 46 but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." 49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation

should perish.” 51 He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation,52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. 53 So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.

54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.

55 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves. 56 They were looking for^[a]Jesus and saying to one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast at all?” 57 Now the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should let them know, so that they might arrest him.

- So this is a good picture of really what’s going on here.
- Go back to verses 45 and 46.
 - You are going to see something about belief at the beginning here.

45 Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, 46 but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

- So some believe, and some don’t.
- Some actually go back to the Pharisees and tattle tail on what they saw Jesus just do.
- But what you need to see here is that every single person regardless of whether they believe or if they don’t believe has a response to Jesus.
 - **Nobody is neutral.** People will go and say yeah I believe in Jesus, I believe he did these miracles.
 - But then there are others who will say “I don’t know. Not sure if I really believe this. I’m kind of skeptical.”

WHAT ARE WE MODELING?

- And that should be a great reminder even at the beginning of this for us to stop and think
- “What is the message that I send about what I think about Jesus to the rest of the world? What do they pick up from me? What do I say?
 - Parents- whether you know this or not, you are discipling your children

- The question you need to be asking yourselves is- Am I modeling to my children what it means to follow Jesus?
- Teaching our kids that it's ok to just consume consume consume.
 - Just living for earthly pleasures
- Teaching our kids that success is spending 60-80 hours a week at work. Getting the next big promotion.
 - Again not a bad thing. But are we pointing them to Jesus?

- Modeling obedience to God our Father is the absolute best thing you can do.
 - Praying & reading the Word together. Modeling forgiveness. Being the hands & feet of Christ locally and abroad. Sacrificially giving. Evangelizing together. Going on prayer walks.
 - Modeling is crucial when it comes to pointing our kids to Christ
- And so the reason I emphasize this, is what must ask ourselves: what is the message that we are not just sending to our children, but also to the rest of the world about who Jesus is.

Look at verses 47 & 48 deal with the sanhedrin. He says in verse 47

47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. **48** If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

- So the Pharisees which is the religious group and the Sadducees which is the political group that don't really believe in God.
 - And they come together and are the ruling party over Israel at this time.
 - And their question is simple: "What are we going to do?"
 - We can not keep letting this Jesus guy come along and do these miracles.
 - All these people are starting to follow after him.
 - And so they are really worried that in verse 48 it says that they are going to lose control. Or lose their influence over the people.

And potentially lose their favor with Rome like it says in verse 49. So the Sadducees & Pharisees are worried.

But what the Pharisees and Sadducees are really worried about is themselves.

- One of the things you notice here that is very obvious is there is a total disregard for who Jesus is.
- They have just seen Jesus bring a man who was dead for 4 days and bring him back to life. And they do not care anything about that at all.
 - You want to know what they are really concerned about: “This Jesus guy could mess things up for us.”
 - They care about their own control, their power, their positions.
 - Not who Jesus is.
 - Think about how deeply wrong that is.
 - That you would make a decision about Jesus, not based on who he is.
 - But based on how he would affect your life.
 - “You know if I believe this stuff, it could change my life a lot.”
 - You want to know the answer- Of course it will.
 - He didn’t come to leave you in the lifestyle you have now.
- God is not interested in lukewarm followers. And what I mean by that is, we call ourselves a “Christian” but our life looks no different than a non believer.

Look at verse 49 **49 But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all. 50 Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.”**

- So Caiaphas who is called the High Priest- He is the son in law of the previous High Priest- a guy named Annis.
 - So this power thing is getting passed right down the line.

The High Priest role was a position of power. This was a political thing.

- You control the people. You have say over what happened.
- If you didn’t like it, it didn’t happen. So clearly this guy didn’t want to lose control.
- So **verse 49** here he stops and humbles everybody there and the rest of the people in the Sanhedrin.
 - And he says you don’t know anything at all.
 - He’s probably not going to win the High Priest of the year award for encouragement.

Verse 50- Caiaphas unwittingly though at this point utters this prophecy which is way more true than he can possibly imagine. Which will tell you that God can use any person he wants to speak. Even someone that may not truly know him.

- He says here “it’s better for one man to die for all the people, then for the whole nation to suffer.”
- Now what he has just done here is he’s told us a really important theological truth that’s called substitutional atonement.
 - Substitutional atonement basically is this.
 - I will make it really simple- You did wrong but you don’t have the pay the price for that. Someone else will on your behalf.
- You want to know how this worked out in the old testament.
 - They would say you did wrong, you gotta go kill an animal.
 - And the blood of that animal is going be put out over the altar. And that is the picture. That ultimately you can not pay this price by yourself.
 - That it has to be done by a substitute. And all along as this happened through the old testament- the idea was that the people of Israel would learn.
 - There is going to be a substitute. Caiaphas just doesn’t realize it in verse 51 that he is describing it right now.
- **Verse 52-** He says **52 and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.**
 - SO in other words this would include us! We who put our faith in Christ will be covered by this substitutional atonement.
- **Verse 53. So from that day on they made plans to put him to death.**
- In other words, they begin to form the plans here to arrest and kill Jesus.
 - Notice here that there is no talk about at all among the people in the council of getting together with Jesus and simply asking some questions.
 - There is no subcommittee to investigate his message or his followers. No one even goes and interviews Lazarus.
 - Remember this is one of the most public/ most spoken about miracles that Jesus performs on his earthly life here.
 - You would think that at least the council could do was talk with Lazarus. But they don’t. Nothing but plans to kill Jesus.

- I thought about this a lot this past week- Why is that they don't want to talk to Jesus or they don't want to ask Jesus these questions.
- Answer: Because they are not going to like the answer their going to get.
- Remember Pilate? In John 18. He actually does this.
 - They bring Jesus in before him, and has a conversation with Jesus.
 - And after some time he goes back out to his people and says "I don't find any fault in this guy".
 - Can I tell you something- The sanhedrin did not want to hear that.
 - Their thinking- let's not make this an optional thing. Let's arrest and kill him.

Look at verse 54- *54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples.*

- So Jesus goes and doesn't go out among the people anymore.
- And the reason why is because his time has not come yet.
 - There's still some things he needs to say.
 - There's still some confrontation that needs to happen.
 - There's still some people he needs to share with.
 - So it's not right for him to be arrested just yet. He will decide when that is going to happen.
 - So Jesus heads to Ephraim which is 12-14 miles Northwest of Jerusalem.

Look at verse 55 *55 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up from the country to Jerusalem before the Passover to purify themselves.*

- You have to understand what's going on here.
 - The Passover is such a big massive event in Jerusalem.
 - The town would sort of swell by hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people up to a million more people for the passover.
 - Now it wasn't it huge town at that point
 - And so they would go there and with all these people coming in getting ready to celebrate.
 - But over the past couple years if you remember in John 2, Jesus let the people have it in the Temple.
 - He started flipping tables and telling them to "take these things away, and stop making my Father's house a place for business.

- Also Luke 19 mentions how Jesus said “And my house will be a house of prayer. You have made it a “robbers den”.
 - - And so the people almost see this as a spectacle.
 - Notice that there is no mention of worship, belief or love.
 - To them Jesus just seems to be the best show in town.
 - Now what is it that John wants us to see out of the passage.
- I think there are 4 things that are pretty important.
- The first truth that John wants us to see is the truth about **BELIEF**.
 - And here’s the truth- not everyone believes. Now think about this for a second.
 - They just saw Jesus just call Lazarus out of the grave. He was dead.
 - They see all of that. And nothing changes in their hearts.
 - I can’t tell you how many conversations I have had with non-believers and have asked What do you think about Christianity? Many say “eh I dunno. It’s an old book for people back in the day. Maybe if I saw Jesus do these things, then I would believe.”
 - Can I tell you- no you wouldn’t. You wouldn’t. They didn’t believe.
 - It’s hard for me to understand why not everybody comes to a saving knowledge of Christ. And I can’t really explain that. Not everyone believes.
- Some people actually struggle with that. They believe in something called “Universalism”.
 - Universalism basically says “you know what, God is basically going to let everybody in heaven somehow. All you have to do is just love & just live out your truth.” I gotta tell you something- That’s totally unbiblical.
 - That’s garbage and a false Gospel. Yet it’s embraced right here in our county
 - It’s important for us to have the need to believe. The need to trust, the need to have faith is paramount to our faith.
 - Let me show you what I am talking about here.
- Open to Hebrews 11:6. **6 And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

- Go to Galatians 3:11 **Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”**
 - Let me translate that for you- It doesn't matter if you do good things.
 - It doesn't matter if you keep the rules. Or if your intent was good.
 - What matters is if you are justified by faith.
 - If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Still don't believe me- look at Romans 5:1-2 **Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

In other words, this is how you get it- by faith. By trust.

Go back to John. Go back to chapter 3. Jesus is talking to Nicodemus and he is being very clear here. John 3:18 **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.**

- To boil this all down: You have got to have faith. You have to trust him.
- You gotta put your confidence in Him. Not in yourself.
 - By the way you don't do this completely on your own.
 - In fact you don't do it at all

One of my favorite chapters in the bible is Ephesians 2:8-9 **8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

- In other words- if God is stirring inside your heart.
 - If he's working inside your heart and making you feel pretty uncomfortable. That's the spirit of God working right now.

So the first thing we learned here is the truth about BELIEF. The second thing we are going to look at is the truth about **BIAS**.

- Bias is the fact that we see things through our own lenses. Through our own ways.
- We want what's best for us. Is this what I want? Does this make me happy?
 - This included Caiaphas. What you see here in verses 48-52 is that Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin they have this bias. They don't want Jesus to shake things up.
 - Their probably thinking “Jesus could you just stop all this. Were in control, we make a good living, people listen to what we say”.

- They are worried. They see people following Jesus. They see Jesus doing the miraculous and can't deny what he is doing. So they say "We need to put an end to this".
- Notice this is all about what makes them happy. What makes them comfortable.
- Most of us hear that, and say "Well I'd never do that. I would never put my desires before God's desire".
 - Is that really true? Let's be honest.
 - Where do you spend most of your time?
 - Are you the hands and feet loving your neighbor like he commanded?
 - What about the money you spend? Is it all for earthly pleasures that flee away and always ends up us wanting more.
 - Or are we investing in the Kingdom of God.

"Jesus, could you just not rock the boat? I mean I really like you as this good guy, this Savior guy. But could you not be Lord though. Not destroy this life I designed for myself."

- Church that's not why Jesus came.
- He didn't come to die on a cross to keep you and me comfortable.
 - He came to die to redeem my life. To change me into His servant.
 - That we might declare His glory. So we could be his hands and feet.
- That's way more radical than Caiaphas and the Pharisees all wanted. If i'm honest it's way more radical than a lot of people want it the Church today.
 - I mean everyone of us wants to be forgiven, loved and accepted.
 - But not everyone wants a Lord over their life.
 - Well here's the problem. Jesus can't stop being Lord. It's who he is.

There's a 3rd truth. So the 1st truth was belief, 2nd truth was bias. The 3rd truth is about **God's plan.**

- Caiaphas in verse 50 tells us here that God is going to take care of our sin problem.
- So this death on the cross is this key issue within our faith. We don't wear little necklaces to represent the stone that was moved away so Jesus could come out.
 - We wear crosses little crosses that remind us that Jesus died. That death matters.
 - Some people really struggle with that.
 - They will say isn't God a God of love? So how can a death be the basis for salvation?
 - Answer: **God is not only a God of love. God is a God of holiness and justice.**

- God can not just be grace and love. God is also Holy and just!
- Or you have people who say “I just think in the end love wins”. Love doesn’t win. God’s grace on the cross- that’s what wins.
- God doesn’t stop ever being holy and just. That means salvation can not violate his attributes.
- Because God is the upholder of the moral code of the universe. Everything he makes has to be Holy and just. Because he is holy & just.
- The problem is that is, we are not like that! I mean even if you think you are not a bad person-
 - Have you ever lied? You’re a liar. Have you ever taken something that wasn’t yours? You’re a thief. Ever have hatred in your heart towards others. God considers that murder. Because he is so perfect and Holy.
 - The depth of sin in every single human being is beyond our imagination. Yet God loves us so much that he didn’t leave us there to die in our sin. He sent his son to die on the cross. He took our place. Substitutionary atonement.
 - Instead of me having to die, he is my substitute.

Let me show you how the Bible says this over and over again. I want you to see the importance of it. That he made propitiation for our sins.

Go back to Hebrews 2:17 **Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people**

That’s why he came. So he could be that substitutionary death.

Go back to the left- Romans 3:23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.**

It happens by faith that we believe. One more

1 John 4:10 **In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

- Jesus is the substitutionary atonement for our sins.
 - So Caiaphas is spot on in verse 50 “Hey listen it’s way more profitable that one would die then the whole Nation would die and suffer”.

4TH TRUTH

Now there is a 4th truth here.

- The 1st truth was about belief, the 2nd truth was about bias, the 3rd truth is about God's plan.
- The 4th one is about **COMMITMENT**.
- You see to the Pharisees and the Sadducees Jesus is a threat.
- Exactly like he is today for many people. That's how the religious people at that time saw him and the same went for the Sadducees (the non religious people) saw him.
- And it's how many people see him today. The question we have to ask ourselves and in this text is: Why would Jesus be a threat?
- Answer: **There is no neutral with Jesus**.
 - You either love him, serve him and worship him or you don't.
 - He's either the King or He's not.
 - It's really interesting when you stop and read this passage and see that there are 3 different reactions to who Jesus is.
- The **1st one** you see is the people that are nowhere with Jesus in verse 46. It says they don't believe.
- It doesn't say they hate him or despise him. But they immediately run to the pharisees and tell them exactly what Jesus does.

Neutral

- They come across as sort of neutral or kind of in the middle.
- And I think a lot of people today think in their own way "Well I think it's ok to be neutral with God". Like not be on one side or the other.
 - The answer is no
 - There is no neutrality

Phillippians 2:10-11 talks about that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that HE is Lord. No neutrality.

- Then there is a **2nd group** of people: They openly oppose him.
 - You see this happening in verses 48-53. Caiaphas, the Pharisees & Sadducees all deny him.
 - I started thinking lots and lots of people down through the centuries have opposed Christianity.

- The reality is that Caiaphas is in the grave. And God's church is alive and growing.
- Then there is a **3rd Group**. Verse 45 gives them the least amount of attention here.
 - And that's those who follow Jesus.

Here's the point all of us fit into one of these 3 groups of people.

- Which is it going to be? The reality is right now, right where you are at- you are making a decision in your heart about Jesus.
- As David Platt says: "It's time to stop viewing God as desperate looking for our acceptance. He is a sovereign Lord and King who is worthy of our praise".
 - We are either for Him or we are not.
 - He is either King or He is not.
 - Many of you in this room have been a follower of Jesus for years. That's awesome.
 - I'd encourage you to keep stepping out of your comfort zone
 - We can and should not ever be content with where we are with God
 - But for some, you need to stop fooling yourself, thinking you have everyone convinced around you
 - Saying that you are for him, when your life looks no different than a non-believer.
 - Let me encourage you, don't let the decision come down to he might mess up the life that you have right now.
 - Because the real issue here is: Who is He?
 - Because I can guarantee you he will mess up your life.
 - Because he is going to be Lord and not let you be Lord any longer.

Being neutral is not going to work.