

## **John 11:49-57 and 12:1-11**

In last week's lesson, we attended a most unusual funeral, a funeral that would have never happened if Mary and Martha had been able to direct events.

However, it was God who was directing events, and His plan involved suffering and disillusionment.

Lazarus must go through the suffering of death.

His sisters must go through the suffering of bereavement.

The disciples must be willing to take their life in their hands.

And even Jesus wasn't left untouched by this plan.

Every step He took in obedience to His Father's will resulted in gross

misunderstanding on the part of His friends.

No, it wasn't a pretty picture, but God's plan would reap a harvest of precious souls and increase the faith of Jesus' followers.

Yes, Lazarus' resurrection would prove once and for all that ---"**as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.**"

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Certainly, this wasn't the first time that Jesus had raised the dead, but it was the first time He had demonstrated His power over total corruption.

It was an amazing victory, significant in at least four ways:

First of all, it gave credence to the main theme of the Gospel of John. Yes, Jesus is God.

Secondly, it expanded the horizons of Jesus' followers --- **"with God all things"** were now possible.

Of course, this had always been the case, but it was the first time they had really realized it.

Thirdly, it gave substance to the hope of every believer.

Not only will Jesus redeem our souls and our spirits, but He can, and will, redeem our physical bodies from corruption --- **"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying**

**that is written, Death is swallowed up  
in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:54**

And fourthly "--- **many of the Jews which  
came to Mary, and had seen the things  
which Jesus did, believed on him."**

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However, this miracle affected the  
religious leaders quite differently.  
They suddenly realized they were losing  
ground --- **"If we let him thus alone,  
all men will believe on him: and the  
Romans shall come and take away both  
our place and nation."**

An emergency meeting was essential, and  
without further delay.

John 11:47 **"Then gathered the chief  
priests and the Pharisees a council,  
and said, What do we? for this man  
doeth many miracles."**

No doubt, this was a gathering of the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews.

It consisted of 71 members, including the chief priest.

And did you notice the words ---"**this man doeth many miracles.**"

Yes, "**many miracles.**"

In secret, they readily admitted that Jesus could perform miracles.

Indeed, they had been thoroughly convinced of His power for some time now.

However, in public, they presented quite a different picture.

Remember what they said when they were examining the blind man --- "**Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.**"

What a bunch of hypocrites they were!

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However, this last miracle had made a profound impression on them.

Surely this would be the miracle that would convince them that they were fighting against God.

On the contrary, it only strengthened their resolve.

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It's a well-known fact, that you can't fight a war without a cause.

Their rallying cry would be "**---the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.**"

Yes, they must protect Israel from Jesus!

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The problem was, Jesus had never opposed Roman authority.

In fact, He had sanctioned the paying of Roman taxes ---"**Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.**"

And once, when Jesus "---- **perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.**"

And He hadn't conducted any secret meetings, plotting against the establishment.

He would remind the high priest of that fact when He was being examining ---"**I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always**

**resort; and in secret have I said nothing."**

No, Jesus wasn't a threat to Rome, but He was a threat to them.

So with the battle cry, --- **the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation,"** they set about the task of saving Israel.

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John 11:49 **"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all ---."**

Up to this point, nothing much had been accomplished.

It was then that Caiaphas rose majestically, and looking down his nose at his inferiors, he said, **"Ye know nothing at all."**



And in the hush that followed, he continued  
---- **"Nor consider that it is expedient  
for us, that one man should die for the  
people, and that the whole nation  
perish not."**

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V 49 identifies Caiaphas as **"the high priest  
that same year."**

This immediately raises a question.

Originally, God had established the office  
of high priest as a lifetime position.  
Aaron was the first high priest, and this  
office was handed down from generation  
to generation.

So why do we read, Caiaphas being the **"high  
priest that same year?"**

Actually, we don't have to check too far  
before we realize that things had  
radically changed.

For instance, at the time when John the Baptist began his public ministry --- Luke 3:2 speaks of --- **"Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests."**

In Acts 4:6, when Peter and John were brought up on trial, Annas was the high priest.

And secular history tells us that Caiaphas had been appointed to this office by the Roman Prefect, Valerius Gratus.

So, apparently, this high office had degenerated into a more or less political appointment.

However, as we will soon see, God still honored this office.

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So with the authority vested in him, Caiaphas took charge of the meeting, bringing down the final solution "---

**it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."**

He made no pretense of justice in his plan.

It was simply the expedient thing to do.

And now that we fully understand the plan,

let's look ahead to the time when Jesus was arrested.

John 18:12-14 **"Then the band and the captain**

**and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him,**

**13: And led him away to Annas first;**

**for he was father in law to Caiaphas,**

**which was the high priest that same year.**

**14: Now Caiaphas was he, which gave**

**counsel to the Jews, that it was**

**expedient that one man should die for the people."**

And then, skipping down to V 24, we read,

**"Now Annas had sent him bound unto  
Caiaphas the high priest."**

That wasn't a trial at all. It was a kangaroo court!

The judge was the author of the final verdict.

So, in order to witness the real trial, we'll have to go back to that secret meeting of the Sanhedrin.

The charge had been already determined ---

**"this man doeth many miracles."**

The verdict had already been given --- **"it**

**is expedient for us, that one man  
should die for the people."**

And all this had been determined without the accused being present to defend Himself.

It wasn't just, but it was expedient.

And the real problem wasn't Israel's peril;  
it was the possibility that the Romans  
might take away their **"place."**

Yes, they were the shepherds of Israel, and  
Jesus must go.

It was simply there civic duty to defend  
Israel.

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Caiaphas sat down, pleased with himself.  
He had brought order out of chaos.

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But then the Holy Spirit puts a whole new  
light on the proceedings.

V 51-52 **"And this spake he not of himself:  
but being high priest that year, he  
prophesied that Jesus should die for  
that nation;**

**52: And not for that nation only, but  
that also he should gather together in**

**one the children of God that were scattered abroad."**

Yes, this clever scheme that Caiaphas had come up with wasn't really his plan at all. It was God's plan.

In spite of the corruption in the priesthood, God had spoken through Caiaphas, and **"he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation."**

It wasn't a new idea at all.

No, it was a very old plan.

In fact, in 1 Peter 1:19-20, Christ is described as **"--- a lamb without blemish and without spot:**

**20: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."**

Certainly, Caiaphas had declared it a necessary expedient in order **"that the whole nation perish not."**

But there was a great deal more than Israel's welfare wrapped up in God's plan.

Yes, Jesus would be lifted up, and thereby **"--- gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."**

Psalm 76:10 **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."**

So in their ignorance, the Sanhedrin was now busily working on God's plan.

But their aspirations were not lining up with God's timing.

No, they were ready to proceed immediately, for V 53 says **"--- from that day forth**

**they took counsel together for to put  
him to death."**

But they would spin their wheels in vain  
until Passover.

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On the other hand, Jesus was fully aware of  
God's timing.

He was the Passover Lamb, and He would not  
be sacrificed until Passover.

V 54 **"Jesus therefore walked no more openly  
among the Jews; but went thence unto a  
country near to the wilderness, into a  
city called Ephraim, and there  
continued with his disciples."**

Yes, Jesus had escaped.

But how did He know the religious leaders  
had taken **"counsel together for to put  
him to death?"**

Had somebody tipped Him off?



Well, in a manner of speaking, I think somebody had.

Remember the time when Nathanael first met Jesus?

Nathaniel thought he was a perfect stranger, but Jesus said, **"Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee."**

Of course I don't really know, but it's entirely possible that Jesus had attended their secret meeting, and had heard every word that Caiaphas had said.

How futile to fight against God.

However, their plan would succeed, but not right now.

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V 55 **"And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country**

**up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves."**

Obviously, some time had passed, for

Passover was "**nigh at hand.**"

Many of the people had gone up early in order to be purified in Jerusalem.

Once again they would remember their deliverance from slavery.

And once again they would acknowledge the blood of the Passover lamb, which had stood between them and God's judgment.

But there was something wrong here.

All of this would have been quite proper in the past, but things had changed.

John the Baptist had already identified Jesus as "**---the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**".

But they had failed to understand the symbolism connected to this

announcement, and more importantly, they had failed to recognize and accept their Messiah.

And soon they would be joining in the cry of *Crucify Him*, as their Messiah took His place as the Passover Lamb.

Yes, it was all wrapped up in the plan that Caiaphas was taking credit for.

And it was all wrapped up in Israel's rejection.

Romans 11:11-12 **"I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.**  
**12: Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the**

**Gentiles; how much more their  
fullness?"**

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John 11:56 **"Then sought they for Jesus, and  
spake among themselves, as they stood  
in the temple, What think ye, that he  
will not come to the feast?"**

By law, Jesus was required to come to the  
feast, as was every other male in  
Israel.

Actually, there were three religious  
gatherings that required attendance at  
Jerusalem.

They were the feast of Tabernacles,  
Pentecost, and Passover.

So, why was Jesus' attendance so much in  
question?

Well, the next verse gives us the answer.

V 57 **"Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him."**

Yes, Jesus was a wanted man.

If there had been printing presses in that day, His picture would have been posted all over the city.

So, would He come?

Of course He would! Not simply because attendance was compulsory, but because He had an appointment to keep.

And He had already told His disciples about that appointment in Luke 13:33

**"Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem."**

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So, this is the prevailing atmosphere as we enter Chapter 12.

V 1 **"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead."**

This would be Jesus' fourth and last Passover during His public ministry. He had arrived six days early, but had not entered the Holy city.

No, He was visiting old friends in Bethany, and, again, it would be for the last time.

V 2-3 **"There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3: Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed**

the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet  
with her hair: and the house was filled  
with the odour of the ointment."

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This little family scene aptly illustrates  
the three aspects of a well-balanced  
Christian life:

Martha speaks of service.

Lazarus represents fellowship.

And Mary pictures adoration.

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Certainly, service is important.

In fact, James tells us, "**faith without  
works is dead.**"

However, service shouldn't be all-consuming.  
Let me illustrate by using the example of  
marriage.

Ideally, a man and woman get married because they love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives together.

Love and fellowship, that's what it's all about.

However, because of the demands of this life, service can sometimes become all-consuming.

The wife cooks, sews, maintains the house, and often works outside the home.

The husband has a job, maybe two jobs, or is required to work shifts.

I've heard it said that shift work makes it possible for one parent to be with the children at all times, but what about the parents?

Oh, I know we have to earn a living, but wasn't the real purpose of marriage *togetherness*?



A balance must be found, or the marriage  
will suffer.

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And the anti-type is just the same.

Our service for Christ must be balanced by  
fellowship and adoration.

I'm certain it was with a loving heart that  
Martha served Jesus.

However, when her actions forced a  
comparison between herself and her  
sister, Jesus had to tell her "--- **one  
thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen  
that good part.**"

Certainly, service is important, but it  
shouldn't crowd out our adoration and  
fellowship.

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And Lazarus teaches us the value of  
fellowship.

**"Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him".**

They ate, and they talked.

And I'm sure, after his strange experience, Lazarus had a lot to talk about.

Jesus talks to us in His word, and we can talk to Him in prayer.

And besides that, we should cultivate an awareness of His presence throughout the day.

And then there's a type of fellowship that requires no conversation at all.

As often happens in a good marriage, a type of togetherness develops as we experience good times and bad *together* --- **"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made**

**conformable unto his death."**

Philippians 3:10

Certainly, Lazarus knew all about **"the fellowship of his sufferings,"** and, of course, he had experienced **"the power of his resurrection."**

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And then there was Mary.

Her life demonstrates adoration.

And adoration is important.

After all, Jesus is the Son of God.

She sat at His feet, and she listened to His every word, and on that particular day, her adoration was poured out in sacrifice.

V 3-6 **"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled**

with the odour of the ointment.

4: Then saith one of his disciples,  
Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which  
should betray him,

5: Why was not this ointment sold for  
three hundred pence, and given to the  
poor?

6: This he said, not that he cared for  
the poor; but because he was a thief,  
and had the bag, and bare what was put  
therein."

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Even more than His disciples, Mary had  
listened to and believed Jesus' words.  
And not only had she identified a particular  
need, she supplied that need with what  
was probably her most precious  
possession.

A pence was equivalent to one day's wages  
for an average labourer, so 300 pence  
would be no small sum.

Certainly, the family must have been fairly  
well to do, for they had been able to  
afford a family sepulchre.

Nevertheless, a gift of this magnitude  
clearly showed the extent of Mary's  
devotion.

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But that wasn't the way Judas saw it.  
All he could think about was easy money  
slipping away.

Certainly, his opinion was greatly  
influenced by the fact that he was a  
thief.

But that wasn't his only sin.

Romans 14:4 asks the question, **"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."**

And we can all fall into this kind of a sin. Certainly this man's covetousness was very evil.

But surprisingly, it was his uncharitable evaluation of Mary's service that angered the Lord.

V 7-8 **"--- Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.**

**8: For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."**

I don't know of any gentle way of saying,

**"Let her alone."**

No, there is no doubt in my mind that Jesus was angry.

And then He defended her actions ---

**"against the day of my burying hath she kept this."**

No, there was nothing foolish or extravagant in Mary's gift.

Mary knew exactly what she was doing, and Jesus appreciated her loving sacrifice.

Why was Mary the only one that understood the need?

It was simply because she listened, really *listened*.

On more than one occasion, Jesus had clearly told His disciples about His upcoming death.

However, they refused to hear Him --- **"Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."**

But Mary believed every word He said without question, and she acted upon her belief

**---"against the day of my burying hath she kept this."**

No, you won't find this Mary among the other Marys as they headed for the sepulchre bearing sweet spices.

She had already done her part.

And there's something else we can learn from Mary's experience.

True devotion for Jesus is never wasted no matter what the cost, and, at least, as far as Jesus is concerned, it is never misunderstood.

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V 9-11 **"Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.**

**10: But the chief priests consulted**



**that they might put Lazarus also to death;**

**11: Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."**

Lazarus was exhibit "A".

In fact, he was so much so that they had even considered destroying the evidence!

Yes, Lazarus was a thorn in their flesh.

I'm sure he was well known both in Bethany and Jerusalem, and certainly a lot of people had attended his funeral.

Now, that same old friendly fellow was back among them.

When you met him in the marketplace, you were glad to see him, but there was always that funny feeling.

It wasn't anything he said. It was just who  
he was.

Yes, Lazarus was a living testimony to the  
power of Jesus Christ which simply  
wouldn't go away.

And **"by reason of him many of the Jews went  
away, and believed on Jesus."**