

**Sermon Series: “The Good News for Life”**  
***The Great Miracle: Aftermath of Whistleblowers, Soothsayers, and Informers”***  
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**Sunday, September 27, 2020**

It is always interesting to see what happens after an event of major consequence occurs. E.g., after the December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor attack our nation went from many protesting against our becoming involved in the war to almost completely united in being behind the war effort. E.g., after 9/11 our nation became largely united and hailed the police, firemen, and emergency first responders as heroes, and church attendance increased in our nation. But this is true not only negative events, but also positive events of significance. E.g., when the Saints won the Super Bowl there was a parade in downtown New Orleans where people were standing along the route several people thick, the city was united across races, religions, and social-economic status. It is interesting to see what is the immediate aftermath from a significant event. We will see a somewhat unexpected aftermath after Jesus’ great miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. READ John 11:45-57 (pp. 105-106)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead by dramatically calling Lazarus out of his tomb. Jesus tells the people to unwrap him and let him go, much to the delight of his sisters!

READ vv 45-46. “The response to Jesus’s great miracle is mixed: those who believe in Jesus and those who were bothered/irritated by Him and acted as whistleblowers on what Jesus had done.” You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. That is the way it is sometimes today. You can bring people, friends to an event to hear the gospel— like a retreat, gospel concert, a debate where the Christian faith is defended— and some will respond positively and others quite negatively. This can happen in families. Have you ever seen that? E.g., I recall watching a debate between a Christian and an atheist where the Christian presented a very solid, convincing case for the gospel, but the person watching it with me who did not believe in Christ remained in his unbelief. E.g., I recall reading about a man in the Air Force in 2014 who had a dry erase board on his door outside his dorm room, and he wrote a Bible verse on it, Galatians 2:20,, and it got him in trouble. People told an attorney for a group for separation of God in the military, and this attorney got superiors in the military to take the Scripture verse down, which he did. But attorney also wanted the man punished, but the military would not do that, thankfully. Well, Jesus has just done an amazing miracle, and it has turned some people’s hearts to believe in Him, but it did the opposite in others’ hearts, and they turned into whistleblowers to get Jesus in trouble.

READ vv 47-53. “Ironically, the Jewish religious leaders in the Sanhedrin were alarmed at— not blessed by— the news of what Jesus had done, and the high priest Caiaphas unintentionally acted as a soothsayer predicting the huge significance of Jesus’ death. Cf. 1:12-13; 10:16.” What exactly was the Sanhedrin? In the Mishnah, “Sanhedrin” 1:6 it says, “The great sanhedrin was [made up of] seventy-one members, and the small one [was made up of] twenty-

three.” This number of 71 comes from Numbers 11:16, where the Lord says to Moses to gather up for Him 70 elders of Israel and in 11:25 the Lord took some of His Spirit and put it on the 70. There are many questions on what the Sanhedrin in Jesus’ day was like, and questions about the two Sanhedrins in the Mishnah (rabbinic literature). The mainstream scholarly view seems to be that there was only one Sanhedrin in charge of administrative, judicial, and interpretation of the Jewish law, and this body was made up of mostly Sadducees— who were aristocrats— but also Pharisees and scribes; cf. Acts 23:6-10. A smaller delegation of 10 of the Sanhedrin plus the high priest Ismael was made to Nero (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.194-194). The Sadducees, according to Josephus (*War* 2.166) had a reputation for being rude— “barbarous”— with one another, and we see this with Caiaphas here. What is alarming about the alarm of the high priest here is threefold. First, the rudeness of a religious leader, which we see here. Have you ever seen a religious leader be rude? E.g., I recall prominent pastor who was known as a great, awesome administrator, a very hard worker, but carried an arrogance about him when I spoke with him once on covenant marriage which was offered in Louisiana which made it more difficult to get a divorce (one had to go through counseling, etc.). It seemed hard to believe that this type of attitude could be in a man recognized as such a great religious leader. Second, what is also alarming is that Caiaphas and his ilk reject Jesus after such a great miracle. It is as though there is *nothing* Jesus can do that will get their praise. E.g., I recall a Democrat was being interviewed recently about President Trump’s being considered for the Nobel Peace Prize for helping orchestrate two Middle Eastern countries, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, to recognize Israel, and the Democrat refused to say anything good about President Trump. E.g., I recall a similar situation where someone could not think of anything good to say about former President Obama— like the killing of Osama bin Laden. I am not at all saying Trump and Obama are like Jesus, but that we can relate somewhat to

someone who has such visceral hatred for another that the person cannot say anything good about the person. It is that visceral hatred Jesus is encountering. The third thing alarming here is that Caiaphas speaks about how pragmatic it is for one man to die instead of the whole nation destroyed. Caiaphas speaks of Jesus as a kind of sacrifice for the nation, and the Fourth Evangelist agrees— Jesus dies to bring in the children of God. READ 1:12-13. Jesus takes our place on the cross so we can go free. E.g., I recall that in 1986 there was the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster happened in the Soviet Union and a young man named Mykola Melnyk offered to fly the helicopter above the spill in a clean-up operation which involved 46 sorties and 52 hours of exposure to radiation, knowing full well his health would be damaged. He became a hero as a result of his selfless actions. Eight years later he had two surgeries related to this radiation exposure, and died in 2013 at the relatively young age of 60. He sacrificed himself for others to keep others safe. Jesus acts on our behalf in a similar way, and oddly Caiaphas is a soothsayer in his words!

READ vv 54-57. “The religious leaders gave out the command during Passover that turned the crowd into informers instead of disciples, and thus Jesus could not openly interact with people. Cf. Mark 1:43-45; John 7:32.” Jesus had another encounter with not being able to interact with people— in Mark 1:43-45 after word got out that He had healed lepers. But this time it is not because Jesus is so popular, but just the opposite— He is despised and sought for arrest, as in John 7:32. So Jesus stays away while the celebration is about to begin for Passover. E.g., I recall reading that in Communist countries it is not unusual to have spies sitting in on the worship services who are informers to the government to let the officials know what the pastor said and who was there in attendance. In a similar way, the religious leaders are seeking informers.

“On whom is our faith based?” Imagine yourself as one of the Jewish bystanders who has seen Lazarus raised from the dead, but you also hear about the

religious leaders warning against Jesus. On whom would you place your faith? Fast forward two millennia to today. There are many who would like for us to place our faith in them— religious leaders and political leaders who are not following biblical Christianity. But Jesus is the only one worthy of us trusting. Following this Jesus may mean we one day have whistleblowers out to get us, soothsayers who predict dire things about us, informers who talk behind our backs. Jesus knew what that was like. But we are to keep our eyes on Him, seek to please Him, build the foundation and hope of our lives on Him. He will one day call all His children home as one.