

**<sup>55</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for testimony against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they did not find any. <sup>56</sup> Many testified falsely against him, but their testimonies did not agree. <sup>57</sup> Some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: <sup>58</sup> “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.’” <sup>59</sup> Yet even on this point, their testimony did not agree.**

**<sup>60</sup> The high priest stepped forward and questioned Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is this they are testifying against you?”**

**<sup>61</sup> But Jesus was silent and did not answer anything.**

**Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?”**

**<sup>62</sup> “I am,” Jesus said. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.”**

**<sup>63</sup> The high priest tore his robes and said, “Why do we need any more witnesses? <sup>64</sup> You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?”**

**They all condemned him as being worthy of death. <sup>65</sup> Then some began to spit on him. They covered his face and struck him with their fists, saying, “Prophecy!” The guards also took him and beat him. (EHV)**

Theme: Hands of Hypocrisy—Caiaphas

How frustrated are you with politicians? Most of us probably are to one extent or another—one of the biggest complaints about politicians is that some of them are hypocrites. They say one thing but do another. They talk about morals but are more corrupt than most. During their campaigns they say all the right things to get themselves elected, but quickly go back on their word as soon as they take office.

Being the High Priest at the time of Jesus was a political position. In the Old Testament times it was a spiritual, established by God. High Priests had to be descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, and when someone was anointed to be the High Priest, he remained in that position for life.

But by the time of Jesus, however, the Romans appointed the High Priest—and they did so for political purposes. They still chose descendants of Aaron, but they no longer held the position for life. Annas, whom Jesus was first taken to, served as High Priest from AD 6-15. After the Romans deposed him, five of his children, a grandchild, and Caiaphas his son-in-law served as the High Priest. Annas, the was oldest and most prominent member of that family, and so many Jews still considered him the High Priest, but it was Caiaphas who held the title and all the power.

The High Priest was supposed to be the spiritual leader of the people of Israel, but he was anything but. On the outside he seemed to be so, but he was really more concerned about keeping peace between the Jews and the Romans, not wanting anything or anyone including Jesus, to threaten his position.

Not only was the position of High Priest political, but so was Jesus' trial. Caiaphas had earlier said that was better for one man to die for the people. Caiaphas thought it was better to put Jesus to death than for there to be an insurrection, which would force the Romans to put many people to death. For years Jewish leaders looked for a way to put Jesus to death. With Judas agreeing to betray him, they had the opportunity. So they had him arrested under false pretenses and under the cover of darkness.

After being questioned by Annas first, Jesus was led to Caiaphas, who probably lived in a different quarters of the same palace. There the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council convened at the High Priest's house—not their normal meeting place in public at the temple. Not only was this deceptive, but the entire trial was illegal. According to Jewish law, there had to be two separate trials, held on separate days, in the daylight. To hold a trial while it was dark was clearly against the law, but certain rules had to be ignored, Jesus had to be dealt with while the fire was hot. So you have an illegal trial, that was really no trial at all! It was all a sham. Caiaphas, the High Priest and judge had already decided the outcome. Jesus had to be put to death, they just needed to figure out an excuse why.

So they paraded witnesses in front of Sanhedrin, one right after another, who broke the eighth commandment by giving false testimony against Jesus. You'd think that if you would coordinate an attack on someone in a court of law, you'd have your stories straight—but they couldn't. Finally, two men got together and said that Jesus claimed that he was going to tear down the temple and build it up again in three days. This is a reference to our Gospel this past week from John 2, which Jesus had said three years prior. And John makes it perfectly clear that Jesus was referring to the temple of body. But even with this accusation, the witnesses didn't agree. You'd think that this was prick the conscience of Caiaphas. He knew it was illegal what he was doing, he knew the false testimony he promoted; but he ignored his conscience, suppressed what he knew to be true and doubled down.

The judge, now became the prosecutor. Upset that Jesus wasn't responding, he attacked Jesus himself. After putting Jesus under oath, he asked Jesus, **Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?** Jesus rarely used the word Christ to refer to himself—it was too political, many thought that the Messiah would defeat the Romans and set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem. But Jesus also didn't deny it—as he did here and when Peter confessed, **you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.**

But then Jesus continued, **And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.** Jesus' favorite name for himself was the Son of Man. This is a reference to Daniel 7, where he is given a vision of heaven and in that vision he sees God, the "Ancient of Days," on his throne surrounded by saints and angels. Then Daniel writes, **I kept watching the night visions, and there, in the clouds of heaven, I saw one like a son of man coming. He came to the Ancient of Days, and he was brought before him. To him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom. All peoples, nations, and languages will worship him. His dominion is an eternal dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.** This Son of Man was given divine power and honor. He was worshiped by all, and he rules over an eternal kingdom! This Son of Man is God!

So the name, Son of Man was perfect for Jesus. By this name Jesus is referring to his dual nature—he is fully man and fully God at the same time. And everyone there understood full-well what Jesus was saying.

And so, Caiaphas tore his robes and accused Jesus of blasphemy. According to Leviticus 10, it was against God's commands for a High Priest to tear his robes. But Caiaphas went for a showy breach of etiquette to show how outraged he was. Now, to be sure, if Jesus was lying then he was blaspheming, or disrespecting or despising God. According to Jewish law he should have been put to death—stoned to death. But if Caiaphas was the spiritual leader that he claimed to be, he would have listened to Jesus, compared him to the prophecies about him and realized that Jesus is exactly what he said about himself! But Caiaphas was a hypocrite and didn't really care about the truth.

And he wasn't really outraged. He was jumping for joy inside. Jesus incriminated himself—at least in the eyes of the unbelieving Sanhedrin. The false witnesses failed to do their job, but Jesus did their job for him and now they had something to accuse Jesus of. And everyone there

agreed that Jesus was worthy of death.

No one likes a hypocrite like Caiaphas. But far too often we too are hypocritical. We look down on others for sinning against the Lord, all while having a big plank sticking out of our own eye. We cast glances at those who are living with each other outside of marriage, while ignoring our sins of gossip. We look down upon those who don't attend worship services that often, while telling yourself, "So what, if I have a habit of drinking too much, at least I go to church." How often do you pretend to be someone you're not, hiding who you truly are so people wouldn't look down upon you? The thing about hypocrites is that we often act that way because we are so concerned about the way others look at us.

Jesus, he didn't really care what Caiaphas thought about him. Did you notice how silent Jesus was—how when he was being falsely accused, he simply sat there instead of vehemently defending himself? And then he confessed who he was freely, knowing how Caiaphas would react and that it would lead to his death.

Jesus wanted it all to happen this way—The Son of Man, who rules over his entire creation, let it happen because he knew that he had to go to the cross in order to take our place. He stood before the court, not for his own actions, but for ours. He lived a perfect life, not once sinning against the Lord, no hypocritical bone could be found in his body.; and even though he had done no wrong (as his trial proved) he was sentenced to death. It had to happen so that Jesus could give us his perfect life as he took our sins, including all the times we've been hypocritical, upon himself.

Jesus' words about coming back on the clouds of heaven, reminds us of the Last Day when the Lord will return to judge the living and the dead. It's a call to repentance. Of course, Caiaphas didn't repent—that's the thing about hypocrites, they don't think they have any sins to repent of. And even though we are all hypocrites at times, what separates us from people like Caiaphas? The Lord leads us to repentance. We think of his words recorded in 1 John 1, **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** We realize that we have no reason to hide our sins, no reason to deny who we truly are. For those who repent—who turn away from their sins, the Lord fully and freely forgives! And in Christ, we are considered pure, holy, and righteous. And since Jesus makes righteous in the eyes of God, how we look in the eyes of other people ceases to be important. In fact, it becomes completely irrelevant. Amen.

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his own blood, Jesus Christ our Lord—to him be the glory and the power forever. Amen.*