

John 11:45-57 | “This is Getting Intense”

Please turn in your Bibles to John 11, and we will be in verses 45 through 57 today.

Let's continue our study in the Gospel of John, as we finish out chapter 11. *[pause]*

Have you ever been in an intense situation?

You know, the kind of situation, where in your mind you're thinking, “OK, this is getting intense.”

Usually it involves people, groups, or nations who are angry at each other.

Not long ago, our nation faced an intense situation with the Iranians, in fact, you could make the argument that it's still tense.

Maybe you have experienced an intense situation at the workplace, where you and another person aren't getting along.

Or you can feel the tension between two co-workers, as soon as you walk in the room.

Maybe your intense situation came in your family or in a friendship.

Or maybe you weren't involved at all - you were simply a bystander.

A man at the grocery store is yelling at the cashier, and it doesn't sound like things are going to calm down anytime soon. *[pause]*

A major mark of an intense situation is escalation.

So things were relatively OK, but all of a sudden the intensity has really escalated.

What started out as a disagreement, turned into a yelling match, which turned into a situation that was on the edge of getting physical. *[pause]*

Well this morning, we will study a passage that could definitely be called “an intense situation”.

Things are escalating between Jesus and the Jewish leaders.

What started out as the Jewish leaders questioning him, turned into them debating him, which turned into persecuting him, and then seeking to arrest and kill him.

But now in our passage, an official decision is made by the leaders to kill him.

There are even orders that anyone who knew where he was, was to report it.

I'd say things are getting pretty intense. *[pauseeee]*

So what does a miracle, a murder plot, and a prophecy have to do with each other?

At first hearing, nothing.

But they are all in our story for this morning, so let's see what our passage shows us...there are...

I. Two reactions to the same miracle (45-46)

READ PASSAGE.

Isn't it interesting that people can often have two different reactions to the same event?

Let's take shopping.

A wife and her husband have to take a shopping trip.

The wife is ecstatic, she can't wait to spend her day shopping at all the different stores.

But the husband is dreading the trip.

He can't wait to go and get it over with. *[pause]*

Or let's take a roller coaster.

A 10 year old and a 17 year old boy both ride a roller coaster.

The 10 year old gets off and says it was the best thing ever, the 17 year old gets off and says to his friend, "Dude, that was so boring."

Same event, different reactions.

That's the sort of thing we find in verses 45 and 46.

Jesus has just done an amazing, astonishing miracle - he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead for 4 days.

You would think that this would be the miracle that makes everyone believe that he is truly the Messiah.

I mean, if you can take someone dead and make them alive, isn't that enough proof?

But that's not what you find with this crowd of people who witnessed the miracle.

Many believe because of what he did, yet there's a group that goes and reports the miracle to the Pharisees.

So it's implied that this group didn't believe and it seems as though they have malicious intent in reporting it to the Pharisees. *[pause]*

You would think that if a person saw *this* miracle, they would believe it.

But it goes to show that no miraculous sign can convince someone whose mind is made up.

If you are not open to the truth, then nothing will persuade you.

Because you will always find reasons not to believe what you saw. *[pause]*

If you have never believed in Jesus Christ, what sign will convince you that he is who he says he is?

What do you have to see or hear to believe?

Will it actually persuade you or will you keep doubting and wondering whether if it's a coincidence? *[pause]*

God's Word gives us the truth of what Jesus said and did.

He really did raise Lazarus from the dead, but will you believe it or remain in unbelief? *[pause]*

These two verses show us that belief isn't solely based on what we hear and see, it's a matter of the heart.

Both groups saw the same miracle, but some believed and others reported it.

No amount of good argumentation or miraculous sign can sway an unregenerate person.

Why? Because of the depth of our depravity, and only the grace of God can soften a heart of stone.

God must work in our hearts for us to respond correctly to Jesus. *[pause]*

So there were two reactions to the same miracle, but we also see...

II. Two reasons for the same proposal (47-52)

Have you ever proposed the same idea or course of action as someone else, but have completely opposite reasons for it?

Kinda like that moment where you say to someone, “We’re saying the same thing, but we have totally different reasons for it.”

Think about it at your job.

You may want someone to get promoted because he deserves it, and someone else may want them promoted, but it’s so that they can get their way once he or she gets the job.

Same idea, different motive.

Here’s another one that’s similar...

You think that someone needs to be fired because they have not been doing their job, but someone else wants them fired because they don’t like them or they simply want their position.

Again, same idea, way different reason.

That’s the sort of thing that happens here with God and the Jewish council. *[pause]*

After hearing the report of Jesus’ resurrecting miracle, the Pharisees gather the council together to figure out what to do.

This council is the Sanhedrin, who was the highest judicial court in the land.

They consisted of chief priests, who dominated the Sanhedrin, but also Pharisees, who were a powerful minority, and a third group, which was pretty small, who were elders.

So this group meets and they need to decide what to do about Jesus.

They are at a loss as to what to do because as they say, “this man performs many signs.”

Isn’t it interesting how they even admit that he was doing signs, yet they remain antagonistic towards him, instead of desiring to see the truth?

You would think that if they recognized he was doing signs, then they would at least reconsider their stance.

But that’s how sin works, it blinds us to what is right in front of us.

It blinds us to the truth. *[pause]*

They say, “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.”

Oh, wouldn’t it be nice if everyone did believe in him, as they were fearful of happening?

They understood his power and growing popularity.

And they were nervous that his popularity would get the Romans' attention and then they would come down on them with an iron fist.

The Romans would take away the nation's semi-independence, as well as the council's authority.

Do you see what this group really cared about? Themselves and their position of authority.

Notice how it's "our" place and "our" nation.

These verses show us that they didn't care about the truth, but their power.

And that's sin for you...

Sin leads people to care about power and control, while neglecting the truth.

Sin causes people to take drastic and unthinkable measures to keep their power.

All you have to do is look throughout history and you see this reality.

Look at the corruption at the highest levels of government.

Look at bribes, murder, and behind the scenes, shady deals.

This isn't new; this is sin rearing its ugly head in people's lives to keep position and control.

[pause]

Yet as you consider the principle here and relate it to our lives - it reminds us of how we like to protect our own little kingdoms and positions.

"God, you can take away anything, just not my hunting or sports."

"God, don't touch my status and reputation at my workplace."

"Lord, you can have my time on Sunday morning from 10:45 to noon, but any other time is mine."

We tend to act like the council and get upset when God's plans threaten to knock down our kingdoms, that we think are ours.

May God break down our pride and show us that it's his kingdom that matters, and it's his position as Lord that cannot be touched. *[pauseeee]*

But also notice how *fear* can lead people away from belief in Jesus.

They were so fearful of the Romans that they missed who was at work right in front of their eyes.
[pauseeee]

May this never be said of us!

May we never be so fearful that we miss the opportunity to trust the One who is working in our lives!
[pauseeee]

What fears are hindering your trust in Christ?

Maybe you're thinking: 'If I show more devotion to Jesus, my co-workers are going to make fun of me non-stop.'

You're fear of losing your reputation stymies your devotion to Christ. *[pause]*

'If I trust God more with my money, then I won't feel as in control of it and something bad could happen.'

You're fear of losing control of your money, hampers your trust in the Lord.

Don't let your fear get in the way of your faith.

For as we see ever-so-clearly with this council - their fear led not only to hindered belief, but obstinate, aggressive unbelief. *[pauseeee]*

So there's all this commotion in the council over Jesus and then someone speaks up.

It's the high priest at that time, Caiaphas, who speaks up and tells them that they don't know anything, which was kind of a slap in the face.

And his proposal is that it's better for one man to die than for the nation to perish.

And the writer, John, brings out that this was a prophecy about what would happen with Jesus.
[pause]

Now isn't that fascinating!

Someone utterly wicked just prophesied for the Lord about Jesus' substitutionary death.

He prophesied without even knowing it! *[pause]*

You see, Caiaphas and God had the same proposal: "one man to die for the people", but they had totally different reasons. *[pause]*

The fact that Caiaphas prophesied here, even though he had a sinful intent, is actually good news.

It shows us that God uses even the most wicked of people with the most wicked of intentions to accomplish his will.

“You know what Caiaphas, you may think you are being wise and knowledgeable in your idea, but you are simply speaking for God, without realizing it.”

This is a prime example of what Joseph said to his brothers, “you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.” *[pause]*

As Christians, this should encourage us.

Even the most evil actions, ideas, and words can be used by God for great, great good.

So we don't despair, as though wicked men have the last word, but we have hope, for our God's Word always comes to pass.

You have no idea how a seemingly sinister situation can be worked for God's glory.

The council was hatching their diabolical plan, but little did they know, they were aiding God in his grand, redemptive plan to save people from every tribe and tongue.

And all we can say is, “To God be the glory.” *[pauseee]*

The high priest's evil reasoning is this...

If we kill Jesus, then there's no more possibility of Roman attention, and therefore no threat of losing anything that we have.

And God's righteous reason is that Jesus would die, taking our place, so that we could live.

And not only this, but he points out that Jesus would gather into one the children of God, that is, he would create the church. *[pause]*

The council is saying, “Let him die for us!”

And that's exactly what they and we needed, but for a totally different reason than they were thinking.

Caiaphas unwittingly shared the central message of the Cross: substitution.

He was proposing an evil murder plot, but he was also prophesying about the best news in the world. *[pauseee]*

Because we are all sinners, we deserve eternal condemnation since we sinned against a holy God.

So that's why we needed a substitute to take our place.

And that's where Jesus comes in - the perfect, spotless Lamb of God, who was sacrificed in our stead. *[pause]*

Caiaphas was right: either Jesus dies for us, or we all die.

And because he died for us, then we get to live. *[pause]*

As we learned last week, though we die physically, yet shall we live because we have believed in him.

Instead of us all dying the death we deserved, he sent His Son to be our substitute, so that he would die *for us*.

Thanks be to God, who provided a way for us to be saved! *[pause]*

Their thinking was: "What are we going to do?!...Let him die for us!"

And God was like, "Yep, that's exactly what's going to happen, but not in the way your intending it." *[pause]*

Praise be to God, whose intentions and plans triumph over ours!

Because if ours were allowed to win, we would be in big trouble. *[pauseeee]*

So there were two reasons for the same proposal, and thirdly, there are...

III. Two responses to the same situation (53-57)

Go back in your mind to that illustration I gave briefly about the intense situation of the man yelling at the cashier.

In that escalating circumstance, both the man and the cashier are involved in it, but they respond differently.

The man grows in his anger and frustration, but the cashier gets more and more timid and scared.

That's the sort of thing happening here at the end of the passage.

Of course, Jesus isn't getting timid and scared, but he does respond differently than the Jewish leaders. *[pause]*

The incident is, as we have learned, Jesus' growing popularity after he miraculously raised Lazarus from the dead, and many people believe in him.

We also find that the Passover is at hand.

Many Jews are going up to Jerusalem before Passover so that they can purify themselves.

This was done for those who had become ceremonially unclean, so that they can partake in the Passover.

And these people are looking for and wondering if Jesus would show up, since there was an order given to let the chief priests and Pharisees know where he was. *[pauseee]*

So just imagine the atmosphere in the city at this point.

There seems to be an arrest warrant out for Jesus, most people know about it, and the celebration of the Passover would likely bring Christ to the city.

So everyone is on edge, thinking, “Is he coming? If so, when? And what’s going to happen when they meet?”

As you can see, the Jewish leaders response is to try to arrest and kill Christ.

They are extremely determined to get rid of this “quote on quote” nuisance.

They are on full alert, looking out for Jesus, and using the people to aid them in knowing his location.

This is anger, fear, opposition, and unbelief all combining in an attempt to exterminate the threat of Jesus Christ. *[pause]*

If you didn’t know the rest of the Gospel of John, you might be thinking, “Well, this is the end for Jesus.”

“The leaders of Jerusalem have issued an official order to arrest and kill him, it’s over as they’ll find him right away.”

But that’s not how it goes down *at this point*.

Because Jesus’ response to this situation is to withdraw.

Verse 54 tells us that he no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went to Ephraim and stayed with his disciples.

Somehow Christ found out about the council’s decision and decides to move away from the possibility of being caught. *[pause]*

That leads us to the question of, “Why?”

Why did Jesus withdraw when we know that he will eventually be arrested and killed?

Was he scared?

No, he wasn't scared, intimidated, or startled by this news...

...It simply wasn't time.

Jesus could not go against the Father's will and be arrested too early.

The Father's good, precise plan must be followed.

So if that means withdrawing, then he must withdraw from the area - he must go into hiding for the time being. *[pause]*

The truth is, no court ruling would lead him to the Cross early.

Jesus submitted to God's plan and will perfectly.

He submitted to God's timing, no matter the cost. *[pause]*

Now we don't have a divine plan that takes us to the Cross like him, but we do know what God's revealed will is for us as we see it in Scripture.

So what if we strived to follow God's will no matter what, like Christ?

What if we followed what He wanted, even if it made us look bad to others?

What if we submitted our agendas and timing to His agenda and timing?

We would definitely have greater Kingdom impact than we have now.

Our faith would certainly grow deeper, as we learn to trust him more.

So trust His control.

Trust His timing when you want something to happen immediately.

Because in the end, we understand that He has the control and His timing is always right.
[pauseeee]

God's good purposes can't be thwarted by anyone.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, can prevent God's purposes and plans from happening.

No amount of anger, evil scheming, worldly wisdom and knowledge, or human power can alter what God plans to do. *[pause]*

Throughout this passage, it looked pretty dark as Jewish leadership concocted a murder plot to extinguish the Savior.

Their plan was initiated and the orders went out to the people to be on the lookout...

...But little did they know, behind-the-scenes, God was at work working his plan to perfection.

They thought their idea was wise (to let one man die for the people), but they didn't realize that that was already God's idea from the beginning.

And they were simply the ones who would eventually carry it out for him. *[pause]*

What they meant for evil, God would mean for the good of the world. *[pauseeee]*

Intense situations aren't enjoyable, but intense situations never get the best of God for His purposes cannot be thwarted. *[pause]*

So how do you view intense moments? With confidence in God or fear and trepidation? *[pause]*

This passage shows us that God is still at work and in control in the most extreme scenarios.

And His greatness, glory, and power are often most evident in the most intense of times.

For one of the most intense moments was the Cross of Christ, where the Son of God was brutally killed, even though he committed no sin.

But that's because he took *our* sin upon himself - he became our substitute, taking and appeasing the wrath of God for *our* sin.

This is the Gospel! One man died for us, and his name was Jesus.

But he also rose from the grave, conquering sin and death. *[pause]*

So the statement that we make is not like the Council, who said, "Let him die for us!"

But we tell the world that He has *already* died for us, and he did it voluntarily, and out of great love for sinners like me and like you.

So now everyone who believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Will you trust what Christ did, if you haven't done so already?

And for those who have, will you remember that God's purposes cannot be thwarted by anyone.

No matter what the situation looks like, we know that His promises, purposes, and plans will be fulfilled.

Be encouraged, there is good yet to come for those who believe in His name.