

John 11:45-57 Sermon by Paul Hudson- One For All. 11/20/22

Good morning! Last week we returned to the series on John and if you are following along, we switched this week's passage with last week, so we will back up from chapter 12 and look at John 11:45-57 this morning. To refresh what happened leading up to this point- Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead, and this, along with his claims of being the Son of God and the Messiah had stirred up an already boiling pot. So, there is a great tension among the leaders along with a great expectation among the people swelling up at this point as Jesus continues revealing his purpose for coming.

So, let's start with the Word this morning, John 11:45-57- the Word of the Lord to you and me: **(John 11:45-57)**

There are three truths for application I want to bring to you this morning, one is a challenge to you, the other two are encouragements that can have a profound effect on your life if you accept them. I will just lay them out before you right now and then we'll go through the Scripture and talk about it more.

The first one is a loving challenge to you about self-preservation— and believe me, this challenge goes to me just as much to each of you.

The second is an encouragement to you about Jesus' sacrifice to preserve your life.

The third truth is about the diverse yet unified community that Jesus created for you and I to flourish in— that community is called his church- his people gathered together. It's a community that he has filled with purpose in a variety of forms, I want to share a little bit about this morning.

Coming into this story, Lazarus had just been raised, and many Jews started to believe in Jesus, but the skeptical ones went to the Pharisees. So the Pharisees called a meeting with the Sanhedrin— the Sanhedrin was like the Supreme Court of the Jews. Under Roman rule, the Jews were allowed to govern themselves with the Sanhedrin as their appointed rulers. They had considerable power, but not enough to execute someone. This meeting shows the real motive behind their push to kill Jesus and make

him a spectacle on the cross for all to see: v. 47 - the Sanhedrin met together and they asked:

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many signs. ⁴⁸If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

Jesus was a threat to them, and he was gaining a huge following that was more than the Sanhedrin could handle, all of their attempts to stop him were futile— they saw him as a rising challenge to their rule and their livelihood, especially because he was claiming to be the Messiah. They realized that their incompetence in repelling this challenge to their self-governing rule would force the Romans, who were the real rulers of the land, to come in full force and take away their self-government. Then the whole nation would dissolve because a king was something the Romans would not allow. Now it is important to see that **the Sanhedrin were more concerned about their self-preservation than whether Jesus was truly the Messiah.**

Alright, I want to hit the pause button right there and bring a challenge to us here- this is the first point for application for us this morning. Here these high-ranking leaders were faced with a choice... they could sacrifice their high standing, their own self-rule, their hard-earned place in this world and follow Jesus, or they could seek to preserve all of that and rid their lives of Jesus. They chose self-preservation and they ended up losing everything anyways when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70AD.

Here is my challenge to you and myself, and I ask this lovingly... **do you sacrifice following Jesus to preserve your own place in this world? Does your status, your office, your place, the image you want to project to the world stand between you and Jesus?** Think about this carefully.

I know in our culture today it is very difficult to let people know that you follow Jesus. In many places, it is too controversial or even considered insensitive or intolerant to talk about Jesus- we live in a post-Christian culture that disfavors traditional Christian values. A lot of us are afraid of what might happen to the relationships we worked so hard for if we brought Jesus into it. We're afraid that we could lose our reputation, maybe even our jobs or that highly sought-after position of respect if they (management, co-workers) knew of the values and beliefs we have as Christians.

This is very difficult because we're talking about our livelihood, our reputation, position of influence, our projected self-image- how we want people to perceive us. My friends, remember that all that you have been given is truly a gift from God, and he will show you how you can respond to this challenge. **John 12:25-26, in the very next chapter, Jesus said, "anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me."** Those look like hard words, but here is the truth: everything we are looking for is right there where Jesus is. God is gracious enough to let you take steps toward realizing the wonderful beauty of his rule in your life. So don't be afraid to begin pulling down those areas of self-preservation in your life and start placing Jesus there instead.

— I want to challenge each of you to **think of one place in your life right now where you have pushed Jesus out, where you've X'd out his rule, and right now, ask him to come rule in that place—take out the X and put the cross there—** proclaim right now that he is the king in that place and that you submit to him as his servant— say that out loud and say it every day— in fact I invite you to say that with me right now— **"Jesus you are king of my whole life, and I will serve you everywhere I go."** Say that every day and look for ways to be a servant to Jesus in that place. It could be a place in your mind, or your body, or a physical place you go to everyday, or even a place you shouldn't go to. Put the cross in that place and follow Jesus. Don't be afraid, trust him, give your whole life to Jesus and you will find he is with you, he will lead you, and you will receive Father God's honor, the highest honor to be received, just as Jesus said. Amen?

Now let's look really quick at the rest of the Scripture and then I'll finish with the final two points of application. **(Display the scripture 11:49-50)** Back to verse 49, the high priest, Caiaphas—the presiding officer over the Sanhedrin— spoke to them in a very insulting tone— kind of like how our government officials talk to each other today— saying, "you guys don't know what you're talking about," — and in verse 50 he says something pretty astounding, considering this is Jesus he's talking about— he said, "don't you know it's better that one man die for the people than the whole nation die?" Actually, it was Caiaphas who didn't know what he was saying because he didn't say this thinking of Jesus as the Messiah, he said it thinking it was the only way to prevent the Romans from crushing them—

so his solution was to capture Jesus, present him to the Romans as an insurrectionist, and have him executed. Verse 51-52 the narrator, John, tells us that actually God was the one who spoke through Caiaphas about Jesus—vs. 51-52 are key passages for this morning and we'll get back to them in a moment.

So, continuing on, in v. 54, Jesus saw the growing threat of instability so he withdrew into the wilderness for a while. And as the Passover feast came, we can see the desperation of the religious leaders to find Jesus along with the expectation of the crowds to encounter Jesus— Now remember, the annual Passover feast drew throngs of people to Jerusalem- and **by this time, there was clearly a growing expectation for Jesus to show up and publicly announce his intention to take the throne as the king of the Jews.** We know that he did exactly that but not in the way that everyone was expecting. So, with these high expectations for the official arrival of the Messiah in Jerusalem, the high court issued an order, saying in verse 57, that if anyone sees Jesus, they must report it so that they might arrest him. So, there was an enormous amount of tension building on what Jesus was up to and what his purpose was in coming.

Now let's go back to the key verses, 51-52— Caiaphas said, "it's better that one man die for the people than for the nation to perish," John interprets for us the meaning of Caiaphas' words, saying:

He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 11:51–52.

So, I've already proposed a challenge to you about self-preservation, and here is the second truth for application that I want to encourage you with, that is— God has a preservation plan that is far better than any self-preservation plan we can come up with. The scattered children of God in this verse is you and I— all who are not Jewish. Because of Christ, all who were not considered God's people have been given a path to citizenship as God's people, so **2. we are included in God's preservation plan— this is part of the reason why Jesus came; He is God's preservation plan for humans.** He died that we might live.

Now I'm going to switch into theology mode for a minute— just a little bit! Verses 51-52 express the heart of the Christian faith, and that is what is called "atonement." **Atonement is simply the process of bringing two**

estranged parties back together, so they are “at-one” with each other; simply put, atonement is the healing of broken relationship between God and people. Associated with atonement in the Old Testament framework is sacrificial substitution through the shedding of blood— let me explain this a little bit— humanity’s disobedience to God unleashed the virus of evil upon the world, allowing it to cause all kinds of deadly chaos. Now the problem is, God is holy, and his holiness is such that it cannot be corrupted. The nature of evil is like a virus, it infects whatever it contacts, it brings death. But God’s holiness cannot be in the presence of evil, He exterminates evil on sight. We have been infected with the virus of evil, and there is only one vaccine available to eradicate evil— the blood of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is the ultimate, atoning sacrifice (**Rom. 3:25: “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith”**)— we receive the vaccine of the blood of Jesus through faith in Christ, and this allows us to come into a fully healed relationship with God. Christ is God’s preservation plan for humans and the world, and through his blood, we are healed and preserved for eternal life! Jesus substituted his life for ours. My friends, the reason why **Jesus asks for your life is so that he can take it, make it whole, and give it back to you.** Jesus takes our life to give it back to us. Will you respond to this truth by giving your whole life to Christ?

The final truth for application that I want to encourage you with comes because of Christ’s atonement for us—- Jesus did not die for us just so that we can have eternal life— he gave his life to bring us together in community and make us one. Listen to this- Jesus is creating the most amazing, beautiful, and diverse community. **3. He gave his life to preserve you and I, and to place us together in his community so that we will be one, to flourish and have purpose in this life**—- not just to help us get through life until we die— but to cause us to flourish with purpose. What is our purpose? I’m going to pull from the Westminster Shorter Catechism and echo that our chief end, our main purpose, is to glorify God and enjoy him forever— Jesus said that he came so that we would have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10)— Being in Christ is how we do this, and there are an infinite amount of ways that we accomplish God’s purposes through Christ in us.

The flourishing life is at its best when we join in the diverse community of God’s people as one in Christ for the purposes of glorifying God in this

world. Galatians 3:26 says, “in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... vs. 28 “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”- this speaks of the uniqueness and diversity of the body of Christ; 1 Cor. 12:4-6 says there are different forms of gifts, service, and working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. This speaks of the diverse forms that God will use through us for his purposes.

I want to share a few stories about what that means because this part about making us one can be a real problem if we don't understand how God makes us one, how he uses us to show his glory. **One of the most amazing things about God's flourishing community is that we are one in purpose but diverse in form**— God meant it to be that way, so let me share a few stories.

First, a little bit of my background: I grew up in the Assemblies of God church and went to a private Christian elementary school that was Pentecostal charismatic. Later, I went to a foursquare church— Pentecostal. Then I joined Youth With A Mission (YWAM) when I was 24. Now, YWAM is a very diverse missions organization with members from every denomination with every Christian belief imaginable. Coming into that organization my only church experience was Pentecostal charismatic—and everything else was suspicious to me— especially Presbyterians! Just kidding- they were all equally suspicious- Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist.... well in my experiences with YWAM, God started teaching me about the beauty of his people and the difference between purpose and form. I had connected form directly to purpose— and that, my friends, is not a good thing- that is how disunity is created. In YWAM I was exposed to many different ways of worship, prayer, teaching, preaching, evangelizing, and every time I encountered a form I wasn't used to I would think — this is odd— but then as I realized God was present through those forms with his purposes, I would think “huh... interesting... very interesting!”

In Montana I had the opportunity to be the worship leader at a small Calvary Chapel church in Kalispell. Now, I grew up listening to dynamic topical sermons from a screaming preacher that often referenced a small collection of verses in the Bible, and when I went to Calvary Chapel, well, the preacher always preached directly from the Bible, book by book, verse by verse, in very long mono-tone sermons. At first I thought, well this is odd, but then after a while I heard God's voice through him, and I thought,

“hmm... this is really interesting... very interesting!” If God’s purposes are accomplished, then the form is valid.

Then I moved to Thailand, and I wish I had the time to tell you all my stories— but I’ll just tell one- when I moved there I met Yam right away— well she invited me to her church where she was the worship leader, and this was a Thai Baptist church. So, she invited me to play guitar on the worship team and the band would lead worship for about 45 minutes on Sunday morning, the preacher would preach about 1 hour, then we would all have lunch together— this was a pretty large church— and after lunch we would meet together again for cell groups the rest of the afternoon, often into the evening- so Sunday church was an all-day affair. Well at first, I thought, “this is really odd....” but after a long while, I thought...” hmmm.... interesting... very interesting...” Through my time in Thailand, God gave me many more interesting experiences with his diverse church, and I realized it’s not about the forms, it’s about God’s purposes, and that’s what makes us one in Christ.

Last story, I came back to the US in 2015 and in 2016 I was hired at this church in Kirkland, Washington— now, despite all of my previous experiences with different denominations, I knew absolutely nothing about Presbyterians—so when I came here my first thought was... hmmm... this is really odd... but I want to tell you the truth it didn’t take long for me to say... interesting... very interesting! You know I think God gave me all those previous experiences so that I could be prepared to serve him here at this church with you and become one with you in our purpose to glorify God and enjoy him together. By the way, I am officially on the path to be ordained in ECO hopefully by this time next year.

I shared all those examples with you to just highlight both the diversity and the unity of God’s people accomplishing his purposes in a variety of forms. **We are one because God has made us one by his purposes, but we are diverse because God has called us to be diverse and unique in our forms**— If we flip that around and say that our forms are our purpose then we will fail because eventually forms fade away—- but God’s purposes remain. God brings us together and unites us in His calling and purpose through Jesus, and if you can accept this, his callings and purposes can be worked out through us in an infinite variety of forms. Church, **let us unify ourselves behind the purposes of Christ Jesus and**

allow him to inform us how we should carry out his mission in this community and world. When we are unified by God's purposes, then we are free to use forms according to the diversity of gifts that he has graciously given to us. I want to end with this: **Jesus died to bring you into his preservation plan, to take your life, heal your brokenness, and give it back to you with purpose, and to place you in his great family where you can flourish with others in every unique way.**