

## John - Part 37 - Sermon Manuscript - Who do we Trust?

Last weekend a young man emailed us through our church website asking for prayer. He's not from the area, but he saw on our website that we take prayer seriously. He's a believer, and at this point in his life he's struggling because he still hasn't found a godly woman that could be his future wife. So, he asked if we would pray about that.

I did pray for him, but I had to write back and tell him that I know exactly what that feels like because I went through the same thing years ago. Before I met Amanda, I remember those feelings of depression because of the rejection I had experienced.

I've heard those words: *It's not you, it's me.* I've even heard the more "Christianese" phrase: *I feel that God has someone better for you in mind.*

And to that I remember thinking: *Oh really, because He didn't tell me that!*

But the truth was, it seemed like God wasn't telling me anything. It seemed like He was silent on the whole issue of finding my future wife. But I think that was on purpose. God wanted me to learn what it means to trust Him.

After struggling with this for a long time, I finally gave it over to the Lord - and I mean, I really gave it over to Him. You know how when we say we're giving something over to the Lord, it's kind of like a New Year's Eve pledge - we're good for about 2 weeks and then we're right back into our slump!

But for me, this time I was legitimately ready to give it over to God. I remember reading in Philippians how Paul had learned to be content in all situations, and that he was only able to be content through the strength the Lord gave Him.

That's what I wanted... I wanted that kind of contentment in my life.

So, one night I prayed. I just laid out all my anxiety over finding the right person - I just gave it all to Him. And to my surprise, it wasn't long after that prayer that I met Amanda.

But even then it wasn't like we immediately started dating! I knew Amanda for almost a year before we started dating. And even then, it was another four years after we started dating that we got married.

And in all that, God taught me to trust His timing. And really, that's a continual lesson that He teaches me - but it's so key to living a life that follows after Jesus.

**In Luke 9:23, Jesus says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."**

Denying ourselves; carrying our cross daily; following Jesus... All of these things are wrapped up in continually learning what it means to trust God.

So, I have to ask:

**[Blank 1] How much do we really trust God?**

How much do we trust Him with our relationships? How about our finances? Our job? I know most of us know what it feels like to be looking for a job and not knowing what the future holds. How do we trust God in that?

How much do we trust God when something goes wrong or when we get some bad news? Do we really believe that Jesus is there with us, ready and willing to walk those dark valleys with us? Or, do we just try to fix things without even talking to God about it?

I want us all to think about this today (including myself):

**What does a sold-out trust in God look like in our lives right now?**

Today we're going to read about some religious leaders who would say they love God, but they didn't really put their trust in Him.

**[Blank 2]** So, go ahead and turn with me to John chapter 11, verse 45.

If you remember from last week's sermon, the passage we're about to read comes right after Jesus raised His friend Lazarus back from the dead. Let's look at how people reacted...

**John 11:45-47** - Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.

### **Couple things...**

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, many people came to believe in Jesus - which is great! But some of them didn't. And some of those who didn't believe went straight to a group of religious leaders called the Pharisees.

We've seen throughout John that the Pharisees have it out for Jesus. They've already tried to have Him killed. People knew this and some were so loyal to the Pharisees that they reported what Jesus did.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees called an unofficial meeting with a group known as the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin were like the Jewish Supreme Court. Larger cities had their own ruling Jewish councils, but the Sanhedrin was like the top tier.

They were located in Jerusalem, but their power could extend beyond Jerusalem into the Judean countryside. They were made up of 71 men - many of which were already religious leaders, chief priests, and even scribes.

These guys would judge Jewish crimes according to their own law which was separate from Roman law.

So, when the Pharisees heard that Jesus raised Lazarus back from the dead, they decided it was time to involve the Sanhedrin. Here's what they said...

**John 11:47-48** - "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. **[In other words, *What are we doing about this? The obvious answer is: Nothing!*** "Here is this man performing many signs. 48 If 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.”

It's interesting that they're not denying His miracles. They're afraid that if they allow Jesus to continue performing miracles, He's going to gain a greater and greater following, and eventually the people will make Him their conquering King that would take back their land that the Romans currently rule.

But the Romans would never allow that without a fight. And frankly, no matter how many Jews go to war against Rome, they wouldn't stand a chance!

The Sanhedrin is worried that if Jesus causes a Jewish uprising, they're going to lose their temple and their nation - in other words, they're afraid the Romans would wipe them all out!

But they're not just worried about their place of worship and their nation. The religious leaders were worried about losing their high social status.

### **Look at verse 48 again...**

If you can, circle or highlight the words: “our temple.” If your Bible doesn't say temple, it probably says something like: “our place,” or “our holy place,” or “our sanctuary.”

The Greek phrase here describes a *physical place* - which would be the Temple - but at the same time it uses this place to imply their *social status* - their “place” in Roman society.

Right now they enjoy a certain level of authority that the Romans allow them to have. But they know all of that will be gone if there's a Jewish uprising.

**John 11:49-50** - Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all! 50 You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”

Caiaphas was kind of like the president of the Sanhedrin. His position as the High Priest meant that he was the top dog. So like, if there was a vote among

the Sanhedrin and it turned out to be a tie, the High Priest would be the tie breaker.

So as the High Priest, Caiaphas speaks up and says: “*All of you have no clue what you’re talking about!*” He’s upset because in his mind there’s only one way to deal with someone like Jesus, and that’s to have him killed.

He reasons that it’s better for one man to die as a sacrifice for the people than for the whole nation to die at the hands of Roman soldiers.

Now, John takes a moment to give his readers some insight...

**John 11:51-53** - 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. 53 So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

John’s saying: *Caiaphas didn’t realize what he was saying, but he was actually explaining the gospel message of Jesus...*

That Jesus would die for both the Jews and the Gentiles. And we know that the gospel of Jesus is that everyone who puts their faith in Jesus will be saved and adopted into God’s forever family.

Through Jesus, believers will be brought together, united as one family under God. This is why Paul can say in Galatians 3:28...

**Galatians 3:28** - “**There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**”

So, from the perspective of the religious leaders, it’s at this moment in history that the decision has been officially made: Jesus must die.

**[Blank 3]** There have been attempts by the Jewish religious leaders to kill Jesus at this point, but now it’s official in their eyes. It’s only a matter of time before they would capture Him and have Him executed.

So, because of this...

**John 11:54-57** - Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the people of Judea. Instead he withdrew to a region near the wilderness, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples.

55 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. 56 They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" 57 But the chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it so that they might arrest him.

At this point, Jesus is basically in hiding. The religious leaders put out a BOLO (*be on the lookout*) for Jesus. **At any point, He could be captured and arrested.** That's a tension that we'll see escalate as we continue our study in John.

**[Blank 4]** So again, because of the huge following that Jesus was gaining, the religious leaders were afraid that He would become the leader of the next Jewish revolution. And for the Jews, they've seen many Jewish revolts end in failure.

They're worried that they'll not only completely lose their heritage and way of life, but they'll lose their status and authority that the Romans allowed them to have.

This is why I mentioned earlier in the sermon that here we have very religious people who supposedly have faith in God, and yet, they're not exactly trusting God. Maybe they think they are? After all, the Sanhedrin would have needed a majority vote to kill Jesus - and maybe they felt that God led that vote (which in a way, He did).

But the point is, they're not really trusting in God because they simply don't even recognize God. Remember what John said in the first chapter?

**John 1:10-11 - He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

In Matthew and Luke we see an account where even John the Baptist questions if Jesus was the true Messiah...

**Luke 7:20-22** - When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?'" 21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind.

**[Slide Change]** So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.

All of these things were not only miracles that Jesus did, but they're prophecies in our Old Testament of what the Messiah would do when He comes.

**[Blank 5]** Jesus was saying: "*Yes, I am the Messiah, and here's how you can tell... just look at the works God the Father is doing through me.*"

But most of the religious leaders of the day missed it. They didn't see that Jesus was the Messiah. They failed to see that He was God... even when He was standing right in front of them, they were the ones who were truly blind.

Why were they blind? Probably for many reasons - one of which was that they craved power. They wanted to be the ones in charge. And as I mentioned in the beginning of this sermon, they didn't really trust God. Because if they had, they would have recognized Him.

### **What gets in the way of us trusting Jesus?**

Is it politics? Maybe it's tragedies like 9/11? Maybe it's the unfortunate news we received from our doctor? Maybe it's our job? Maybe it's simply the struggle of things not going the way we want?

Whatever it is, as followers of Jesus, we have every reason to trust Him, because He gave His life for us so that we would be saved from sin, death and Hell when we put our faith and trust in Him!

### **When things aren't going our way, how do we react?**

Do we try to fix things with our own strength? Are we so worried about losing our way of life... so much so that we do whatever we can to keep what we have? Do we try to manipulate our lives in such a way that we don't lose things like our status, our power and our wealth...

Or are we willing to let go of these things and simply trust Jesus? Are we willing to humble ourselves and pray: *"Jesus, please help me. I can't do this on my own. I need your strength to get me through this."*

Are we willing to follow Jesus in such a way that we choose to deny ourselves - our wants and desires - and choose to carry our cross daily?

It's not that we can't have what we would call a good life... It's not that we can't have stuff... It's not that we can't have fun...

But the real thing to watch out for is when those things sort of take over our lives in such a way that we lose focus on Jesus... maybe to the point where we don't even see Him for who He is anymore.

**[Blank 6]** We're on this earth for a purpose. And that purpose is to do the good works that God has prepared in advance for us to do. Whatever those works are... they're different for all of us... but whatever they are, we'll miss out on God's plan for our lives if we continually indulge our own desires rather than looking to Jesus.

So, I hope that causes all of us - myself included - to take an honest look at how we're living our lives. Are we living to glorify ourselves, or Jesus? Are we trusting ourselves, or are we trusting Jesus?

I pray that we would all put our full trust in Jesus.



**Romans 15:13** - May the God of hope fill [us all!] with all joy and peace as [we] trust in him, so that [we would] overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Let's Pray**