

Last week, we had talked about Jesus being arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. And one of the things that we emphasized at that time was that he did all of these things willingly for us. There was nothing that happened to Jesus by accident. There was nothing that happened to him against his will. Everything that happens in this account happens because Jesus has chosen it for himself. And that's an important thing to remember, especially as we go forward into talking about his trial before Caiaphas. All of these things which we hear about was not an accident. Jesus submitted himself to Caiaphas and his judgment, even though it was a complete joke of a trial.

And I mean that seriously, Christians. This was a complete joke. There was nothing about this trial that Jesus was facing that was good, that was just, that was right, that was moral, that was even legal. Everything that was happening to him should not have happened. Because think about where we are, first of all, what time of the day we're at. Jesus was in Gethsemane in the middle of the night, and it's not until we get to chapter 27 that it becomes morning. All of this is still happening during the dark in the wee hours of the morning on Good Friday. When was the last time you ever heard of a court trial at night? That's not something that happens. Why couldn't they have just waited a couple more hours and then it would be daylight and they could do something normal, something that we would expect? What was it about Jesus that was so dangerous to them that they couldn't wait those few extra hours until the morning? No, they had to condemn him right now! And it should just go to show you how much of a joke this whole thing is. Because he was arrested and condemned within the space of a couple hours. That's not a fair trial. They're not interested in the truth. They're simply interested in condemning Jesus.

But it gets worse than that. If you have your Bibles with you, open up to Matthew 26 starting at verse 59. "Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, "This man said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days."" Does that sound like any trial you've ever heard of? That they try to find the witnesses after the fact? You would normally expect them to have all the witnesses together already, to already have a case against him, and then they would give him a fair hearing to see whether the things that they said was true. But that's not what they're doing here. They're soliciting witnesses! Anybody who wants to speak against this guy, come on up and say what you're going to say! Because they've already decided what the verdict is: Jesus is guilty. That's a foregone conclusion. That's going to happen. Now they're just looking for anything, any excuse they can find to condemn this guy to death. It's completely backwards, a complete unjust thing that is happening to Jesus.

But it's worse than that still! Because when they're looking for two witnesses--and notice they're trying to find just two. They had all kinds of witnesses come, but none of them agree with each other, but they want just two to be able to condemn Jesus--the reason for that is because in Deuteronomy chapter 19 verse 15, it says you shall not condemn anyone except by the testimony of two or three witnesses. So think about what they're doing: trying to find two people who will at least agree with each other in some way so they can say, "We have kept God's law. We have done the right thing here. We are the righteous ones in this situation." What utter hypocrisy on their part! To put Jesus through this farce of a trial and then have the audacity to say, "But we

kept the law, because we found two witnesses who spoke against this man!" Everything about this trial is just terrible. It's a complete joke.

But how does Jesus respond? Verse 62: "And the high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?' But Jesus remained silent." Now, why would he do that? Why would he not say something? It's a joke. Everybody knows it's a joke. Why doesn't he just speak up and bring an end to the whole thing? I think it's because it is such a joke. Nobody takes it seriously. How could you take it seriously? Nothing about this is just or right. And for Jesus to be quiet here is for him to silently say: "You know that this isn't real. You know how much of a joke this is. It doesn't even deserve my response. I don't have to say anything, because I know it's a joke. You know it's a joke. Everybody here knows it's a joke. It refutes itself."

But Caiaphas is tricky. Going on in verse 63: "And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.'" Caiaphas is forcing him to answer. And because he calls on God's name now, if Jesus did not answer, he would actually be falling into sin. It was part of God's law. To adjure them in God's name like this meant he had to answer. But Caiaphas's question is not a fair one. Jesus is being asked to testify against himself. Does that sound like a fair trial to you? To have the one who is condemned be one of the witnesses who speaks against himself? It's still a joke. The whole thing is just a complete farce. But Jesus answers, because he does not want to sin. He's not answering in a way that's evasive. He's not trying to avoid the question. He's doing it in a way which avoids falling into Caiaphas's trap. "You have said so," which is absolutely true. Caiaphas had said just as much. Jesus will not be caught in Caiaphas's trap. Jesus will not sin even in this moment.

But now he turns it around. And he says to them, "But I tell you, you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven." He's basically telling them: the day is coming when you will also stand trial, and you will stand before the Son of Man who will be your judge. And you will have to answer for everything that you are doing tonight. All of this sin, all of these terrible things that you are doing against the Son of Man, you're going to have to answer to God for every single one of them. Because God sees what is happening here. God knows what is happening. God remembers, and God will give justice. You will have to answer for your sins, and you will have to stand trial at which you will be condemned. Because evil will not and cannot win the day.

But if that's true, Christians, then why does Jesus still submit to all of this? We know it's a joke. We know what they're doing is a sin. We know that they should not be doing this. Why does Jesus still go through with it? It almost doesn't make sense. You think that he would say something, that he would just bring it all to an end, so that it would finally be at an end. He could do the right thing! But he submits to these things, Christians, for you, for your sake. Because if he was not condemned that day, how could he be the innocent one who suffers on our behalf? If he did not submit even to Caiaphas' joke of a trial, how could he be the innocent substitute to take away the sins of the world? Jesus does all of these things, Christians, so that you might be forgiven. He does all of these things to bring you to himself. He's in control of this situation. He

knows what he's doing. And because he's in control, he does it so that you would be brought to him forever.

But he's also doing it for another reason too. And that is to teach us that no matter what happens, that no matter what he had to suffer, evil will not win the day. God sees what happens to Jesus. God knows it. God remembers it. And God will judge it in his righteousness. All of the things which Jesus suffered will be made right again, because God is a God of justice. And God does not forget the sufferings of his Son. And more than that, Christians, you who are in him, being soldiers of Christ, those who are part of his body, God sees all the things that you have suffered too. The world hates Jesus. It will also hate you. But God is not turning a blind eye, not paying attention at all to the things that are happening to us. God knows. God sees. God remembers. And God will act. He will take care of you. All the things which you suffer--being cast out of society, being driven out even away from family or friends for the sake of Christ, even losing much, our jobs, our possessions, even our very lives--God sees all of it. And God remembers all of it too. And he will not forget or fail to give you justice in the end. If he gave it to his Son, he will also give it to you.

So rejoice, Christians! Rejoice when the world hates you. Rejoice when the world persecutes you. Because you know on that day that your names are written in heaven, and God will not forget those who belong to him. God sees. God knows. God remembers. And God will act, because he is the one who will give you justice.

Let us pray. Lord God, heavenly Father, to you belongs all vengeance and from you comes all justice. We pray that you would look upon us, your Christians, and give us the justice which we cannot find, knowing that you will not abandon us in our time of need. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.