

The Fifth Sunday in Lent  
“God’s saving will is done”  
John 11:49-53  
March 22, 2026  
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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, our text for the Fifth Sunday in Lent is from our  
Gospel reading, John 11:

**49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.**

**53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.”**

So far our text:

Caiaphas said some true things, but not in the sense that he intended. For his will and the will of God were diametrically opposed. But God used the evil of these leaders of the church for His eternal good. Amazing. God’s purpose, God’s plan, God’s strategy uses the most vile purposes of man to accomplish His saving will – the redemption of all mankind through the death of His Son, Jesus.

Caiaphas berated his council of chief priests and pharisees who were shaken up the people following Jesus on account of his miracles – following Jesus and not them.

**“47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”**

There was no denying the signs that Jesus did. We heard last week how Jesus healed a man who was blind from birth. Unheard of... never been done before...something only

God can do. Yet, these leaders did not want to give glory to God but to discount it as a work of the devil. And when that didn't fly, threaten and intimidate the people that if anyone follows Jesus, they'll be kicked out of the temple. It worked against the parents of the blind man, but not the blind man himself who saw and believed in Jesus, his Lord, the Son of God.

That this miracle was still fresh in the minds of the people, we hear in today's text, when Lazarus dies and the people lament that Jesus could have saved him if only He had been present.

**33 Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. 34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."**

**35 Jesus wept. 36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"**

**37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"**

It hurt Jesus to the core to see the sadness of the people mourning the death of a loved one. This was not God's will. Death should have never entered this world. And for this very reason Jesus came into this world – to oppose the will of sin, death and the devil and remove its condemnation.

Jesus took on the likeness of our sinful flesh, yet without sin. He felt the sadness of sin in His true human body. He felt thirst, hunger, tiredness, temptation, pain and suffering. Our epistle from Romans 8 tells us why:

**"3 For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering."**

Powerless. The Law renders all of us powerless like Lazarus. Powerless to hold off death. Even the strongest and most fit like Chuck Norris who died this week, cannot escape. The world needed a sin offering to remove the condemnation of the Law. The world needed the perfect sin offering, the only sin offering that was truly expedient for the world – the death of Jesus Christ.

Our epistle tells us this glorious truth – this saving will, this saving strategy of God.

**“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, 2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.”**

The Holy Spirit’s plan, His law, His work is to personally give life to lost sinners and set one free from the law, the work, the evil strategy and will of sin and death. Thanks be to God that the Holy Spirit has worked this faith in Aaron Contreras whose faith will be sealed by the washing of regeneration in his baptism shortly.

This faith and belief in Him, Jesus wanted the people to have so He performed a miracle that was undeniably only possible by God.

But, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die, even though He could have come immediately and healed him...even though He could have just said the word and he would have been cured. Jesus allowed Lazarus to die for a reason. And Jesus tells us that reason in our Gospel reading.

**“3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” 4 When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”**

The Son of God would be glorified by showing His power over death itself -that He alone is the true Messiah. Jesus waited for two days until Lazarus slept before He went. As Jesus then told His disciples:

**“Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.”<sup>12</sup> Then His disciples said, “Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.” <sup>13</sup> However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. <sup>14</sup> Then Jesus said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. <sup>15</sup> And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe.”**

What was Jesus’ purpose? What was His saving will for the disciples? That they may believe. That we would also be strengthened and believe Jesus words that He spoke to Martha:

**“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. <sup>26</sup> And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”**

**27 She said to Him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”**

And Jesus showed His power over death by calling Lazarus out of the tomb!

**43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!” 44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Loose him, and let him go.”**

He is freed from this temporal death. Loose him. And in faith, Lazarus was freed from eternal death through faith in his Savior. Our text continues to tell us that many believed but others went to the chief priests to oppose Him.

**“45 Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did.”**

Things had reached a tipping point. The chief priests recognized that they were losing support. This miracle that Jesus planned for people to believe in Him, also served His eternal purpose and will in that it angered His enemies to the point that they were now willing to commit murder. Yes, they were enraged to the point that they were wanting to do the one thing that was indeed expedient for the salvation of the world – kill Jesus.

Of course, Caiaphas didn't use that language “murder and kill”. Caiaphas softens it by saying it is **“expedient for us that one man should die for the people,”**

John makes sure we know what is truly going on: **“53 Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.”** When the timing was exactly right for Jesus to accomplish the salvation of the world, He would willingly allow Himself to be captured, tried and crucified. Until then, **“Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews,”**

Yes, what Caiaphas said was true in many ways. **“You know nothing at all”**. Caiaphas meant to tell the council that it's very clear what must happen. They were having a tough time making this hard decision. This Jesus must die. They did not know the hard choice

that had to be made. In a game of chess, yes, one sacrifices a pawn, or a rook or a knight, or a bishop to achieve a checkmate. But this was not a game. This involved the purposeful murder of an innocent Man. Why? It was a power grab. So they tried to explain it away. The nation would perish unless they pulled the trigger.

We see this power play all the time. In order for the Iranian terrorist regime to hold on to its power they murder 30,000 peaceful protesters. And if anyone has any second thoughts, they publicly hang a decorated wrestler to intimidate and coerce the people.

Yes, the council knew nothing at all. They did not know Jesus as their Savior. And Caiaphas spoke another truth. He prophesied, directed by the Holy Spirit to speak this truth.

**Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.**

Caiphas believed that Jesus' death would secure their earthly power. But God took his very words to show His purpose and saving will – Jesus death would gather not only Jewish believers to Him, but also Gentiles. Yes, even Balaam's donkey was used to prophesy.

The result of God's saving will? Our epistle tells us so clearly and beautifully this truth:

**“But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.” Amen**

**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**