

The Lord's Message: Am I Guilty? Of Not Loving My Neighbor

Date: March 6, 2022

Where: Tilghman United Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Matthew 26:1-5

We are starting a new sermon series entitled Am I Guilty? Each Sunday through the Season of Lent and spilling into Easter, we will look at something in our lives that we might need to repent and ask for God's forgiveness. Repentance also means that we need to work to change our lives to fall more in line with Christ's.

Let us pray.

In the passage of scripture that was read, we discover that Caiaphas was the chief priest at the time of Jesus' arrest, trial and sentence of death. Caiaphas was also chiefly responsible from a human perspective of organizing the death of Jesus. We know that God was truly the one that had planned this long ago. In the Book of Genesis, right after Adam and Eve sinned, God pronounces what He will do to bring Adam and Eve back into relationship with Him. Let us look at **Genesis 3:15**. Jesus confirms this to Nicodemus in **John 3:14-15**.

What do we know about Caiaphas? I am glad that you asked. What we know of Caiaphas is found in the New Testament and also in the historical writings from this time of a Jewish historian, Josephus.

Caiaphas comes to power in AD 15 and stays in power for 18 years. He has been preceded by his father-in-law, Annas. After his reign as Chief Priest, he will be followed by 5 brothers-in-law, sons of Annas. A family affair, but not the family of Aaron. If you might recall when God set up the nation of Israel, He divided all the power and operation of the nation among the tribes. Each family was assigned certain duties in the new nation. The tribe of Levi was assigned the worship of God. In that tribe, Aaron and his son and the sons that would come after, were assigned as priests and chief priests. Someone may also recall, who I said should have been the chief priest at the time of Jesus – John the Baptist.

John the Baptist was killed by another family – the family of Herod. The Herod family was known for ruthless tactics. Many innocent people died because of them. In the New Testament, there are six Herods mentioned: Herod the Great, Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas (who would have John the Baptist killed and presided over by the trial of Jesus), Herod Philip, Herod Agrippa I, and Herod Agrippa II. This again was a family affair. Who would like to name their child, Herod?

The reason for the succession of chief priests is that they were appointed by the Roman authorities to keep the peace. When the Roman authorities did not like what they were doing, they would have their authority removed and given to the next person in line. They were to maintain the status quo.

John the Baptist was preaching to upset the status quo. We find this in **Matthew 3:1-12**. Jesus came to upset the status quo. Jesus told us to obey these two commandments. Anybody remember what they are? To love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus was asked, “who is my neighbor?” Jesus told the story about the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:30-37**) John Wesley was told by an Anglican bishop, “Mr. Wesley, you have no parish!” John responded with, “The whole world is my parish.”

Let us put this into practice in our sanctuary. How many of you walked into this church and greeted the same people that you have been greeting for a long time, because you feel comfort with them. You have a relationship with them. You sit in the same pews with the same people that you have for a long time. It is a comfort level. I know this happens. I can take attendance on Sunday mornings and tell you who is here and who is not here. We want to maintain that status quo. I watched on Wednesday at the luncheon. People sat with the group of people that they were comfortable with. We are not intentionally trying to be unloving to our neighbor, but we are. We need to break out of the status quo. We need to show love to all our neighbors.

So, after the church service today, why don't you greet someone that you have never met or do not usually associate with. When we have a luncheon, do not only sit with your friends, but include someone that you have never sat with or usually do not. Better yet, invite a neighbor to join you for lunch that doesn't know about the luncheon. Let us show love to our neighbors. Next Sunday, maybe sit with someone that you usually do not. Amen.