

10/31/2021 - John 11:45-54 - "Fear of Exile and Trust in God"

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[0 : 00] We're gonna be continuing in the Gospel of John and we're in the passage that was just read by Catherine in John 11.

And this is a unique passage. It's a unique section of the implications of what the passage entails and its placements.

And so for those reasons, we've broken this out. And I believe that what we'll be able to see in this passage is something that is common to us in America where Hollywood has kind of impressed upon our minds this need for happy endings, this sort of resolution to problems after significant struggle or trial or even traumatic situations and occurrences.

I have kids and we've watched Frozen more times than I would like to admit. I know the songs by heart, but you can't forget Elsa's tumultuous journey through the wilderness, all trying to figure out who she is.

And at the end, Arendelle and the Enchanted Forest, who were once on a road to demise, were brought into safety.

[1 : 36] Everyone was saved. Everyone lived happily ever after, right? Those are the endings that we desire. Now, for any Marvel fans out there like myself, you know, we have these Avengers movies.

We have these warfares, these instances of warfare, of a battle that's about to ensue that seems as if the enemy is going to overpower the superhero.

And literally, I just described every Avenger movie in the series. That's literally it. It's literally like holding a sneeze the entire time. You're just like, oh, here we go again. Here comes the superpower.

But every movie has that resolution, it seems, that itches our ears for the desire to have a happy ending. And this creeps into even our own lives as we think about the passage and what it speaks to us in the midst of our own situations of where it seems as if resolution resolution is nowhere to be found.

Nowhere close. Not even a chance of resolution. And we can often question in our own lives, what are we to do in this situation?

[3 : 01] If you're anything like me, this sort of brings upon this hyper-vigilant mentality where all of a sudden it's like a curse. I go through every sort of instance.

What this could happen if this happens and it's like a chain reaction within my mind. It makes me anxious. I start evaluating and being hyper-vigilant to make the best decisions of what am I to do. And today's passage, the text today, is gonna help us to trust God when we are in those what-are-we-to-do moments.

And like I said, this passage is unique in its placement and context. It's what I'm gonna call today a looming demise hinge, the hinge of looming demise for Jesus.

It stands out in the passage. You just have this massive sign of Jesus healing a man who was dead for four days.

[4 : 10] His name was Lazarus. And all of a sudden you have here, they're gonna kill Jesus. It's a hinge.

It's an acting hinge of demise, of the looming demise that's gonna set the momentum and the stage in the final days of Jesus' ministry.

And so we're gonna see two sides of a reminder today, church. The first side, we're going to have a reminder to view our problematic circumstances differently and trust God regardless of the

foreseeable threats.

And on the other side, we're gonna see a reminder as well of God's providential guiding of good things through the hands and agenda of wicked people.

So let's turn to prayer as we get in and see this hinge unfold and see what we learn about who God is and how he uses everything in this life to bring about his glory.

[5 : 20] Let's pray. Lord God, we are turning to you, asking for you to speak to us today, asking that your word would come alive in our midst.

Father, enter our hearts and transform us by the power of your word. Help us to submit our lives to your word that regardless how we feel and what we see in this passage, that we see exactly what you intended for us to see.

And Father, what we are gonna see is gonna be challenging aspects of our life, of our sinfulness. We are going to come in very personal interaction with our own sin and in our lives.

And we're going to see how to follow you, how to glorify you by being obedient to following your word.

So Father, help us at this time. Help me to speak what your church needs to hear. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I don't know what's wrong with my technology here.

[6 : 40] I'm just gonna call it technology. There we go. The sermon title today for any note takers is Fear of Exile and Trust in God.

Fear of Exile and Trust in God. We have two sections that this passage is broken up into naturally and we're going to preserve its original structure in staying true to God's word and how he desires for it to be communicated.

And so within this passage that Catherine read is two sections. And the first section that we're gonna see today is Jesus intrudes man's plans and agendas.

Verse 45 says, Many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

And some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Last week's passage, church, was profound.

[7 : 50] There's some texts, I believe, that you kind of just preach through and just back away and let the power of God do its thing.

I make a reference to those types of passages similar to just leaving an egg upon the stage. It's yours to take or leave.

And last week's passage truly did that for us. That was definitely one of them. And the case for faith in Jesus Christ was clearly laid out.

This is no ordinary man. This sign was no ordinary sign. And there are two options that John, according to John's gospel, gave to us as hearers of his word, belief or rejection.

Responding by belief or rejection. And so we see this narrative pick up and connect kind of that bridge with the context from last week. Many of the Jews therefore who had come with Mary had seen what he did and they went to the Pharisees and told them.

[8 : 58] So those who failed to believe, who rejected this, left and reported this as tattletales back to their people of the raising of this man who had been dead for four days long.

And so in verse 47 we see intensity grow. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council.

Just stop there for a moment. What this should communicate to us is that this wasn't just a little party to have a couple bites of wings and have a drink and talk about how life is going.

This is a serious matter that literally in our day and age today it can be identified similar to the Supreme Court has gathered together to make a verdict upon this situation.

This is a serious matter and we can kind of miss that aspect in simply just reading a superficial couple words.

[10 : 09] So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council. This is a serious instance. They gathered 71 men who made up the Sanhedrin.

This is a serious situation. They said, they made a question, they posed a question. What are we to do?

What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him.

And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation. What are we to do? What's the legislation before the Supreme Court of that day?

What are we to do with Jesus? Because if he continues, it's going to threaten our freedom. It's going to jeopardize our place that we have been given by Rome.

[11 : 12] Our nation that is able to establish here all given by Rome. And considering the vast cultural gap between our political climate today, we won't get into that too much today.

our political climate today and their political climate then in the first century, these two verses clue us into a very intense, it's very, there's a lot of tension between the Jews and Rome.

And we see that tension here. Because they're concerned, what are we to do? Because Jesus threatens them to be losing their place, their nation.

And so, this is coming into a historical issue between the Jews and Rome. In 139 B.C., the Jews were banished from Rome.

And just about a decade previously from this time in 1980, under the reign of Claudius, the Jews were again kicked out of Rome.

[12 : 26] Rome. And luckily, they were allowed to come back. Grateful Romans, right? They were allowed to come back and continue their independent existence under Roman law.

And so, essentially, how we can understand the decade of that day is that the Jewish nation was kind of a nation operating within a nation. They had different various aspects that were subject to cooperate, friendly, with the Roman government, but they were a nation within a nation.

In other words, what's going on here is that Jesus is threatening their freedom that they've been given.

this brings about what I could think that we could understand is like exile PTSD.

If you were a Jew, you know your history. It has a long history of exile, being exiled from different lands and battles and wandering and wilderness journeys.

[13 : 38] This would bring exile PTSD. Fear settles in because Jesus could compromise everything that they've earned. Every status they've been able to gain with the Roman government, everything that they've acquired, their temple, everything would be gone because Jesus is running wild, saying and proving that he is the son of God.

How many times in our own lives have we looked at Jesus Christ as the monkey wrench in our lives?

The one who calls for obedience that often comes at an extreme cost in life. One thing is certainly true in this passage.

Jesus Christ and the Roman government, both of those entities, Jesus Christ and the Roman government, are viewed as gods in this passage.

Both are calling for obedience, but only one is worthy. Only one gives and one threatens to take away.

[14 : 59] How many of us have looked upon Jesus Christ as the troublemaker in life? that if only obedience to Jesus Christ could maybe be on our terms a little bit, maybe we could run the course of our lives.

We might actually be able to live peaceable lives in the freedoms of the country that we've been given. We don't want to upset this desirable life that we've been given, even in our country. history. Well, you see, the moment we begin to think of Jesus as the problem or counting the cost of our obedience, we move into not worship of God any longer.

It's worship of self. And this is the hard reality that this passage poses, because this Jewish nation, in the name of worship to God, was actually masking their self-worship, their worship of a lifestyle, their worship of rights and privileges that's been given to them.

And Jesus intrudes man's plans and agendas and challenges our devotion to him. In this text, the government takes and Jesus gives.

[16 : 30] we see that there's a fear of the government taking this away, where Jesus has come with a message that gives. And without a proper theology, church, that everything in our lives is truly a gift of God, yeah, you may go out and work 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 hours a week, but it's not you who earn that.

It is a gift. Even your own paycheck is a gift from God. You may get a good grade upon your exam at YSU, but it is a gift from God of all of our achievements in this life.

And friends, we consistently slip into this form of idolatry. This nation is full of idolatry. Since when did the church need anything like a government, civil rights, legislation, constitution to exist, the truth is it has never needed anything.

It only needs Jesus Christ and the gospel. And the very same reason the church thrives for any season of time throughout the church history is the same reason of why it suffers.

It's because God allows it to thrive or suffer. Now, I don't know about you, but I think it would be better for the church to stand in obedience to Christ regardless of the potential consequences from the world.

[18:15] Great. Lose your job because you won't hide your faith with your co-workers. God will honor that. Who cares if they threaten to take our church building away because we aren't abiding by certain rules?

Go ahead. Have our building. The church does not constitute a building. The church is the gathered people. How often we can just lose sight of that because of the privileges we've been given.

Better for the church to stand in obedience to Jesus Christ regardless of the potential consequences from the world. I don't know about you. I'd rather stand boldly in the truth of God's word and accept the consequence rather than shrinking in compromise.

And this is important, church, because if you are a Christian, there is no other way of following Jesus Christ than wholeheartedly.

I love the hymn that says, I surrender all. All to thee, my precious Savior. I surrender all. It's not, I surrender some.

[19:37] Right? Come on, church. I surrender all. If you are a Christian, there is no other way to live than wholeheartedly regardless of the consequence.

Why is it so difficult for us often at times as human beings that it's like we live as if the world has so much to offer to the church and we've lost sight that the opposite is eternally true.

The church has everything to offer to the world. We lose sight of this. Let us never get this backwards. This situation that's playing out in this hinge of demise of this passage is a great reminder for us today to set our minds on things that truly do matter.

Great reminder for us today. We see in the second section of this passage, God's providence is paradoxical.

A paradox is simply a way of saying it seems like it's self-contradictory. It's a statement that seems like it contradicts itself, paradox. Much of the gospel is a paradox and the ways of God is paradoxical.

[21:02] And we see that in this passage, plain and simple, God's providence is paradoxical. The verse continues in verse 49, but one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, you know nothing at all, nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish.

One of the men of the Sanhedrin, this is a pretty important guy. We can debate how you pronounce his name later after the service. I call him Caiaphas, whatever have you.

It's the same guy, no matter how you pronounce it. He spoke with great precision in this passage and refers to something that actually he was discussing with the Sanhedrin long ago.

He is an important guy. He is the president of the Sanhedrin. He is the one of the 71 guys. He's pretty important.

And so he was the high priest that year. You know nothing at all. In other words, what are we going to do? We kill Jesus, just as we already planned, guys.

[22:28] Isn't this a noble cause in order to keep our temple worship and our political status to keep things at bay?

Get rid of the problem on account of saving a nation. This kind of reflects and allusions back to 2 Samuel chapter 20 with Sheba's death on behalf of the city of Abel.

That one person's death would be a sacrifice, a substitute on behalf of an entire nation. And the paradoxical providence occurring is that it was through precisely the words of this idolatrous, wicked, and self-preservative man of which God precisely detailed his exact plan of redemption.

That's the paradoxical providence. And John even gives us aid. If we're wondering what's going on in this passage, John tells us in the next passage of the hinge of demise, it's all downhill from here as the good Charlotte song sings.

We see in verse 51, he did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also, look at this, to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.

[24 : 26] Isn't it interesting how God can speak through the most unusual means? Speaks through a donkey in the Old Testament. He speaks through a witch to get through to King Saul.

He will speak when he needs to speak, even using and having divine ends to man's selfish agendas.

And stemming from the lips of this selfish, prideful, self-preservative president of the Sanhedrin came the mission of the gospel. God's gospel. Substitute and gather, being the mission of the gospel.

And this is entailing the mission even of the Gentiles that we got to back in John 10. Remember, the shepherd goes out to gather those that aren't among the sheep.

John is saying everything that has been said from Jesus' ministry is connecting. He's helping us connect the dots in this passage of what is truly occurring and the substance of what's being said remains regardless of man's main intentions.

[25 : 49] And the basis of this message is the problem is Jesus, not us. The language used here is of substitutionary exchange.

Boy, that could be a sermon in and of itself. We'll save it for a statement of faith sermon. The problem is Jesus, not us.

Someone has to die. It's either Jesus or the nation. Caiaphas was thinking along political levels, what God intended for spiritual levels, and with a redemptive end.

And John makes it clear and he invites us into that explanation here. Because at a political level here, Jesus' death, yes, would retain earthly status with the government.

But from a spiritual level, over on this side, says that God is working out a divine decree in life to retain eternal status.

[27 : 02] As forgiven sinners. That this is the only means in which that can be attained. We see in this passage that Jesus has already made this clear.

That he is the resurrection. Jesus is the life. And you cannot kill that truth.

He is who he is. Truly, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin. Through the death of Jesus Christ, it ushered in the salvation of nations in verse 50.

In verse 52, not just for a nation, but also for those who are outside of that fold to be brought in as children who were once scattered.

The world's solution to the problem that Jesus creates is to simply kill him. To get rid of the problem. And it is through that very agenda that God providentially puts his glory upon display.

[28 : 18] This is a truth that you just cannot kill. And this changed the course of the narrative following the rest of this gospel as we'll see unfolding in the days and weeks ahead.

Because Jesus from this moment forward has a bounty on his head after this meeting. And we see the end of this come to a conclusion.

So from that day on in verse 53, they made plans to put him to death. Jesus, therefore, no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness to a town called Ephraim.

And there he stayed with his disciples. I want to spend a moment to just talk to us today. I've done a lot of preaching.

I want to talk today. Is that we see in this passage, we see two perceptions. We see the perception of the world.

[29 : 31] We see the perception of God. The perception of the world is that Jesus Christ was given over as a substitute to die for the nation in order to retain our earthly freedoms and our statuses in this life.

But from a divine perspective, Jesus actually died for much more. An eternal cause. Eternal freedom from sin that binds us from birth.

A sin that has stemmed from the garden of Eden and has corrupted this world since. And church, we can tack our agendas on Jesus all we want, but we will never have the power to distort his sovereign plan that he has and he intends on this life unfolding through the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

What is the sovereign plan? What's John 11 say? The sovereign plan is belief or unbelief. Sin condemned or sin atoned.

How silly. How silly. We can try to tack on our agendas and our plans upon the mission of Jesus Christ.

[30 : 59] Political stunts. All of a sudden, a president's saved and he's saying, I'm a Christian now. Vote for me, right? Come on, church. Don't fall for foolishness like that.

Or even within the church, leveraging on people's wealth and finances in the name of being healed, in the name of having faith. If you sow a seed, you'll be given this.

This is not biblical theology. This is idolatry. It's sad. The agenda of the world is being used by God, though, to prophetically bring the ends of which God intended to ordain constantly.

And what the world means for their end, God is using as it also intended for his plan. It cannot be redefined.

It cannot be distorted. It can only be accepted by faith, believe or unbelief. The certainty that we have in God's plan is through his providential hand, he is sovereignly guiding all history.

[32 : 14] The good aspects and, tragically, the bad that we experience. We see from this as we end with something to chew on the rest of this week and the days ahead is that there is such great certainty in God's providence in life.

And with that being so, how much greater the certainty that we have when we firmly hold tightly to his word as revealed in the canon of scripture.

This being the very words of God, that regardless of what we think and regardless of what we feel, regardless of what our deceitful heart perceives as truth, this word refines our realities of what is true and what is false.

And there is great certainty upon that. And upon the weeks looking ahead, the remaining weeks of the Gospel of John series, we will see this providential plan unfold through the wicked hands of man.

And if we could only just learn something from all of this. They often say preaching is kind of just putting yourself on repeat, putting God's word as simple words in our lives on repeat, repeat, repeat to remind us.

[33 : 46] Even I need these reminders. That if we could only tear down our idols in this life, in this country, in this society that they have implanted upon our worldview, might we lose the shackles that the world puts on us as if we can live within the freedom and the bounds that they give, or we can be released from that and live in the freedom that Jesus Christ intended to actually give us.

And that comes at a great cost. We can rest confidently upon his truth. And the God who intended, who created all things and intended to control all things, even the evil intentions and the actions of enemies is saying this.

This is your God, Christian. This is our God, the one who you trust in. Your faith is not in the systems or the institutions or the freedoms and liberties that are given to you by humanity, nor your ability to devise your own plan of those means and that end.

But it is God who controls all of them and in the mysterious but gracious plan of God for you and the world. Don't we know this?

Romans 8, 28. For we know that all things, God works together for good.

[35 : 27] And for this reason, we trust him no matter the initial forecast of danger or threat. What are we to do? As the looming question hovers over our lives and our conscience, we believe in God.

We trust his ways. That his ways are not our ways. His thoughts are not our thoughts. We believe this and be transformed in affections and desires to have Jesus's grace upon our lips in obedience of following the chief shepherd.

Let's pray. Amen.