

Caiaphas

Portraits of Repentance

Matthew 26:1-5

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ²“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the courtyard of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁴and they conspired to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ⁵But they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

This Sunday marked the first Sunday in Lent, the 40-day journey which will take us to Easter. We see the number 40 biblically as a time of change and preparation: In Genesis, Noah and his family are in the ark for 40 days and nights, afterwards emerging into a changed world. In Exodus, the recently freed Hebrew slaves wander in the wilderness for 40 years while God reshapes and prepares them to enter the promised land. In the New Testament, Jesus goes into the wilderness after His baptism for 40 days without eating or drinking, and tempted by the devil, to return prepared for ministry. God is preparing us each for something new throughout this Lenten journey. **What do you sense God is preparing in your life during this time?**

Throughout this sermon series we'll look at the events of Holy Week, and focus on a different individual each week as an invitation to repentance. This first week our focus is Caiaphas, the high priest of the temple system in Jerusalem. Jesus has just entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday for Passover as the crowds look to Him as the prophesied Messiah who will save them from Roman rule, just as God rescued them from the Egyptians during the first Passover. Our instinct is to regard Caiaphas as a bad guy, a powerful person who controlled politics and government. However, Caiaphas likely walked an uncomfortable tightrope as the high priest tasked to keep people in the good graces of Roman rule. When we understand this context, it makes more sense that Caiaphas led the charge to *arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him* (v. 4). Caiaphas had every opportunity to arrest Jesus in the light. **Why would this plan have taken place at night, in hiding? How is this strategy a continuation of habits that started in Genesis with Adam and Eve hiding from God?**

Caiaphas operates within a system which justifies this kind of action. He obviously knows what the reaction of the people will be. Systems and people who operate in the dark cannot flourish. When we have the accountability and support of community, we too can step out of the shadows and allow God to

transform what we are hiding. Thomas challenged us to consider if our groups are more like a book club, or those which contain the transparency of an AA meeting. **Are we willing to break this cycle that started in the garden of Eden, continued in Caiaphas, and now our own lives? What do you need to acknowledge to God that lies in the shadows for you?**