TITLE: Christ before the Court

TEXT: Jn. 11:43-50 & 53; Mt. 26:3-4, 26:57, 26:59-66, 12:33-39, 12:24, 23:25-28; James 1:22

INTRODUCTION: The United States Supreme Court is the most powerful Court in the Land. For the most part, what the Supreme Court decides is what goes in our nation.

Well, did you know that Jesus once stood before, what would be the equivalent, of our Supreme Court?

Shortly after Jesus rises Lazarus from the dead Scripture tells us this….

**John 11:43 – 50 & 53 (NIV)**

**43When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!”  44The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, “Take off the grave clothes and let him go.”**

**45Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.  46But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.  47Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. “What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.  48If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” 49Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all!  50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.” ……..53So from that day on they plotted to take his life.**

Jesus has just preformed a mighty miracle. He had just raised a man from the dead.

This concerns some people who hear of it and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, is called together to discuss the case….

**47Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ---- “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs.  48If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” 49Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up…..  50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”**

**……53So from that day on they plotted to take his life.**

Caiaphas would have been the equivalent to the Chief Justice on our supreme court today.

As such, he was probably the most powerful and influential person in his land.

His solution to the Jesus problem….

**50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”**

**……53So from that day on they plotted to take his life.**

Later, when it came time for Christ mission on earth to be accomplished, this plot becomes a reality….

**Matthew 26:3 - 4 (NIV) 3Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas,  4and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him.**

**Matthew 26:57 (NIV) 57Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled.**

**Matthew 26:59 - 66 (NIV) 59The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.  60But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward. Finally two came forward  61and declared, “This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’” 62Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?”  63But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” 64“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” 65Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, “He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy.  66What do you think?” “He is worthy of death,” they answered.**

Have you ever considered the irony of Jesus encounter with Caiaphas, the high priest of the Jews? Christ, the true high priest of God, stood before Joseph Caiaphas, the humanly appointed High priest of God.

And though Caiaphas and Jesus had different motives, they essentially agreed with each other. Caiaphas believed that, in the best interest of the people, one man should die so that the rest would live.

Christ believed the same thing, that one man should die so that the rest would live,.

Caiaphas, the humanly appointed High priest said: let it be Him!

Jesus, the true high priest said: Let it be Me!

The great contrast between Christ and Caiaphas was that while Christ came in obedience to His Fathers will, Caiaphas was motivated by expedience.

Caiaphas had said: **50You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.”**

Caiaphas was afraid that if Jesus wasn’t dealt with and he continued to raise the dead and heal the sick that the people would raise up and make Him King and the Romans would then come in and wipe out this rebellious people.

Caiaphas was just being expedient….

Expedience comes from two Latin words meaning “to get your foot out of a trap.”

Jesus had become a real threat to Caiaphas and the rest of the Jewish leadership. Jesus threatened their stranglehold of power over the people..

So Caiaphas and most of the rest of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court, started to feel like their foot was in a trap.

Caiaphas answer to getting his own foot out the this trap of Jesus threatening his authority and power was to try to set a trap for Jesus, but in doing so, in reality, he fell into an even bigger trap himself.

The false witnesses that He had arranged to testify against Jesus had all contradicted each other, so he had no case against Jesus.

So in desperation Caiaphas screamed at Jesus, Tell us if you are the Son of God!

Caiaphas couldn’t have expected Christ to answer that question, because, up unto this point Jesus had refused to answer any of his questions and accusations, and also, because his question was illegal for Under Jewish law for no one could be forced to testify against themselves.

Caiaphas must have almost fallen over when Christ answered, “*Yes, It is as you say!”, I am the Son of God*

Caiaphas shouted, Blasphemy! And tore his robe and declared Christ guilty.

Caiaphas exemplifies many in our world today.. People who can best be described in three words….Religious but Lost.

Caiaphas, a religious leader, was believed to be a Sadducee. So he denied many of the great truths of Scripture. He didn’t believe in the Resurrection, The Holy Spirit, immortality, or angels.

He proposed that his high position and ritualistic practices would ensure his souls eternal well-being----but they did not.

In fact, his eternal destiny itself relied solely upon the man who stood before him that day----Jesus, the Christ--- the Son of the living God.

The one who once boldly proclaimed: **I am the way and the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except they come through me…**

Again, we see many Caiaphas in our world today..

People who can best be described as religious but lost.

People who on the outside look good enough, they seem to be religious, they know the terminology, they talk like a Christian…. The problem is that they don’t walk like a Christian.

I don’t care how good our talk may be, if our walk doesn’t back up our talk then eventually our life will be revealed for what it really is….

Jesus always seemed to have the harshest things to say to the religious leadership of his day because even though they may have talked the talk, for the most part, they didn’t walk the walk.

**Matthew 12:33 - 39 (NIV) 33“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.  34You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**

**35The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.**

**36But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.  37For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.” 38Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” 39He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.**

The heart of a Pharisee is really revealed here in these passages of Scripture..

What had just transpired here was that a man possessed by an evil spirit which had left him both blind and mute was brought before Jesus, and Jesus not only delivered this man from demonic possession but also healed him of his deafness and blindness.

This was a total and complete healing. Jesus healed this man physically and he healed him spiritually.

The religious Pharisee’s immediately tried to associate this great healing, not as an act of God’s mercy, but as an act of Satan.

They said: **Matthew 12:24 (NIV) 24But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this fellow drives out demons.”**

So Jesus says to them:

**33“Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.**

**34You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.**

**37For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.**

Jesus told them that a tree will be recognized by its fruit.

In the winter you can call an apple tree a pear tree and everyone that you tell it to may believe you, but in the spring when the leaves start to come out and the tree starts to form its fruit it will be impossible to maintain your deception because the fruit that the tree bears will give you away.

The deception of the Pharisees was that they loved to tell the people how holy and righteous they were. They would say long, eloquent prayers in public and boast of how much they would put into the collection plate, but then they would go out and take advantage of the widow and the orphan and the oppressed of their world.

They cried out how religious they were but the fruit of their lives revealed what they were in reality.

Some of the harshest words Jesus ever spoke in Scripture he speaks to this group of people, people who seem religious but are in actuality still lost….

**Matthew 23:25 - 28 (NIV) 25“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.  26Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**

**27“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean.  28In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.**

Jesus said: **You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence.**

Looks can be deceiving can’ they?

Example: Styrofoam cups at picnic…. I picked one up to use and it looked clean on outside but as I went to pour the Kool-Aid in the cup the inside was dirty and had bugs crawling around in it…..

When I do dishes at home sometimes Pam accuses me of not doing a good job….It is easy to clean the outside of the glass but what I have found is that it is much harder to get the inside clean.

We have some glasses that have groves in the bottom of the glass that like to retain milk if it sets in the glass too long and what I find is that my hands are too big to get down to the bottom of the class to clean to the milk ring on the bottom.

I can get the outside clean pretty easily but in order to make sure the inside gets clean I have to take a long handed object and wrap it in the dishrag and use that to scrub the inside of the glass…. I can get the inside clean but it takes a lot more effort.

That is what Jesus is saying about our lives. It is easy to make the outside look good and clean, but a lot harder to get the inside so that it is as good and clean as the outside.

And unless the inside is clean it makes no difference how clean the outside appears.

A dirty cup is a dirty cup! A filthy life is a filthy life!

**26Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.**

If we take the effort to clean the inside the outside will just naturally get clean in the process.

I love the analogy Jesus uses of the whitewashed tomb.

You know it really makes no difference how well or how often you paint a tomb the fact remains that what lies inside is still in the process of death and decay.

Example: I once was asked to do a Reburial service. They were moving a loved one from one cemetery to another cemetery.

In the hearse on the way to the cemetery in chatting with the Funeral director he said one time that he did one that had been in the ground for 8 years and they still heard sloshing inside the casket when they moved it…

(People have a tendency to remember the humor and the gross stuff in a sermon so I want to tie a more pleasant thought to this example of the sloshing casket---**To be absent from the body it to be present with the Lord.)**

Point is, Jesus compares those who may talk the talk of a Christian but don’t walk the walk of a Christian as a whitewashed tomb, a nice looking casket.

Someone who may look good, may appear righteous or religious on the outside, but on the inside, they are full of decaying death.

The outside of the cup of their life may appear clean but the inside of the cup of their life is still foul and dirty. A place where Christ says death and uncleanness still resides.

As a Christian our desire should be that the inside of the cup of our life be as clean as the outside of the cup of our life may appear.

That we not merely talk the talk of a Christian but that we walk the walk of a Christian.

**James 1:22 (NIV) 22Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.**

We are not merely to be hearers of God’s word but we have been called to become doers of His word.

It is the process of becoming a doer of the Word of God that cleans the inside of the cup of our life.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work on the inside of us, allow Him to scrub us clean in those hard to reach places by our simply being obedient to His gentle whisper within our hearts, learn to discern that still small voice of the Lord, that we will become a clean vessel that is fit to contain His presence and advance His Kingdom in the world in which we live.

Most people would be repulsed to drink out of a filthy cup. It doesn’t make any difference how clean the outside of the cup may appear, if the inside is dirty we will not want to drink from it.

The same holds true for us spiritually.

It doesn’t make any difference how good we may appear on the outside if we haven’t allowed God to clean us up on the inside.

And if we are still dirty on the inside the world in which we live will see our dirty cup and not be attracted to partake of what we have to offer them.

So, the question of challenge that I leave us with this morning is: What is the condition of the cup of our life today?

Are we as clean on the inside as we appear on the outside?

Have we, are we, allowing Jesus to do His complete work of redemption within these bodies of ours?

Are we truly allowing our life to be a reflection, a manifestation of Jesus to our world?

As a Christian, is what we have to offer the world in which we live being offered from a clean cup that will appeal to them so that they will want to take a drink?

Or do we need to allow the Lord to wash again the cup of our life, scrub us clean with His Holy Spirit so that, what we look like on the outside, is but an outward reflection of what we are on the inside?

Are you allowing God to do His complete work of redemption and sanctification within your life today cleansing you from the inside out?

Is the vessel of your life a vessel from which others would want to drink?