

**A Journey Thru Lent, Pt.3: to the Courtyard of Caiaphas
Sermon of 2021-03-07**

By Major Brian Coles

[slide 1] Welcome to week 3 in our Lenten series for 2021.

We're looking at Matthew's account of the passion of the Christ.
[slide 2] This week, we journey to the courtyard of the Jewish High Priest; a man named Caiaphas.

You can follow along in your bible this week by turning to Mt. 26 starting at v.57.

[slide 3, blank] Let's pray. "Teach me, Lord, that I may teach the precious things that you impart; and wing my words, that they may reach the hidden depths of many a heart." Amen.

"I don't go to church because it's full of hypocrites." Have you ever heard someone say that before?

World renowned Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias is the most recent example of hypocrisy

when revelations of his double life were exposed to the public after his death in May 2020.

An international evangelist and defender of the Christian faith in public life, he was also guilty of sexual abuse over many years in his private life.

Saying that the church is full of hypocrites, or that Christians are hypocrites, can be a convenient way for people to dismiss the claims of Christ.

So how do we answer this charge of hypocrisy?

One way is to admit there are church members who are as phony as a \$3 bill.

But there are phony doctors too, yet we still go to a doctor when we're sick.

There are also phony politicians. Yet we still vote when it comes time for an election.

So while there are phony X'ns - X'ns who are kind and loving on Sunday, but mean and hateful during the week -

or like Ravi, brilliant defenders of the Christian faith in public and sexual abusers in private,

let us remember that we're not asking people to believe in X'ns. We're asking them to believe in Jesus, and there is no hypocrisy in him.

One thing we can say to people who lay the charge that the church is full of hypocrites, is to point out that X'ns aren't claiming to be perfect.

If the charge of hypocrisy is leveled against everyone who's imperfect or flawed, then we're all hypocrites.

But rather than spend all our time trying to answer the critics,

I think it best for us to invest our time trying to develop authenticity in our lives, to be a people of integrity and genuineness.

To do that we're going to look at two kinds of hypocrisy Jesus faced in the courtyard of Caiaphas.

Once we've looked at the two kinds of hypocrisy he faced, my hope is we'll be motivated to want to live lives of authenticity, of integrity and genuineness, like Jesus lived.

What then, is the 1st kind of hypocrisy Jesus faced? [slide 4] **The first kind of hypocrisy Jesus faced is seen in the life of Caiaphas.**

Caiaphas was the spiritual leader of the Jewish people. He was their high priest; their mediator between God and themselves.

He also presided over the Sanhedrin, a council of religious elders who had complete control over the religious affairs of the Jewish people.

The Sanhedrin was also the Jewish highcourt. As such it was the supreme authority in the interpretation of the Mosaic law,

and when they mediated disputes about the Law, their decision was final.

In addition to that, the Sanhedrin also governed Jewish civil affairs and tried criminal cases

under the authority of the Roman governor who, at this time, was Pontius Pilate.

Caiaphas, leader of the Sanhedrin, seemed to have a personal vendetta against Jesus. He was determined that Jesus had to be killed. Why?

In Jn. 11, after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the Sanhedrin had an emergency meeting and said in v.47ff,

“If we let [Jesus] go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our temple and our nation.”

⁴⁹ Then... Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, “You know nothing at all!

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

So Caiaphas seemed set on having Jesus killed.

Jesus was eventually arrested and brought to trial before Caiaphas and the rest of the members of the Sanhedrin.

The conduct of Caiaphas, during this trial, was very hypocritical.

There were at least 6 violations of justice, 6 breeches of the law Caiaphas made, which reveal his utter hypocrisy as High Priest.

What then, was the 1st violation of justice Caiaphas made which revealed how hypocritical he was? [slide 5]

1. Caiaphas ordered an improper arrest.

Earlier in c. 26, Judas had made a pact with the Sanhedrin to have Jesus arrested.

In v.47 of c.26 we read that Judas, with a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, of whom Caiaphas was the HP, arrested Jesus in Gethsemane.

Jewish law specified that any arrest for a capital crime [for which Jesus would be charged] had to be made during the daytime.

Yet Jesus was arrested at nighttime. It was an improper arrest.

What then, was the 2nd violation of justice Caiaphas made which revealed how hypocritical he was? [slide 6]

2. Caiaphas presided over an illegal meeting.

No Jewish trial was to take place between 6 pm and 6 am.

Yet the Sanhedrin hastily gathered in the middle of the night at Caiaphas' home rather than the temple precincts as the law required.

And then, in a phony move, waited until after 6 am to pass their verdict, even though the law required a minimum of one day before passing a verdict. It was an illegal meeting.

What then, was the 3rd violation of justice Caiaphas made which revealed how hypocritical he was? [slide 7]

3. Caiaphas permitted false testimony.

He welcomed liars into the courtroom even though Jewish law opposed false testimony.

In v. 59 of Mt. 26 we read, “The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.

⁶⁰ But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.”

Now, in vs.61, two witnesses did come forward [the minimum required in a capital case, who may or may not have been bribed by the Sanhedrin] and declared,

“This fellow [Jesus] said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”

Jesus had indeed said that, but he wasn’t speaking literally of the temple building itself.

He was referring to his own body; his death and resurrection 3 days later.

However, they took the words of these ‘witnesses’ at face value, and therefore as a threat to desecrate their Temple.

And that, in their eyes, was a capital offense.
What then, was the 4th violation of justice Caiaphas made which revealed how hypocritical he was? [slide 8]

4. Caiaphas forced incriminating testimony.

Vs.62f, “Then 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?"

Caiaphas was probably hoping Jesus would incriminate himself. "But," v.63, "Jesus remained silent."

A presiding judge ought to be neutral. But Caiaphas' animosity toward Jesus was so intense that he couldn't restrain himself.

Kind of like US congressman Adam Schiffs' virilent animosity toward Donald Trump during the impeachment hearings.

Caiaphas, frustrated by Jesus' silence, forced Jesus to incriminate himself.

V.63, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

By charging Jesus under the curse of an oath, Caiaphas is forcing Jesus to answer.

Jesus knows he is the Messiah but not quite the Messiah Caiaphas and the rest of the Sanhedrin have in mind, so he must answer with some explanation.

"You have said so," Jesus replied" in v.64 [forcing the questioner to take responsibility for the claim that he is the Messiah, the Son of God].

"But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One [the LORD] and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Jesus responds by alluding to two OT texts in Ps. 110.1 and Dan. 7.13.

He's telling them that eventually, they will not see him as he now stands before them, but as the undisputed King; as Messiah and Sovereign Judge of the world.

Though they are judging Jesus now, he will ultimately prove to be their judge.

Jesus' words enrage Caiaphas, and leads us to the 5th violation of justice Caiaphas made which reveal his utter hypocrisy as HP which was...
[slide 9]

5. Caiaphas manipulated a guilty verdict.

V.65f, "Then [Caiaphas] the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses?"

In that day, for the High Priest to tear his clothes was a sign of righteous indignation and intense anguish over sin.

Not only was this melodramatic, it was also very hypocritical of Caiaphas to act so righteous and angry over this alleged blasphemy charge because

he himself was so full of hatred and had been breaking the law numerous times since the arrest of Jesus.

Whether Caiaphas thought Jesus was blaspheming for claiming to be the Messiah,

or because he put himself at the Mighty One's right hand, the hand of power and authority,

or because he perceived Jesus as a political threat to the Temple establishment and the peace of the nation, is uncertain.

But what is certain is the verdict. And the verdict was blasphemy. And to blaspheme, as they charged, mandated the death penalty.

"Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. V. ⁶⁶ What do you think?" He is asking for their verdict.

“He is worthy of death,” they answered. Caiaphas manipulated a guilty verdict.

What then, was the 6th violation of justice Caiaphas made which revealed how hypocritical he was? [slide 10]

6. Caiaphas tolerated abuse of power.

V.67f, “Then they spit in [Jesus] face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him

[and the Greek verb for slapped can also mean clubbed] ⁶⁸ and said, “Prophecy to us, Messiah. Who hit you?”

A real Messiah should know, even if blindfolded.

Yet Caiaphas, as High Priest and leader of the Sanhedrin, did nothing to stop this illegal abuse.

He went right along with it, pretending it was for the good of the nation.

Such was the hypocrisy of Caiaphas, acting all pious and righteous, yet guilty of such gross injustice.

[slide 11, blank] Nothing turns people off Jesus more than X’ns who are hypocritical. We may think we’re faking it and pulling it off.

But over time, perceptive people can tell whether our lives are authentic or whether we’re just pretending.

We can find examples of hypocrisy everywhere.

I mentioned Ravi earlier, which is a very serious example of hypocrisy.

But on a lighter note, in San Jose, CA, Luke Goodrich was burning garbage in the backyard of his home, which was against the law.

What's worse was that while Luke was burning his garbage, the fire got out of control and ended up spreading over a hundred acres.

It took six helicopters and 400 firefighters to put the blaze out.

The irony of all this, and the hypocrisy of it, was that Luke Goodrich was the captain of the San Jose fire department.

Here's another example of hypocrisy. Back in the late 1930's, while living in Germany during Hitler's rule, a young boy held his father in high esteem.

This teenaged boy, however, was appalled by his dad's religious hypocrisy.

His father was Jewish. But one day he came home and said,

"From now on this family will be Lutheran. Don't ask any questions. It will be to our advantage."

That boy never forgot his father's blatant hypocrisy. And later in life he said, "Religion is the opiate of the people."

Who was he? He was Karl Marx, a German philosopher, economist and socialist revolutionary.

And Marx's writings, the *Communist Manifesto* in particular, negatively influenced millions of people, partly because his dad was such a hypocrite.

Jesus said in Mt. 23.27, "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 the bones of the dead and everything unclean."

That describes Caiaphas to a tee. And if we're honest with ourselves, can describe us too.

Not only was there the hypocrisy of Caiaphas. **[slide 12] A second kind of hypocrisy was seen in the life of Peter.**

When Jesus was arrested, his disciples deserted him and fled in fear. But Peter followed Jesus, even though at a distance, right up to the courtyard of Caiaphas.

Jesus had warned Peter earlier that day that before the night was over, before morning broke and the rooster crowed, he would deny him three times.

Peter had done his best in Gethsemane to defend Jesus, but his best had not been good enough as Jesus was arrested.

And now, we read in v.69, "... Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him.

"You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said." Her remark to Peter reflects both an accusation and curiosity.

⁷⁰ "But he denied it before them all. **[slide 13]** "I don't know what you're talking about," he said."

V⁷¹, "Then he went out to the gateway [of the courtyard, perhaps to get away from the light of the night fires],

where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁷² He denied it again, with an oath [this time]: **[slide 14]** "I don't know the man!"

Using an oath, Peter is invoking a solemn curse on himself if he is lying.

“After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your [Galilean] accent gives you away.”

⁷⁴ Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, [**slide 15**] “I don’t know the man!”

Peter was denying the Lord he had promised, only hours ago in the garden of Gethsemane, he would never deny.

Peter was guilty of a reverse hypocrisy. Whereas Caiaphas was pretending to be more spiritual than he really was.

Peter was pretending to be less spiritual than he really was.

He wasn’t in the habit of denying Jesus. But now, tired and frightened, if that’s what it took to convince the crowd, then that’s what he would do.

[**slide 16, blank**] This kind of reverse hypocrisy is common among X’ns today.

James Dobson told a story of a wife who went to lunch with 11 other women who were taking a French course at a local college.

One rather bold women asked, “How many of you around this table have been faithful to your husbands all your lives?” Only one women raised her hand.

One of the wives related that incident to her husband later that night, and he was crest fallen that she had not raised her hand.

She said, “But I *have* been faithful to you.” So he said, “Well, why didn’t you raise your hand?”

And she responded, “I was ashamed. I was afraid they would ridicule me for being too straight.”

I wonder if she could hear a rooster crow in the background?

Would you deny Jesus if someone were to say to you, “You’re not one of those Jesus-freaks, are you?”

Would you deny Jesus if you were in a group of people and one of them said, “Nobody here actually believes in Jesus, do they?”

Maybe you’re denial of Jesus is a little more subtle. Would you be embarrassed if people saw you pray before a meal in a restaurant?

Would you be embarrassed if people saw you reading the Bible while having a coffee at the mall.

In c.12.42 of his gospel, John tells us that many of the Pharisees believed in Jesus, but they would not confess their faith in him to others. Why not?

John tells us it was “for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God.”

[slide 17] This kind of hypocrisy has two negative consequences.

1. It damages your witness.

Jesus told people in his sermon on the mount in Mt. 5, that they are to be the light of the world; that a city on a hill cannot be hidden.

But how are people going to see Christ in you if you're hiding your light; if you're pretending like you don't know Jesus or denying him outright?

The 2nd negative consequence of this kind of hypocrisy is that... **[slide 18] You can become the person you're pretending to be.**

A former member of a police vice squad got so involved in undercover work dealing with cocaine, that he himself got arrested for using and trafficking cocaine.

He said, "I got so confused. I didn't know weather I was a police officer or a drug dealer. I played the role and then the role played me."

You can play the role of denying that you're a follower of Jesus, but eventually the role will play you, and you'll not know who you are. Nobody else will either.

[slide 19] Jesus was on trial for his life. Yet inspite the hypocrisy he faced from others, he demonstrated authenticity.

He wasn't concerned about impressing people. He was determined to please his heavenly Father.

So when asked a question that would implicate him and end in his being crucified, he told the truth. He didn't put on a pseudo-pious air.

He just spoke the truth and set for us a positive example of what authenticity; of what integrity and genuiness, is all about.

[slide 20] The writer of the book of Hebews says in 10.22, "Let us draw near to God with a *sincere* heart in full assurance of faith."

The Greek adjective for 'sincere' - ἀληθινός - used here, means, "to be genuine or authentic," as opposed to being hypocritical.

[slide 21, blank] Don't be hypocritical. Just be authentic. Be genuine, be sincere, so that the light of Christ can shine through you.

So what's can authenticity look like?

In my ministry, if someone comes to me and says, "Thanks for praying for my mother when she was sick,"

I need to be authentic and genuine in my response and say, "I'm thankful your mother is better, but to be honest, I forgot to pray for her."

Once while shopping in public, Robert Redford had a women look at him and say, "Hey, are you Robert Redford?" And he replied, "Only when I'm alone."

Wouldn't it be sad to be yourself only when you're alone and you're acting all the rest of the time?

Let's be authentic. Let's be genuine and sincere. Nothing can damage our witness more than being a hypocritical X'n.

Conversely, nothing is more attractive than living an authentic X'n life.

Going back into the time vault, I found a story about Phil Donahue, who, in the late 1960's,

pioneered and established the modern daytime talk show format that Oprah, Dr. Phil, and others now use.

He tells, in his autobiography, of a time when he was a young reporter for TV.

He was called to a mine disaster in the Appalachian region of West Virginia. He said, "It was freezing cold. The rescue workers were down in the mines.

Friends and family were gathered at the mouth of the mine praying that there loved ones would be rescued.

All of a sudden, someone in the crowd began to sing, “What a friend we have in Jesus.”

Others in the crowd began to join in, “all our sins and grief’s to bear...”

Finally the whole crowd was singing, “what a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer.”

Then an old preacher stepped out of the crowd and led the group in prayer for the people who were trapped. It was a brief but extremely moving prayer.”

Donahue said, “The trouble was my camera froze up. I couldn’t get it operating. I warmed it and patted it and finally got it to work but the prayer was over.”

So Donahue went to the preacher and said, “That was a beautiful prayer. Would you repeat it so I can get it on tape?”

The preacher said, “No.” Donahue said, “But sir, you don’t understand. I’m not a local TV reporter.

I represent 260 stations across the nation. Would you repeat the prayer?”

Again the preacher said, “No.” Donahue said, “Sir, if you’ll just repeat that prayer millions of people across the country will see it on CBS news tonight.”

And the preacher said, “No thank you,” turned and walked away.”

Donahue said, “I was furious and dumbfounded. But then a year later it hit me. I realized that what I had witnessed was something called integrity.”

Like that preacher, let us be a people of integrity; a people who seek to live authentic, genuine lives as we follow Jesus.

Let's pray. To paraphrase the words of General John Gowan, Lord you know my failing and my fears. I have no secrets unknown to you.

And while the future I cannot see, I ask that your promised presence would travel with me

as I seek to live a truthful, authentic life, letting the light of Jesus shine in and through me.

I invite you to sing with me song 715 "Knowing My Failings" 724 P
Prayer