



Sunday, May 9, 2021

Rev. Dr. Michael R. Fitzgerald, Senior Pastor

Sermon #40 from the Gospel of John

“Don’t Miss the Miracles”

John 11:45-57 (King James Version)

Good morning and welcome! Happy Mother’s Day to all the Moms here today! We just had a beautiful Parent/Child Dedication Service which is always a special occasion.

We’re going to finish John 11 today; it’s the last living disciple’s account of the life of Jesus Christ. Most of the other disciples died early in life as martyrs. By the grace of God, John was allowed to live past the age of ninety. No earthly man knew or loved Jesus any more than John. He was one of the three “leading” disciples—Peter, James, John. He referred to himself as the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” That’s true for each of us—if you’re a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, He loves you. He wants to use you in His work as much as He wanted to use the old disciple John. It’s so evident how John loves Jesus; he wrote this Gospel to leave behind after his death that it would lead the world to Jesus Christ. It has lead millions of people to Him as Lord and Savior; especially the words from John 3:16.

John 11 contains the greatest earthly miracle of Jesus—raising Lazarus from the dead four days after his death and burial. In the past two sermons we studied the gripping account of Mary and Martha’s grief in the loss of their brother, Lazarus. We hear Jesus’ promise to both of them “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who lives in me will never die.” He asked the women if they believed that; it’s a relevant question today: Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?

We pick up today’s passage after Lazarus had left the tomb, still in his graveclothes. Mary and Martha were at the tomb surrounded by a crowd mourning with them. How did the crowd react? Let’s read verses 45 and 46. “⁴⁵Then many of the Jews which came to Mary and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. ⁴⁶But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done.” After witnessing the resurrection, many in the crowd fell before the Lord Jesus Christ and said “I need you as my Lord and Savior.” They put their trust in Him because He had the authority over death. Others, however, were not impressed by His miracle. Their hearts remain unchanged; they didn’t understand the miracle and missed its meaning. They went back to Jerusalem as “informers” to the Pharisees. This shows us an amazing side of the human heart. Some people literally saw a man raised from the dead, walk out of his tomb after four days, and they could not believe it. How hard does a heart have to be in a situation like that not to give the glory to God through Jesus Christ His Son after seeing this miracle? Some totally ignored it—amazing.

I have witnessed that same kind of heart: A person who is at death's door, pulled back because of a surgery, an intervention, or God just miraculously healed them so they did not die. Miracles like that happen every single day. When you woke and got up this morning, that was a miracle of life from God. When you're thirteen or maybe twenty-six you don't think about that, but when you're over sixty you do! Every day is a gift; every day has its merit. Miracles happen around us all the time; they're not limited to the Bible. People who escape from death will say "I had a good doctor, great medicine, and dodged the bullet!" They missed the miracle! They missed the Great Physician! Listen, friends, when something miraculous happens in your life you need to give God the glory, honor, praise, and credit! Every day is a gift. We need to come to Jesus with praise, thanksgiving, and worship. Don't miss the miracles! Don't take Jesus for granted, don't underestimate His power, don't explain a miracle away.

In this passage, the "tattlers" run to the Pharisees and report this miracle. How did they react? Let's read the remaining verses. ⁴⁷Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. ⁴⁸If we let him thus alone, all *men* will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. ⁴⁹And one of them, *named* Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, ⁵⁰Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. ⁵¹And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; ⁵²And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. ⁵³Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. ⁵⁴Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. ⁵⁵And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. ⁵⁶Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast? ⁵⁷Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew *it*, that they might take him." May God add His blessing to the reading of His word.

Upon hearing the latest news of Jesus' ministry, the Jewish religious leaders form a council. (We Baptists call it a "committee!") "What do we do with Jesus? He's negatively affecting our lifestyle." This council was composed of Pharisees, leading religious priests of the temple, and the one high priest of the year, Caiaphas. It's interesting—he was a Sadducee. According to Acts 23:8, Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection, angels, or eternal salvation. To their credit, Pharisees did believe in resurrection and eternal life. Normally, Sadducees and Pharisees were so theologically different that they didn't meet together or socialize. But, they're on this "council" that was formed—a committee against Jesus to kill Him. Read verse 48. These men say "if we do nothing a lot of Israelites will put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and we'll lose our place. We'll lose our fame, fortune, fancy clothing, our popularity. The Jewish people will not get along with the Roman government. We need to take action and get rid of this Jesus." Then Caiaphas speaks up: "You're not thinking; you committee men are too negative in this process about getting

rid of Jesus. If we can accomplish this act of murdering Jesus, it's going to save our nation a lot of turbulence and trouble. It will smooth out our relationship with the Roman government." Read verse 50.

In verses 51-52 John interjects his own thoughts of what's transpiring from Caiaphas; it's inspired by the will and word of God. Caiaphas made a statement about Jesus, but he doesn't realize it because he's a very ungodly man. As he spoke, he prophesied the very word of God—about the death of Jesus. John says Jesus will die but not just to save the nation of Israel but to save the world through the old rugged cross. We're hearing the plan about Jesus but God Almighty is speaking through the lips of a lost man! Isn't God's word amazing?!! Now read verse 53—a job description of the council. These so-called "godly" men are forming the committee of the cross. In the remaining verses, Jesus knows there's a price on His head; He's a wanted man. He knew if He walked into Jerusalem, a death penalty awaits.

Remember this, Jesus knows, and I want you to know He is on a holy timetable—not an earthly one, but on God's. He is not going to die on the cross one minute before God Almighty says so. Men are not going to put Jesus on the cross; God Almighty will allow His Son to go to the cross at exactly the perfect moment—not a minute early, not a minute late. Scripture tells us Jesus is not running from men in fear but rather He is following His Father in faith. God Almighty is setting the steps for His Son. He's not walking in public crowds right now. He takes His disciples to Ephraim. In the Old Testament it was called Ephron—about fourteen miles north of Jerusalem. It's a safe place of quiet and prayer in preparation for what is coming. Very shortly after Jesus leaves Ephraim, He enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday for the last week of His earthly life. The cross is about two weeks away. Jews are getting ready to purify themselves because the cross event takes place during their high holy event, Passover. They're filtering into Jerusalem to get cleansed and ready for this celebration. In verse 56 they wonder: "Now that Jesus is a wanted man, do you think He'll come into town and walk among us?" The council of the cross issued a commandment: "If you know where Jesus is, report Him to us immediately. We will have Him arrested, taken, and eventually see to it that His life will end."

As Chapter 11 ends, we're getting closer and closer to the centerpiece and center point of human history—when Jesus Christ dies to save us all. Jesus was surrounded by all kinds of people—those who loved Him, hated Him, questioned Him, unsure of Him. God has shown me that different people two thousand years ago are much like different people today. The crowds haven't changed much in that time span. I believe there are four groups of people: **(1)** Some are like the council of the cross in that they literally hate Jesus and everything He stands for. Some are atheists and adherents to other religions; some believe Jesus is a hoax, a fake. They hate Him and His message of being our Savior. This group is not out of the reach of His grace. If any turned and went to Him, He would forgive their sin and adopt them as son or daughter. **(2)** Some people know the name of Jesus but have no clue of who He is because they have no relationship with Him. They're lost; they're sheep without a shepherd headed for hell. They've never turned a page of this Holy book. They don't know the love of Christ expressed for their lives. They don't understand the cross, the empty tomb. These people are all over the world; some walk past us every day. Jesus sends us

out as the outreach arm of the church. Yes, we gather here to worship but when we walk out those doors, we're the outreach arm of Jesus. These people need to know Him! Praise God we have witnesses of Him in other countries. (3) Some folks acknowledge Jesus answers prayer and that He does indeed live. At some point in their life, they may have attended or joined church and even baptized. But He's just not important enough to worship, to serve, to be the center point in their life. They know Him but are too busy and have too many distractions. They can't be bothered on Sunday mornings. We need to reclaim these people; reach out, bring them to church, get them on the right path with Jesus Christ. (4) Some are like the disciple John. They've seen the miracle of salvation; they love the Lord with all their heart. Jesus is the centerpiece of their life; everything revolves around Him. I want to be in this group! You need to be in this group that life is about living for your Savior. He's the first thought in the morning and last prayer at night. We know the miracles and need to deliver the good news about them to a hurting world in need of a Savior. Don't miss your miracle. Don't miss the fact that you are a son or daughter of God by the old rugged cross not by your talent, energy, or income. So am I. Solely saved by grace; never cease to be thankful.

If you're here today and have never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you need to know Him and realize that He knows your name. He knows everything about us—whether we're lost or saved. He is ready and willing to open His arms and receive you as His son or daughter. It doesn't matter your background. If there was a time you hated Him, He's willing to forgive and receive you now. Say "I need You, Lord. I love You and want You to be my Savior. I believe in the cross, the empty tomb, and that my name was on Your heart and You went through all of that for me." Say yes to Him today. Don't let the miracle pass by you!

Let Us Pray: Our Father, our God, thank You for the miracle of salvation. I, for one, too often take it for granted. I pray You will help us see the vision of what Jesus did for us on the cross and walking out of His empty tomb. He did it for me and for every one of us! What a miracle that offers us salvation! Help us, Father, daily to be thankful for the miracle. For that one who needs You, the miracle of salvation is waiting this moment for him or her to say "Yes, Lord, I believe in the cross and that You died for me. I want to give You my life; I'm a sinner and need forgiveness. I accept You as my Savior." May they come to You; the miracle begins today. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.