

## Jesus Says To His Enemies.

Text: John 11:46-57

1) You meant evil against Me

Suggested Hymns:

2) But God meant it for good

77, 149, 408, 85, 348

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 11:46–57, *<sup>46</sup> But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. <sup>47</sup> Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, “What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. <sup>48</sup> If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”*

*<sup>49</sup> And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”*

*<sup>51</sup> Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.*

*<sup>53</sup> Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. <sup>54</sup> Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.*

*<sup>55</sup> And the Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves. <sup>56</sup> Then they sought Jesus, and spoke among themselves as they stood in the temple, “What do you think—that He will not come to the feast?” <sup>57</sup> Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

One of the most intensely interesting narratives of the Old Testament is that of Joseph, the favourite son of Jacob. Who of us has not been moved to indignation against Joseph's wicked brothers when we read of their cruelty towards that poor boy, their lies, their treachery, etc.

Who has not pitied him when he was accused by that lewd and deceitful woman, Potiphar's wife? Who has not rejoiced at Joseph's rescue and advancement? Tears have started when we read how he wept at the sight of his brothers, so distressed and humiliated before him, and when he saw his beloved brother Benjamin.

There are no more-fitting words to describe the life of that man Joseph than the words in which he himself summarised it all, as we read in Genesis 50:20, <sup>20</sup> ***But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.***

But the story of Joseph, beautiful as it is in itself, is not of chief importance because of Joseph, but because of Jesus, of whom Joseph is only a type. Here in our text we have the fulfilment of what Joseph's story simply typified. Here we see Jesus who could say to all His enemies: "***You meant evil against Me; but God meant it for good.***" May the Lord bless our meditation.

### **1. Jesus Says To His Enemies You Meant Evil Against Me**

The enemies of our Lord hated Him in spite of His goodness and of His good works; yes, the more good He did, the more truth He spoke, the more bitter became the malice of their hearts against Him.

In the verse preceding our text we are told how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. What a wonderful work! Should not every Israelite have come to this Man and acclaimed Him the Saviour whom God had sent to His people?

We read in John 14:11, <sup>11</sup> ***Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.*** But instead of that they are filled with jealous rage, as we read in John 10:32, "***Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?***"

Such wickedness is satanic. Jesus therefore also told them that they were of their father, the devil. We read in Revelation 12:9, *that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, ... deceives the whole world.* The old Serpent, has always sought the Seed of the woman. His enmity against Christ, and against His flock, and against His truth, has always been wicked and satanic.

For example, the murder of the poor Jewish children in Egypt at the time of Pharaoh, and the infants in Bethlehem under Herod. The early Christians, the burning at the stake at the time of the Spanish Inquisition.

And although today open acts of violence are not so common, yet insidiously, under cover and slyly, the enemies are still at work undermining faith and morals.

Modernism in the churches, religious indifference among the masses, scoffing, and impurity in popular literature are but symptoms of the hatred against Jesus and against His Church.

And does not the Church of Christ today do good and speak truth? Is it not preaching the Bible? Is it not feeding the poor? Is it not helping the orphan? Is it not leading and protecting the young? Is it not heeding the temporal and spiritual need of the child? But what is it receiving? Scorn, ridicule and criticism form the masses. As Scripture says, *“You meant evil against Me; but God meant it for good.”*

The evil thoughts which filled Jesus’ enemies burst forth into accusations against Him. They prophesy all manner of harm that is to follow His activity. *“If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.”*

Enmity against Christ cloaks itself in the beautiful apparel of patriotism and love of the masses. These men declare that they must protect their people against this deceiver, that they must defend their nation and their country against this traitor.

Pharaoh of old declared concerning the Israelites that they would multiply and, if any war was to break out, they would join with his enemies.<sup>1</sup> He declared that it was his duty to exterminate this hateful seed.

At the time of Jesus' birth, Herod was actuated by the same fear of the loss of his kingdom. The heathen Romans declared that the Christians were the cause of the downfall of the Roman empire. At the time of the Reformation, Luther was condemned as an enemy of the government.

And so it is today. The Christian Church, although it is the very mother of all proper education, is denounced as an enemy of true understanding. Because faithful teachers will not tolerate false doctrine, they are reviled as narrow-minded, and their exclusiveness is ridiculed. Evil thoughts of the masses break forth in lying accusations.

But these evil thoughts not only express themselves in words, the enemies of Christ proceed to deeds. In our text, one of their number declares that it is necessary for the people's good that this Man should die. He spoke this because of his murderous, blood-thirsty hatred against the Saviour, and therefore *both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a command, that if anyone knew where [Jesus] was, he should report it, that they might seize Him.*

It has always been like this. Where it was possible, the foes of Christ sought the very life of the flock of Christ. Abel died as a martyr of Christ. Moses, David, and Joash, had to flee for their lives. Jesus Himself was nailed to the cross. Every one of His disciples, as far as we know, with the exception of John, died by the hand of the persecutor.

Thousands upon thousands of the disciples of Christ have sealed their testimony with their blood. And to this day the lives of the true Christians are embittered by violent persecution.

Look, then, what evil thoughts the enemies of Christ have against Him and His flock. Oh, we are hated! The old Serpent is always ready to strike. The enemies are thinking, they are planning, they are conspiring, they are plotting evil, against the Church.

It is a bitter struggle that is appointed to us, just as Jesus foretold in John 16:20, <sup>20</sup> *Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.*

And in Matthew 10:16-22, <sup>16</sup> *Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*

*<sup>17</sup> But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. <sup>18</sup> You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. <sup>19</sup> But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; <sup>20</sup> for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.*

*<sup>21</sup> “Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup> And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.*

Evil thoughts, lying accusations, blood-stained persecutions, that is what we must expect. What bitter tears have been shed, what wailing has been heard, even as Rachel wept for her children!

No human history can record all the sorrow that the evil thoughts against Christ have caused. But in spite of all this we have no reason to despair, but every reason to rejoice, for Jesus can say to all His foes: *“but God meant it for good.”*

## **2. Jesus Says To His Enemies But God Meant It For Good.**

The heathen rage, and the people plot a vain thing, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel against the Lord and against His Anointed. But Scripture says that *He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision.*<sup>2</sup> By God’s almighty power He controlled all the rage of the enemies in such a way that thereby Jesus was glorified and His little flock gained the final victory.

Notice that here in our text, while the enemies were expressing their hatred against Jesus, they make this confession: *“What shall we do? For this Man works many signs.* What a testimony that is for Jesus out of the mouth of His very enemies!

Likewise Nicodemus had to confess, as written in John 3:2, *“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*

They say something which strengthens our faith: *this Man works many signs. This Man works many miracles.* And they were eye-witnesses and would gladly have disproved it, if they could, but they were forced to admit His power.

Likewise at the time when the tax-collectors and sinners gathered around Jesus, His enemies declared: *“This Man receives sinners and eats with them.”*<sup>3</sup> They said this in order to slander Jesus as a companion of wicked and lewd persons. But what have they done? The Christian Church has taken up this very word from the mouth of the enemies and made of it one of its most beautiful hymns: *“Jesus sinners doth receive.”*<sup>4</sup>

It was the same with the crucifixion. We read in Matthew 27:42–43, <sup>42</sup> *“He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. <sup>43</sup> He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”*

But Jesus says in John 10:11, <sup>11</sup> *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.*

From their mouth we have the statement recorded in John 10:33, <sup>33</sup> *The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”*

What does the high priest say in our text? *Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, <sup>50</sup> nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.”*

<sup>51</sup> *Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, <sup>52</sup> and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.*

While He was advising the death of Jesus, he was forced to prophesy salvation through Jesus’ suffering.

So it has always been. The enmity and malice of the foes have worked together for the salvation of God’s people. Cain slew Abel, but Abel is still speaking. We read in Hebrews 11:4, <sup>4</sup> *By faith Abel offered to God a more*

*excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.*

Pharaoh persecuted the Jews, and this helped them to gain the Promised Land. Saul persecuted David, and this typified the persecution of the great Son of David, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

It is just so today. It is true, we cannot understand and see God's ways beforehand. But as Jesus said, ***“What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.”***<sup>5</sup>

We read in Luke 21:33, <sup>33</sup> ***Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*** Therefore we are certain that the Church, which the gates of hell have not vanquished, will endure also now and gain the victory in the end.

Let us not be as the Emmaus disciples, who thought all was lost, whereas Jesus told them, in Luke 24:25–26, ***“O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?”***

Balaam was hired to curse Israel, but was forced to give us those beautiful prophecies of Christ. One of them is written in Numbers 24:17, <sup>17</sup> ***“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel.***

And what is true here of Jesus and His flock is true of every Christian. You who are experiencing the enmity of the world, who are passing under the wrath of God, who are walking through the dark valley of discouragement, who are bearing a burden that is nearly too heavy for you, be sure the devil and your foes have evil thoughts against you.

They mean you ill, they will cause you to endure the suffering which is the portion of every child of God. We read in Hebrews 12:6, <sup>6</sup> ***For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.”***<sup>6</sup> But remember there is One sitting in the heavens. He will not allow you to be tempted above that you are able.<sup>7</sup>

The hymnist expressed it this way,<sup>8</sup>

Belovèd, it is well:

God's ways are always right,

Therefore we can triumphantly say with St. Paul as written in Romans 8:18,  
<sup>18</sup> *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 1:10

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 2:4

<sup>3</sup> Luke 15:2-3

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 317

<sup>5</sup> John 13:7

<sup>6</sup> See also Colossians 1:24

<sup>7</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:13

<sup>8</sup> Hymn 408