

Under-Estimating Christ.

Text: Mat 26.57-68

Suggested Hymns:

48, 305, 73T170a, 70, 69

1) The Sanhedrists

2) The people of today

3) You and I

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 Matthew 26:57-68, ⁵⁷ *And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. ⁵⁸ But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.*

⁵⁹ *Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰ but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'" ⁶² And the high priest arose and said to Him, "Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?" ⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"*

⁶⁴ *Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." ⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! ⁶⁶ "What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." ⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, ⁶⁸ saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?" (NKJV)*

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

Dear friends in Christ,

To err is human. All people make mistakes. Some mistakes are not serious and may involve only a personal inconvenience, a loss of time, or small loss of money. People make mistakes in telephone numbers, in addresses, and in the sums of addition.

But some mistakes may be very costly. When the captain of Titanic made the mistake of disregarding the ice-berg warning, he made a mistake that cost hundreds of lives. When a big business man or a banker makes a mistake, it may wipe out the savings of millions of dollars.

However, the worst mistakes possible are made in field of religion, because they involve not merely the physical side of man, but also the spiritual, and not merely time, but eternity.

The worst mistake in religion is to ignore or under-estimate Christ, the center of time, the heart of the Christian religion, the Saviour of the world.

It is such a serious mistake because there is no salvation or sanctification without Christ. You are all aware of the Scripture texts, such as John 14:6, ⁶ *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me* and Acts 4:12, ¹² *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*¹

Still the mistake of under-estimating or ignoring Christ is very common. It was made at the time of His earthly mission as we read in Matthew 11:19, ¹⁹ *"The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"* This was partly a correct and a partly incorrect estimate. Jesus was *a friend of tax collectors and sinners*, but not a *glutton and a [drunkard.]* They knew who Jesus was but did not know His purpose.

The mistake of under-estimating Christ was made by the Jewish leaders. It has been made throughout the ages and is often made today. Therefore on the basis of this section of Passion-story that was red let us consider, "Under-estimating Christ." May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Under-estimating Christ **The Sanhedrists**

Our text begins, ⁵⁷ *And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.* This gives us the historical setting. Who laid hands on Jesus? It was Judas and his band in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was then led to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrin was a Council of seventy men composed of the best people among the Jews. They were Bible students, people of rank and standing, the highest churchmen. These very people, mentioned in our text were in a position to form the correct opinion about Jesus, but because of personal prejudice and jealousy they turned against Jesus and under-estimated Him in every way. This is plain at the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

The Sanhedrists under-estimated Christ's perfect life and doctrine. ⁵⁹ *Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, ⁶⁰ but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward ⁶¹ and said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"* They sought by means of false witnesses to attack Jesus and His teachings. But they were having difficulty in having the lying witnesses agree.

Then they misquoted John 2:19. Jesus had said, "*raise it up,*" which could be applied to His body; but they had said, "*build it up,*" referring the statement to the building of Temple.

They tried to accuse Jesus of lying, of making false statements, but failed. The challenge of Jesus "*Which of you convicts Me of sin?*"² also stood this test.

The Sanhedrists also under-estimated His work as the Christ. ⁶³ *But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!"* The name Christ, the Anointed, describes Jesus as to His work and office.

The Anointed, the Messiah, was to be the great Prophet, Priest, and King. These people ignored the testimony about Jesus. They ignored the angel's Christmas-message "*For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord.*"³ They ignored His wonderful work as the Prophet of Galilee, teaching, and preaching to the multitudes. They ignored His

almighty power as King, Lord over every sickness, storm, the elements, and even death itself. They certainly did not look upon this humble Nazarene as the great High Priest who would sacrifice Himself for the sins of the whole world.

They also under-estimated Christ's person. *I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!* The question of the high priest was not put for purpose of getting information, but shows the attitude of these people. They did not consider Him the Christ and they did not consider Him to be the Son of God either.

The calm, direct answer of Jesus, was *"It is as you said."* This is a direct, open assertion of His deity. The actions of the high priest are stated in our text. *Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!"* ⁶⁶ *"What do you think?"* The verdict of blasphemy, shows plainly that they did not accept the words of Jesus. They under-estimated, and even condemned His claim to divine Sonship.

The High Priest and Council also under-estimated the power of Jesus. We read, ⁶⁷ *Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands,* ⁶⁸ *saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"* They thought they could do with Jesus just what they pleased. They thought they could abuse Him, judge Him, condemn Him, and kill Him.

But see how wonderfully Jesus corrects them and warns them. Jesus develops the thought of the final Judgment, the wonderful glory and the ascension of Jesus. *Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

There can be no doubt that the Sanhedrists under-estimated Christ, and there can be no doubt that they made a serious mistake in doing this. But the Sanhedrists were not the only ones to make this mistake. It has been made throughout the Christian era and is also being made today.

2. Under-Estimating Christ The People Of Today

We begin by looking at the time after Christ ascended into heaven. Cerinthus in the days of John denied the deity of Christ. A few centuries later, Arians under the leadership of Arius denied the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, making Him merely like God and thus under-estimating Jesus.

During the dark Middle Ages, when the errors of Rome became ever more prominent, Jesus and His work were pushed into the background by the worship of Mary and work-righteousness. The Rationalists of the last century, and even many present-day church people, have elevated human reason and pushed Jesus into the background.

Today Jesus is not only under-estimated, but ignored, yes, warred against by atheistic individuals, groups and governments. These enemies of Jesus, following the footsteps of the Sanhedrists, are outspoken in their opposition to Jesus.

But the real Sanhedrists of today are the people high in the councils of the Protestant Church, who under the guise of friendship under-estimate and undermine Jesus.

There are three popular views, which are all definitely under-estimating Christ:

Firstly, those who look upon Jesus as a harmless, ignorant Galilean. A poor, misguided individual who suffered from a mental disorder thinking that he had great personal power.

Secondly, those who look upon Jesus as a wonderful man, but merely as a man. These people fail to realise that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. If He was not, then He was a liar and therefore not a wonderful man. Sadly, even some Protestant clergy do not believe in Jesus' deity.

Thirdly, those who look upon Jesus merely as a great teacher of morals and ethics but not as the Saviour from sin. This is a widespread view. People think they are honouring Christ, but they under-estimate Him. We read in 1 Peter 2:4, *'Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men.*

And in 1 John 2:1-2, *¹ My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

And also 1 John 1:7, ⁷ *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* The blood, not merely the teachings or the example of Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from sin. Many so-called Christians therefore under-estimate the person and work of Christ. We also are in danger of doing this.

3. Under-Estimating Christ

You And I

As Lutheran Bible Christians we may not deny Christ's deity or the work of Christ for our salvation; but so often we do not take His Word seriously enough. If we do not take Word seriously enough, if we try to shade it to suit ourselves, our whims and likes, we under-estimate Christ the Lord.

You and I are also in danger of under-estimating Christ's work. We may state glibly the Lutheran teaching, the teaching of the Bible⁴ that we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus; but so often there is much of the self-righteous spirit left in us. As soon as you rely upon your works just a little, you are under-estimating Christ.

You and I are in danger of under-estimating Christ and His Word as the one great remedy for the ills of the world. The one great need of the unchurched masses of our land and the untold millions of ignorant heathen is to tell them about Christ. We have the Christ. There is no salvation without Him. What are we doing to bring Him to others?

Let us therefore have the proper Scriptural estimate of Christ, His person, His work, and His mission here in this world. Amen

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

¹ See also John 15:5

² John 8:4

³ Luke 2:11

⁴ Romans 3:21-28