

Main Idea: The rejection of glory took place in four phases in John 11:45-57. As we observe these four phases, we'll learn about our problem as human beings, and about the divine solution for our problem.

- I. The rejection began with a mixed response (45-46).
  - A. Some saw and believed (45).
  - B. Some saw and betrayed (46).
- II. The rejection led to a deadly meeting (47-53).
  - A. We see motives revealed (47-48).
    1. They couldn't deny the facts.
    2. They didn't let the facts stand in the way of what they wanted most.
  - B. We hear a plan presented (49-50).
  - C. We learn of a prophecy proclaimed (51-52).
  - D. We see a plot to kill (53).
- III. The rejection led to a change in ministry focus (54).
  - A. Jesus avoided public ministry.
  - B. Jesus spent time in private ministry with the disciples.
- IV. The rejection led to a diabolic trap (55-57).
  - A. Everyone was looking for Jesus, but for selfish reasons.
    1. The people wanted to use Him.
    2. The leaders wanted to eliminate Him.
  - B. The Lord worked through it all to fulfill His plan to save sinners.

Take Inventory: How have I responded to His glory?

History is filled with accounts of people rejecting good things because they made a faulty assessment of what they were seeing.

E.g.—

But there's never been a more foolish rejection than this one. “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him (John 1:11).” When the Son of God came to earth as the God-man, His own people rejected Him.

“We have seen his glory,” said John in John 1:12, “the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” But having seen it, all but a handful, and those by the grace of God, rejected the glory they saw.

Of course, that's the human problem, and we're all guilty of it. By its very nature, sin does not respond rightly to God's glory. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.”

This is the message of the Gospel of John. Glory has come. Glory has been rejected. But even in the rejection, divine glory is put on display, for the Lord is at work, moving, advancing, fulfilling His eternal plan to rescue a rejecting world.

There's no excuse for what they did, and what we've done. It's unthinkable to see and then reject the glory of God in the face of His Son. But that's what happened. And it's what God actually used to fulfill His plan to form a people for His eternal glory.

I've entitled this morning's message, “The Rejection of Glory.” I could have entitled it, “The Rejection of Glory and the Glory of Rejection,” or “The Glory of Rejection in the Rejection of Glory,” for the Sovereign Lord actually used the very rejection of His Son to orchestrate the brilliant display of the glory of His grace.

This morning, as we open our Bibles to the final section of John 11, we're going to see how this rejection of glory happened, and what the Lord did about it, and what difference this can and should make in our lives today.

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\*\*\* Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

But first, we need some background. Our text begins in verse 45, “Therefore.” When we see a connector like that in the Bible, we need to go back and see what it’s *there for*.

**The Setting (John 11:1-44):** Verse 45 refers to “many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary.” They’ve come to visit Mary because her brother became sick and eventually died. This Lazarus, along with his sisters, Mary and Martha, were special friends of Jesus. When he became ill, the sisters sent word to Jesus, “Lord, the one you lover is sick (3).”

But instead of healing Lazarus, Jesus chose to demonstrate His love for Lazarus by letting him die. How could this be a demonstration of love? In so doing He permitted this man and His brothers, and others too, to see the most beautiful sight in the universe, *the glory of God*.

Verse 4—“This sickness will not end in death.” Note that Jesus didn’t say that Lazarus wouldn’t die. He said this *wouldn’t end in death*. “No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

So the Lord purposed to work through this sickness and resulting death to bring glory to God and Himself. And so it happened.

Lazarus did die, and they buried Him in a tomb. Jesus did go to Lazarus, after he’d been in his tomb four days. He announced to Martha (in verses 25-26), “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

She did believe. She brought Mary to Jesus, and Jesus wept with her and the others, and went to the tomb with them.

“Take away the stone,” He said in verse 39. “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God (40)?”

And as a significant evidence of her God-given faith, Martha gave the instruction to remove the stone. The scene was now set for the display of glory.

Jesus prayed. “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me (41-42).”

Then Jesus called out in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” And John says in verse 44, “The 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.’”

Now that’s a display of divine glory! To merely speak to a dead man, and by the power of those words, to cause death to let go of that man so that he walked out of his tomb alive, that’s glory!

And by opening our Bibles, we too have seen it, the display of glory. Now it’s time to see the effect of that display.

*Therefore*. Because of what Jesus did, here’s what happened. It’s the shock of all shocks. Glory seen became glory rejected.

Have you ever seen glory rejected? I know you have. I have. I’ve shared the work of Christ with people before and asked, “Would you like to know more about this person?” Only to hear them change the subject. The rejection of glory.

In the story before us in John 11:45-57, the rejection of glory took place in four phases. As we observe these four phases, we’re going to learn both about our fundamental problem as human beings, and about the divine solution for our problem.

### I. The rejection began with a mixed response (45-46).

Again, a dead man has just come to life. It's an undeniable miracle. No one can deny it, nor do they try. Everyone, then and now, responds to that miracle and to the One who performed it. John identifies two groups of people with two very different responses.

**A. Some saw and believed (45).** "Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him."

This is the appropriate response to Jesus. *Faith*. Of course, as John demonstrates throughout his gospel, not all faith is saving faith. Is this? We don't know. Only time will tell. When faith is saving faith, there will be fruit.

In this case, John says that *many* believed. Many who had *seen* what Jesus did, put their *faith* in Him [lit. "believed into Him"]. Seeing led to believing.

But that doesn't always happen. Seeing doesn't always lead to believing, and it didn't in this story.

**B. Some saw and betrayed (46).** "But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done."

Why did they go? We're not told. Maybe some went to try and persuade the Pharisees that Jesus was the real thing. The tone of the text, however, suggests otherwise. They seem to be tattle-tailors, and they want to keep the Pharisees supplied with the latest intel on what Jesus is up to.

So I take it by John's contrast that, while some saw and believed, this second group *didn't* put their faith in Jesus. Instead, they saw the glory of God and responded by betraying Jesus to the very men who wanted Him dead.

A mixed response is not uncommon. It happens nearly every time the glory of the Lord is put on display. Some see it and believe. Some see it and look for ways to get rid of it. That brings us to phase two...

## II. The rejection led to a deadly meeting (47-53).

Notice the beginning of verse 47, "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin."

The Sanhedrin was the Jews' ruling organization in Israel. Undoubtedly, ultimate authority belonged to the Romans and their puppet rulers, but internally, the Sanhedrin held considerable clout. The priests (which were Sadducees) held the biggest stick in the Sanhedrin. The Pharisees were an influential minority, and most of them were scribes.

Most of the Pharisees didn't like Jesus. That's already been established in the gospel record. But the Pharisees lacked the political and legal authority to do anything about it. That authority belonged to the chief priests. And while most of the chief priests were Sadducees, and while the Pharisees and Sadducees didn't typically get along too well, their mutual hatred of Jesus now unites them.

John says that both the chief priests and the Pharisees called for the Sanhedrin to meet. Four things happened in this deadly meeting.

**A. We see motives revealed (47-48).** It starts at the middle of verse 47 and into verse 48, "'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If 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.'"

That's interesting.

1. *They couldn't deny the facts.* For that matter, they didn't even try to deny the facts. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs." They didn't say, "This Jesus keeps tricking the hoi paloi with His pseudo-magic. What are we going to do about

this deception?” No. They don’t deny the validity of His miracles. They can’t. There have been too many with too many witnesses.

John, himself an eye-witness, later wrote, “Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written (John 21:25).”

I remember talking to a man a few years ago who said he was an agnostic. “I don’t want to talk about Jesus,” he told me. My response was, “I probably don’t believe in the Jesus you don’t believe in, either. I’m quite sure you’ve never seen the true Jesus, and I’d like to introduce you to Him.”

That led to a Bible study in the gospels. And after a couple of months of seeing the true Jesus, this agnostic not only stopped being an agnostic, but he put his faith in the real Jesus!

But that’s not the situation these men are in. They’re not agnostics. They couldn’t deny the reality of Jesus, nor the facts regarding the miracles He’s performed, so they don’t even try. What did they do? It’s what we all do with Jesus, apart from grace.

2. *They didn’t let the facts stand in the way of what they wanted most.* And what do they want most? Listen again to their words, “If 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.”

There’s what’s driving these men. Two things. Our place. And our nation. That’s why they won’t even consider the possibility, in spite of the facts, that they’re wrong about Jesus. They’re driven by their desires.

We want our *place*, probably referring to the temple, but also all that the temple represented for them. And we want our *nation*, with the emphasis on *our*. They have a good thing going. They have positions with the clout and respect and wealth that go along with these positions. And if Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God is right, they’re going to lose what they so love.

Whenever there’s a fight, keep that in mind. People do what they do because of what they’re loving most in their hearts. James, the half-brother of Jesus, later talked about this reality in James 4:1-3, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don’t get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

That’s why, when a person loves his possessions, or his status, or his so-called reputation, or whatever, and you present the truth about Jesus to him, it doesn’t phase him. He doesn’t just need information. He needs a heart change. So while you’re giving him the truth about Jesus, keep in mind he’s already in love with something else, and a person can’t love two masters. For that matter, neither can we.

So at this deadly meeting, we hear motives revealed. Secondly...

**B. We hear a plan presented (49-50).** Motives always lead to plans. I want food, so I head to the refrigerator. I want a better job, so I send our resumes. I want peace, so I look for a way out of a tension-filled marriage. I want to see my neighbors saved, so I invite them over for dessert. Motives lead to plans.

In this case, notice the plan, “Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, ‘You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.’”

Who is this Caiaphas? D. A. Carson explains, “Joseph Caiaphas had been appointed high priest in ad 18 by the Roman prefect Valerius Gratus. His father-in-law was Annas, who himself filled the office during the years ad 6–15, and whose influence prevailed long after his term of office (*cf.* notes on 18:12ff.). Caiaphas remained in office until ad 36, when he and Pontius Pilate were both sacked at the same time.”<sup>1</sup>

John says that Caiaphas was high priest *that year*. That doesn’t mean he served only that year. John uses the term, *that year*, in the sense of “*that fateful year*,” the year the Messiah was crucified.<sup>2</sup>

*You know nothing at all!* says Caiaphas to the seventy or so leaders of Israel. Not exactly a model of diplomacy in action! This actually typifies how the Sadducees operated, according to first century Jewish historian, Josephus, who wrote, “The behavior of the Sadducees one toward another is in some degree wild, and their conduct with those who are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them.”<sup>3</sup>

*It is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.* Caiaphas falsely framed this problem as an either/or dilemma, in essence, suggesting there were only two alternatives in dealing with Jesus. Either kill Him, or let Him live and watch the nation perish.<sup>4</sup> Of course, there were other options, such as listen to Him, study His claims in light of Scripture, and believe in Him. But that is no option for a man who is in love with something else. Again, you cannot serve God *and* something else.

It’s worth noting that while the Jews chose to kill Him, they still ended up losing their place and their nation in AD 70.

Having seen the motives and the plan...

**C. We learn of a prophecy proclaimed (51-52).** “He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one.”

That’s interesting. *He did not say this on his own.* That doesn’t mean that Caiaphas was a puppet, for he certainly was not. He did what he did and said what he said because he wanted to do so. But unbeknownst to him, the Sovereign Lord “invested those words with a meaning he did not intend.”<sup>5</sup>

Even a clock with a dead battery gets it right twice a day.

Caiaphas intended one thing, but he ended up saying something far more. He uttered a double prophecy. Notice what he said.

One, Jesus will die for the Jewish nation. Of course, he meant that either Jesus dies, or the nation dies. And if the nation dies, then he and his self-serving friends will lose what matters most to them. So there’s the first prophecy. Jesus is going to die for the nation. The decision is made even before there’s been a trial. There will be no justice in His death, just expedience.

And there’s a second prophecy. Jesus will die for the scattered children of God. On the surface, that referred to the Jews in diaspora. But John is writing this account sixty years later, and he no doubt sees this in the fullest, spiritual sense. God’s scattered

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<sup>1</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (421). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>2</sup> According to Carson.

<sup>3</sup> Josephus, quote taken from MacArthur, p. 484.

<sup>4</sup> Observation by MacArthur, p. 484.

<sup>5</sup> Observation by MacArthur, p. 484.

children are not just people with Jewish blood, but people who receive Jesus as their Savior, whether they are Jew or Gentile.

But while they were once *two* people, they become *one* people. *To bring them together and make them one*, says the prophecy.

Turn the page and look into Acts, and what do you see? You see the church, right? You see a Jewish foundation and a Gentile structure built on top of it. So Caiaphas got it right. Jesus did die for, in behalf of, in the stead of, in place of, both the Jewish nation and God's scattered children in the world, and by His death the two became one.

This is beautiful to behold, beloved. In the rejection of glory we see the glory of rejection. The Sovereign Lord used a man who rejected the glory of His Son to proclaim the glory that his very rejection produced.

Now, having seen the motives, the plan, and the prophecy, finally...

**D. We see a plot to kill (53).** "So from that day on they plotted to take his life." It's unthinkable, but true. *They*—Israel's spiritual leaders, Bible men who should have known better. *They plotted*—that's what criminals do, not the highest court in the land. They plotted *to take*—not to investigate, not to verify guilt, but to take. *To take his life*—to eliminate, to kill, to get rid of the very life of the One who just brought Lazarus back to life.

That's the outcome of this deadly meeting. Carson sums it up, "In short, Jesus is not to be arrested in order to be tried; he is to be tried because he has already been found guilty (as Mk. 14:1–2 presupposes). And this, John insists, has been precipitated by the raising of Lazarus (*cf.* also 12:10)."<sup>6</sup>

How could they do such a thing? How could anyone, for that matter? Paul pondered that very question in 1 Corinthians 2:7-8, "No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

That brings us to the third phase in the rejection of glory. It started with a mixed response. Then came a deadly meeting. Thirdly...

### III. The rejection led to a change in ministry focus (54).

That's verse 54, "Therefore Jesus no longer moved about publicly among the Jews. Instead he withdrew to a region near the desert, to a village called Ephraim, where he stayed with his disciples."

When He raised Lazarus, He was in Bethany, just two miles from Jerusalem (11:18). But with the deadly plot in motion, Jesus alters His ministry focus and heads to a village called Ephraim near the desert. That's four miles north-east of Bethel and about twelve miles from Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

Notice the shift that's occurring. For the past two plus years the Lord has preached and done miracles all over Israel, from Galilee in the north to Judea and Jerusalem in the south. But now with the plot underway, Jesus withdrew from the multitudes and masses.

In short...

**A. Jesus avoided public ministry.** And...

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<sup>6</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (423). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

<sup>7</sup> Information by Carson

**B. Jesus spent time in private ministry with the disciples.** In fact, the closer the cross becomes, the more time Jesus will spend in private with the Twelve.

Is that because He's afraid? No. It's because though He has come to die for others, He will die in His own time. But it's also because this is His method. Disciple-making. Not to win the crowds, but to make disciples who will make disciples who will make disciples. That's what He told His men just before returning to heaven in Matthew 28:19-20, "Therefore *go and make disciples of all nations.*"

That's our mission? And how do we fulfill it? Jesus said by "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Once again, we see the glory of rejection in the rejection of glory, for as the Jewish leaders reject Jesus, the Master moves His plan into overdrive. Which brings us to the fourth and final scene.

#### IV. The rejection led to a diabolic trap (55-57).

John writes in verses 55-57, "When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. They kept looking for Jesus, and as they stood in the temple area they asked one another, 'What do you think? Isn't he coming to the Feast at all?' But the chief priests and Pharisees had given orders that if anyone found out where Jesus was, he should report it so that they might arrest him."

John mentions three Passovers in his gospel. The first is back in chapter two (2:13ff). The second is in chapter six (6:4). This one is the third. Carson remarks, "The one mentioned here (11:55) is the third and last for the period of Jesus' ministry, which therefore establishes that his public ministry ran a little over two years. If the first Passover was in ad 28, forty-six years after the date Herod the Great began the rebuilding of the temple (2:20), the year of Jesus' death and resurrection is ad 30."<sup>8</sup>

Since it's Passover time, which is in the early Spring, Jews from all over the country were making the trek to the temple in Jerusalem. Some suggest that a million people packed into Jerusalem during the major Jewish festivals.

John says they are heading there *for their ceremonial cleansing*. Do you see the irony in this? The people are coming to Jerusalem to get rid of guilt, while the so called spiritual leaders are about to cover their own hands with the guilt of Messiah's blood.

Verse 56 says, "They kept looking for Jesus." That's a good thing, isn't it? To look for Jesus. Not necessarily, for a person can look for Jesus for a variety of reasons. In this case...

#### **A. Everyone was looking for Jesus, but for selfish reasons.**

1. *The people wanted to use Him.* To get miracles, to get a better life, maybe even to get a little entertainment. But it boiled down to *using* Him. Worse yet...

2. *The leaders wanted to eliminate Him.* It's no longer a secret, either. The chief priests and Pharisees passed down the order, "If you have any information regarding this man, Jesus, report it at once. We have issued a warrant for his arrest."

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<sup>8</sup> Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (424). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

Never forget this, my friend. There's a difference between showing interest in Jesus and being committed to Jesus. Here are just two examples of people who were interested in finding Jesus, but for deficient reasons.

Why are you interested in Jesus? You came to church today. That's a good thing, but why? Is it Jesus for Jesus' sake, or Jesus for your sake? Or to put it another way, are you interested in seeing His glory or some form of your own?

Here's the amazing thing. Even when people minimize His glory, which is what sinners do, He continues to manifest His glory in His response to those sinners. It's true. We've just seen the Lord perform an amazing miracle, the raising of a dead man. And while some believed, some betrayed Him, and some determined to kill Him. And while they were responsible for those glory-defying responses...

**B. The Lord worked through it all to fulfill His plan to save sinners.** In just a short time, He will hand Himself over to these wicked men, and let them do to Him what their wicked hearts desire to do. Nail Him to a Roman cross. Unthinkable. The rejection of glory. And yet in the rejection of glory, we see more glory put on display, the glory of rejection, the glory of the cross.

What are they singing about in heaven? The slaughtering of the Lamb. "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and *glory* and praise (Rev 5:12)!"

Is the terrible, horrible cross beautiful to you? Do you sing about? Do you cherish it? Do you *glory* in the slaughtering of the Lamb?

This has always been God's chosen method of working. Remember what Joseph told his brothers in Genesis 50:20? "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

And so it is in our lives too. The glory of the Slaughtered One is made known to the world through the rejection, and at times slaughtering, of His own.

"All things work together for good...that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:28-29)."

Friends, for the past four weeks we've seen glory as we've walked through John 11. Now we've seen the rejection of glory. It's time to take inventory with a very personal question...

#### Take Inventory: How have I responded to His glory?

Everyone responds. Even no response is a response.

"What's the right response to His glory?" you ask. Listen again to John's answer in John 1:10-14. Let me start with verse 14, and then work backwards.

Verse 14—"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." So to look at Jesus is to see the glory of God. We've seen it! says John. And what's the right response?

Verses 10-11, "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." There's the wrong response, to see Him and refuse to receive Him.

Verses 12-13, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

There it is. Receive Him. Believe in His name. Become a child of God.