



The High Priest's View

On the Outside Looking In #1 • March 22, 2026

Series Introduction

This Easter, I want to take a look at Jesus through the eyes of some people who were on the wrong side of the story.

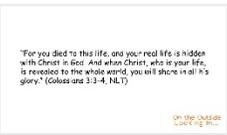
You and I come to this time of year with expectation and joy. At Easter, we understand the great gift that God provided through the sacrifice of His Son. We are exceedingly thankful for the salvation that comes through the cross! And while we remember His sacrifice continually, we also remember that the sacrifice wasn't the end. Jesus conquered death! Jesus rose from the dead! He lives, and He will live forever more. His experience is a precursor for us – the source of our hope!

“For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.” (Colossians 3:3–4, NLT)

We talk of these things together, as “privileged insiders;” we talk of the things we know and believe and celebrate, as ones to whom the mystery of Christ has been revealed. Easter is a time for **insiders** to rejoice!

But not everyone is inside. There are many who *aren't* insiders. There are many today who stand on the **outside** and don't understand, trust, believe, or hope like we do. To them, Easter is just another date on the calendar, a time made special because there are extra candies in the stores and seasonal decorations in Hobby Lobby. They might use the occasion for family events, attending Easter Egg hunts (or Color Runs). They might take the opportunity to gather with the extended family and share a meal together. But it isn't about Jesus; He isn't significant, the cross isn't special. Easter is just a seasonal holiday filling space between St. Patrick's Day and Cinco de Mayo.

Many people are on the **outside** of the story looking in (if they look at all). They do so today, just as they have done throughout history. In fact, in the days that led up to the *first* Easter, our Bible introduces us to *many people* who were **on the outside looking in**.



As we prepare for Easter, I'd like to share their viewpoint. I want to look at Jesus through the eyes of some people who were on the wrong side of the cross. I want to ask:

- **How did they see Jesus?**
- **What errors or mistakes did they make?**
- More importantly, **how can we help avoid making those same mistakes?** How do we overcome them?...
- ...and MOST importantly, if we find ourselves on the outside, **how can we cross over to become an insider?**

Today, I want to look through the eyes of one outsider with great influence. He shows up at different points in the story, and you might recognize his name.

He is **Caiaphas, the High Priest**...and he is going to show us that

KNOWING BETTER ISN'T ENOUGH!



Getting to Know Caiaphas

[Camera opens. Caiaphas sits casually, maybe adjusting his robes, giving a confident half-smile.]

“Hey... Caiaphas here. Yeah, that Caiaphas—but let’s not lead with work, alright?”

I’m the High Priest, which basically means long hours, big decisions, and a lot of people asking me questions I’d rather not answer before coffee.

When I’m not in the Temple, I enjoy quiet evenings, good wine, meaningful conversations... and keeping things... orderly. Big fan of tradition. Structure. Stability. You know—no chaos.

Friends would say I’m decisive, loyal to my people, and maybe a little intense—but hey, that comes with the job.

If you appreciate a man who knows what he believes, stands his ground, and looks good in formal wear... we might get along just fine. Just... don’t bring too much controversy into my life.”

[He smirks slightly.] *“Trust me... I’ve had enough of that already.”¹*



¹ Script generated with ChatGPT



Caiaphas was the high priest during the life and ministry of Jesus. As the official head of the Jewish state, Caiaphas presided over the council, or Sanhedrin—its highest court. Next to the Roman governor, he was the most powerful man in Judea and was responsible to the Romans for the conduct of the nation.²

As you read the New Testament and hear his name, you need to remember those political connections. Caiaphas was attuned to political unrest, and he was aware that his population’s safety rested on their ability to appease the Roman occupiers of the land!

That knowledge explains his reactions when we first encounter him in the Gospel of John. In John 11, we find Jesus in the town of Bethany, a couple of miles away from Jerusalem. He has arrived at the home of his good friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. But the mood isn’t happy when He arrives, because Lazarus has died! Jesus speaks to those who are mourning and proclaims,

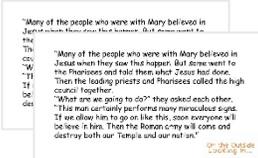
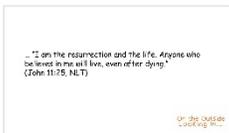
... “I am the resurrection and the life. Anyone who believes in me will live, even after dying.” (John 11:25, NLT)

And soon after, he goes to the tomb where Lazarus has been buried for four days and does what seems impossible! He says, “*Lazarus, come out!*” And Lazarus does, still wrapped in his grave clothes! It is a miracle! It impacts everyone who witnesses it and everyone who hears of it.

And that brings us to John 11:45-53 and our encounter with Caiaphas.

“Many of the people who were with Mary believed in Jesus when they saw this happen. But some went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together.

“What are we going to do?” they asked each other. “This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.”



² Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). In *Tyndale Bible dictionary* (pp. 248–249). Tyndale House Publishers.

Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, “You don’t know what you’re talking about! You don’t realize that it’s better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.”

He did not say this on his own; as high priest at that time he was led to prophesy that Jesus would die for the entire nation. And not only for that nation, but to bring together and unite all the children of God scattered around the world. So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus’ death.” (John 11:45–53, NLT)

Caiaphas isn’t part of the insiders, celebrating with Jesus and eating dinner with a previously buried Lazarus. No, he is on the outside looking in, trying to make sense of it all, putting Israel’s security ahead of its Savior.



A Man Who Should See

Sometimes people are so close to a situation that they miss the things that should be obvious.

Blind Spots



We all have “cognitive blind spots.” They exist because our brains are constantly bombarded with an overwhelming amount of information. To cope, our brains have developed a nifty little trick: **selective attention**. It’s like having a bouncer at the door of your mind, deciding what gets in and what gets left out in the cold. This process is crucial for our survival and sanity, but it also means that sometimes, important details slip through the cracks.

Science has identified several types of blindness that we experience.

1. **Inattentional Blindness:** This is when we’re so focused on a specific task that we completely miss something obvious right in front of us.

2. **Change Blindness:** It’s our failure to notice changes in our environment, even when they’re right under our noses. It’s the reason why you might not notice your wife’s new haircut until she points it out (and why you might end up sleeping on the couch as a result).



*3. **Attentional Blink:** This is like your brain's version of a slow internet connection. When we're presented with a rapid sequence of visual information, our brains sometimes "blink," missing information that comes too quickly after something we've just processed. Our brains need a moment to catch their breath before taking in new info.³*

How many have experienced those kinds of "blind spots"?

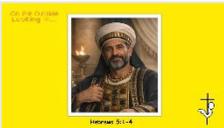
Did you notice the flipped sermon title on the slides?

If you've done it, you can better understand how Caiaphas could be so blind to the truth. Because, if anyone should see this situation clearly, it should be Caiaphas! He is the high priest! **He should know better!**

Let me remind you of what that means.

The Role of the High Priest

In Judaism, the high priest is the key religious figure for the people. Here's how he is described in the book of Hebrews:



*“Every high priest is a man chosen to represent other people in their dealings with God. He presents their gifts to God and offers sacrifices for their sins. And he is able to deal gently with ignorant and wayward people because he himself is subject to the same weaknesses. That is why he must offer sacrifices for his own sins as well as theirs. And no one can become a high priest simply because he wants such an honor. He must be called by God for this work, just as Aaron was.”
(Hebrews 5:1–4, NLT)*

Note the key parts:

- **He a man who meets qualifications.** Chosen as a **descendant of Aaron** in the tribe of Levi, he is literally born for this. Caiaphas is high priest now; his father-in-law, Annas, was high priest before him.
- **He is a stand-in for the people,** serving as the one who **goes between them and God.** He alone has once-a-year privilege to approach the place of the temple (the “Holy of Holies”) where God gave special access to His presence!

³ [Mental Scotoma: Understanding Cognitive Blind Spots](#)

- He **offers sacrifices for the people's sins** (as well as his own), a reminder that humans need saving! His entire job is to bring others closer to God!

While the high priestly position has additional political pressures now with Rome involved, the role is still one of spiritual leadership. The high priest is supposed to be a man who knows the Law, knows God, and has a heart to follow and obey Him. And as such, he should be the most capable (of anyone in the room!) to recognize God's presence when He sees it. **He should know better!**

But...Caiaphas has *inattentional blindness* or some other form of cognitive blind spot. From the outside looking in, his brain just can't see Jesus for who He is.

In John 11, Caiaphas treated Jesus as a political threat...a threat to stability, and an expendable one at that. "*Better for him to die now for the good of the nation.*" But Caiaphas was blind to the real truth of his prophetic statement.

- Caiaphas saw **miracles** having *social* power to make Jesus popular. He was blind to the miracles having *divine* power to show God's presence.
- Caiaphas saw a Rome that was a big **threat** to *personal* safety. Yet he was blind to the problem of sin that was the main threat to *eternal* safety.
- Caiaphas saw **death instead** (Jesus instead of Israel). He was blind to the fact that it was **death for** (Jesus dying FOR Israel...and beyond).

Blind Spots Among Us

Church, have you experienced similar types of "blind spots"?

Do you know God...but sometimes fail to notice God?

- Have you been so focused on your own ideas that you don't notice God's truth?
- Have you been so enamored with your own opinions or enjoyment that you don't notice God's words?
- Have you been so preoccupied with your own work or time with family or your kids' activities that you don't notice God's creations?



You're here at church now. So you ARE a person who wants to learn more about God; you ARE someone who knows (and knows better). But you STILL might be a person who

- *wakes up in the morning with **your own** plans,*
- *watches the morning news with **your own** political bias,*
- *goes to work seeking **your own** advancement,*
- *makes it through the day following **your own** routine,*
- *comes home to enjoy **your own** relaxation...*

*...all the while not noticing what **GOD** is trying to tell you, show you, guide you, challenge you, rebuke you, or redeem about your day!*

Are you on the outside looking in at Jesus, *knowing better* but **not noticing** what you should see about Him and what He wants from your life?

Knowing better is not enough! You still need to notice what God is doing!



A Man Who Wouldn't See

But noticing isn't enough.

Intentionally Ignoring

There was a movie that came out years ago involving some Boston bank robbers (The Town – 2010). I still remember one scene where the robbers (who are dressed in nun costumes with masks) have just committed another robbery and are fleeing the scene. They have a plan to switch vehicles to throw off any pursuing law enforcement. They squeal into the parking space by the new vehicle, throw open the doors and jump out, money bags and assault rifles in hand...only to notice, on the other side of the street, a parked police cruiser with an officer looking at them in disbelief. Everyone stops. Everyone stares with an “are you kidding me?” look. The cop pauses briefly, and then slowly and intentionally... looks the other way. For the sake of survival, the cop noticed, but he chose not to see!

In that way, he was like Caiaphas (and maybe us!)

Caiaphas didn't always notice, but even when he did notice, he chose to ignore it. **He was a man who *wouldn't* see.**

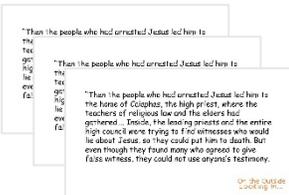


His blindness continued...intentionally... even after Jesus was arrested. Head back to the gospels with me, this time to the book of Matthew.



On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus had gone out to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Eventually, Judas showed up to betray him...flanked by multiple guards. These weren't Roman soldiers – these were temple security, men who served Caiaphas.

They arrest Jesus and bring him to stand trial.



“Then the people who had arrested Jesus led him to the home of Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of religious law and the elders had gathered.... Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus, so they could put him to death. But even though they found many who agreed to give false witness, they could not use anyone’s testimony.

Finally, two men came forward who declared, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’ ”

Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, “Well, aren’t you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?”

But Jesus remained silent.

Then the high priest said to him, “I demand in the name of the living God—tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”

Jesus replied, “You have said it. And in the future you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God’s right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, “Blasphemy! Why do we need other witnesses? You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?”

“Guilty!” they shouted. “He deserves to die!” ... (Matthew 26:57–66, NLT)

As the trial begins, notice the phrase, **“...trying to find witnesses who would lie about Jesus...”** The trial’s outcome was a foregone conclusion. Jesus would be found guilty by the council.



- Caiaphas was convinced that he was right.

- Caiaphas was convinced that he was serving God.
- Caiaphas was convinced that Jesus' death was for the public's good.

And that means that Caiaphas wasn't unaware; he was simply a man who WOULD NOT see, regardless of the evidence. *Knowing better* wouldn't be enough. No, he would be unwilling to change.

Caiaphas, the only person in the room qualified to stand in the presence of God, eventually looked Jesus in the face and asked point blank, "*Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?*"

And when Jesus truthfully says, "*You said it*" (followed by an Old Testament quote that they recognized as a claim to divinity)...?

...Caiaphas rejects it and calls it **blasphemy**. He didn't *evaluate* it. He didn't *pray about* it. He didn't *consider* it. He didn't *ponder* it. He didn't *tremble* at it. He didn't *fall to His knees* over it. He didn't *accept* it. He didn't see it.

He was a man who would not see, and a man who would not change. That decision left Caiaphas on the outside looking in.



Our Need to Repent

So, that brings it to us. If we notice that we're on the outside looking in when it comes to Jesus and His truth..., are we willing to change?

Let that question sink in. [Pause]

If He tells you something... **Are. You. Willing. To. Change?**

There's a theological word we use in church that goes along with that question. The word is "repent." To "repent" means to change direction, to do a 180-degree turn. It means you have a *fundamental change of heart and mind from sin to God*.

Repentance is an important theme in the preaching of Old Testament and New Testament figures alike.

The call to repent was the first and fundamental summons in the preaching of **John the Baptist** (Matt. 3:2), Jesus (Matt. 4:17), the **Twelve** (Mark 6:12), **Peter** at Pentecost (Acts 2:38), **Paul** to the

Gentiles (Acts 17:30; 26:20), and the **glorified Christ** to five of the seven churches in Asia (Rev. 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19)⁴

And the message is clear:



“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.” (Acts 3:19, NLT)

Church, when you see, are you willing to change... to adjust your position?

Your answer is one of the quickest ways to identify an “idol” in your life.

For Caiaphas, his idol might have been power and authority...or knowledge as he thought he understood Scripture and God’s Law...or a desire not to look foolish for changing opinions on Jesus.

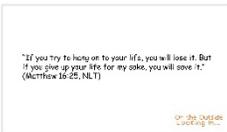


For you, your idol could be other things. For you...

- ... is it **comfort?** (Are you willing to be uncomfortable?)
- ... is it **pleasure?** (Are you willing to give up what made you feel good?)
- ... is it **control?** (Are you willing to give over decision-making to Him?)
- ... is it your **toughness?** (Will following Jesus make you seem weak?)
- ... is it your **escape?** (Will repentance get rid of your safety net?)

Like Caiaphas, many will see Jesus’ claims and requirements and decide to stay on the outside.

But if we want what is best, and true, and everlasting, we need to see...and then repent, dropping whatever keeps us outside and turning to follow Him!



“If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.” (Matthew 16:25, NLT)

Practical

How do you repent? You change your heart, mind, and habits – through Jesus’ power, not your own!!!! Through the Holy Spirit...

- **You work to change what you love (Heart)**



⁴ Packer, J. I. (1993). [*Concise theology: a guide to historic Christian beliefs*](#) (p. 162). Tyndale House.

- At one point, when trying to lose some weight, I switched from regular Dr Pepper to Diet Dr Pepper. I didn't like it better...at first, but it grew on me.
 - When you repent, you might have to work hard to let the things of God "grow on you." But they can and they will if you commit to it.
- **You work to change how you think (Mind)**
 - This is where God's word comes in. Read it. Quantity and quality reading. Remember it, think about it. Learn what matters to God and what He asks of you.
 - Let those words replace your own as you think.
- **You work to change how you act (Habits)**
 - Repentance needs to bear fruit in what you do, not just what you say:

"Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God..." (Luke 3:8, NLT)

 - That could mean sobriety, or getting a job, or ending an affair, or apologizing for what you've said.
 - Ask God what actions need to change, pray for the Holy Spirit to empower it, and then be faithful in obedience.

Why? Because...

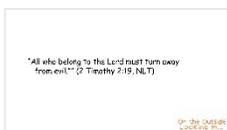


KNOWING BETTER ISN'T ENOUGH!

Conclusion

You may have had blind spots where you didn't know. Or you may have resisted, choosing not to see.

But you don't have that choice anymore. Those excuses keep you on the outside! But if you want to get in with Jesus, there's a simple solution: repent!



... "All who belong to the Lord must turn away from evil." (2 Timothy 2:19, NLT)

KNOWING BETTER ISN'T ENOUGH!

Don't be like Caiaphas! Take the steps to change your heart, mind, and habits. See...and then repent!



Prayer

Invitation

If God's word has opened your eyes today and you realize that your blindness has kept you on the outside looking in, then take the step of repentance!

I'll be up front during our next song, and I would love to pray with you and for you as you submit to the Spirit through the forgiveness that comes from the Son and you turn back to the Father!

If you want prayer, come forward as we sing!

Sermon Notes

KNOWING BETTER ISN'T ENOUGH!

Getting to Know Caiaphas

(John 11:25; John 11:45-53)

A Man Who Should See

(Hebrews 5:1-4)

A Man Who Wouldn't See

(Matthew 26:57-66)

Our Need to Repent

(Acts 3:19; Luke 3:8; 2 Timothy 2:19)

Sermon Discussion Questions

- When have you missed something obvious right in front of you (a “blind spot” moment)? What happened?
- In John 11, how was Caiaphas technically correct in his statement that “one man should die for the people”? What did he miss?
- Why should Caiaphas have been able to recognize Jesus for who He was? What responsibilities did the high priest have that made his blindness more serious?
- What are some modern-day equivalents of “being close to God” but still missing Him? What are some things in your daily routine that might keep you from noticing God?
- What does Caiaphas’ reaction to Jesus’ claim (calling it blasphemy) reveal about his heart?
- What’s the difference between not seeing and refusing to see?
- Where do you see evidence that Caiaphas had already made up his mind about Jesus (Read Matthew 26:57-66)?
- Why is “knowing the truth” not the same as responding to it?
- What are some reasons people resist repentance even when they know they should change?
- What is one practical way you can change what you love (heart)? ...think (mind)?...live (habits)?
- What helps repentance “stick” instead of becoming a temporary change?