

DEFENDING RELIGION

As preached on Sunday, March 22nd

Read: John 11:45-57

1. Our text this week reveals two different responses people had to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. What were they? How could they arrive at such varied conclusions?
2. Take a moment to re-read vv.47-48. As the Sanhedrin begins their meeting together, what is it they are discussing? What are they afraid of? Why?
3. In vv.49-50, the high priest Caiaphas addresses the council. What do you make of what he has to say? Were his words persuasive to the people? (hint: see v.53)
4. In vv.51-52, John provides a bit of editorial commentary regarding Caiaphas' words. He indicates that Caiaphas actually prophesied Jesus' death and what his death would accomplish. Do you think Caiaphas knew what he was really prophesying? If not, why did he say what he did?
5. Caiaphas' "prophecy" introduces the idea of substitution, of Jesus dying in the place of others. What is your understanding of this concept of "substitutionary atonement"? How important is this concept to Christian faith?
6. We're told in v.47 that the members of the Sanhedrin are well aware of the many signs that Jesus has performed, yet they remain resistant to who Jesus is and what he's teaching. Why do you think it is that they choose not to believe?
7. How would you respond if you discovered something about God that was completely different than what you'd always thought to be true? Would you be open to a new understanding of God and his ways, or would you tend to resist the new understanding and defend the understanding of God you've always held?