

## **LOSSES AND GAINS**

**John 11:45-57**

**By Andy Manning**

### **I. INTRO**

1. Jesus Christ was a good man who went around doing good deeds. So, why did the Jewish leaders kill Him? The answer might surprise you, and you will be surprised to find that you might have done the same if you were in their shoes.
2. We are at the end of John 11. We're close to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus has just traveled to Bethany and raised Lazarus from the dead.

### **II. TEXT AND COMMENTARY: John 11:45-57**

1. 45 Therefore, many of the Jews who came to Mary and saw what he did believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.
2. 47 So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and were saying, "What are we going to do since this man is doing many signs? 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
  - i. Some people told the Pharisees about the miracle Jesus had performed.
  - ii. Do you remember the Pharisees? They were a religious group within Judaism, a brotherhood that you could belong to. Their passion was keeping the law of Moses. But they were Jesus' main enemies.
  - iii. So, the Pharisees and chief priests convened the Sanhedrin.
  - iv. The chief priests probably consisted of the high priest, any former high priests, and their close relatives.
  - v. The Sanhedrin was the supreme council in Judaism. It was called "the council of the Israelites (Acts 5:21)". It was the Jewish Supreme Court, or the Jewish Senate. When it came to Judaism, and the Jews, they ran things. It had seventy-one members. The high priest was the president, and there were seventy men who were either priest or religious experts such as Pharisees and scribes and rabbis. Why seventy-one? It goes back to the days of Moses in Numbers 11. The Israelites complained about eating manna every day and having no meat. They were depressed and took it out on Moses. Moses was so discouraged that he was ready for God to kill him. So he prayed, and God's answer was to give Moses some help. He was to select seventy men, and God placed some of the Spirit that was on Moses on them so they could help him shepherd the people. So, the Sanhedrin was sort of like Moses and the seventy elders.
  - vi. When they heard about Jesus raising Lazarus, they convened the Sanhedrin to discuss the "Jesus problem." What was the Jesus problem? Israel at this time was subject to Rome. They were under Roman authority ever since 63

B.C. when the Roman general Pompey conquered them. The Sanhedrin was fearful that as Jesus performed more miracles, He would attract a huge following and lead them to rebel against Rome. In turn, this would cause Rome to send its massive armies to destroy Jerusalem and take away the authority of the Sanhedrin.

- vii. **William Barclay** put it well. “Now, Rome was essentially tolerant, but, with such a vast empire to govern, it could never afford civil disorder, and always quelled it with a firm and merciless hand. If Jesus was the cause of civil disorder, Rome would descend in all her power, and beyond a doubt the Sadducees would be dismissed from their positions of authority.”
  - viii. Notice that the Jewish leaders were fearful of two things. That they would lose their place and their nation. They were afraid the Romans would destroy the Jewish nation, but there was also a selfish fear; they feared they would lose their place; their position of power and authority and prestige.
3. 49 One of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! 50 You’re not considering that it is to your advantage that one man should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.” 51 He did not say this on his own, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, 52 and not for the nation only, but also to unite the scattered children of God. 53 So from that day on they plotted to kill him.
- i. Caiaphas was the high priest that year. The Jews chose their own high priest, but it was controlled by Rome. If Rome did not like the high priest, they would replace him. This is how Caiaphas got the position. His father-in-law, Annas, was the previous high priest. But the Romans deposed him and replaced him with Caiaphas. Annas was still a member of the Sanhedrin, but no longer the high priest.
  - ii. Caiaphas was the high priest at this time, and he would be the high priest serving at the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.
  - iii. Caiaphas said something very remarkable. He told the Sanhedrin that there was a very clear solution to the Jesus problem. Rather than lose the entire nation, they could just kill Jesus.
  - iv. John gives some commentary here. God was speaking through Caiaphas, prophesying that Jesus was going to die for the nation. Neither Caiaphas nor the Sanhedrin knew how true those words were. Jesus would indeed die for the nation of Israel and for the entire world to bring us back to God.
  - v. So it was from this day on that they plotted to kill Jesus.
4. 54 Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews but departed from there to the countryside near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and he stayed there with the disciples.
5. 55 Now the Jewish Passover was near, and many went up to Jerusalem from the country to purify themselves before the Passover. 56 They were looking for Jesus

and asking one another as they stood in the temple, “What do you think? He won’t come to the festival, will he?” 57 The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that if anyone knew where he was, he should report it so that they could arrest him.

- i. So, why did the Jewish leaders decide to kill this good man who went around doing good deeds? They were afraid of losing their place.
- ii. The Jewish leaders were not concerned with truth, with morality, with pleasing God, with knowing God more, with finding the Messiah, or even with their own eternity. They were concerned about losing their place. The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus because they did not want to lose their current position of power, prestige, and wealth. They chose to gain the world and lose their soul, rather than lose world and save their soul.
- iii. Ironically, it was because of their rejection of Jesus that they lost their place and nation in 70 AD. **Matthew 23:38** “See, your house is left to you desolate.”
- iv. The primary reason we struggle to follow Christ is the universal fear of loss. We naturally weigh the pros and cons in every decision; the benefits and the challenges; the losses and gains. And we often reject Christ because we do not want to lose the things of this world. This is the primary reason people reject Christ. This is the primary reason that Christians compromise and are lukewarm.
- v. Revival occurs when people decide to forsake the world to gain Christ. When people decide to give up everything for Jesus, no matter what the cost, they experience an intimacy and a power like never before.
- vi. Today I want to encourage you to lose everything in order to gain Christ.

### **III. FIVE FACTS ABOUT LOSSES AND GAINS**

#### **1. There are losses in following Christ.**

- i. The Jewish leaders were right about one thing. If they followed Jesus, there would be a cost. It might have led to a war with Rome and the loss of their place and nation, or it might have meant some other loss.
- ii. Following Jesus is not all roses.
- iii. You will face hardships because of Christ.
- iv. These losses are significant.
- v. Some of the disciples gave up their fishing profession. When Jesus called them, they left their nets, and their boats, and they followed Him.
- vi. Before Matthew became a Christ-follower his name was Levi, and he was a tax collector. He was likely very wealthy. When Jesus called him, he gave up being a tax collector to follow Jesus.
- vii. Zacchaeus is another example. He was a tax collector, and he often cheated people by charging them more than he had to. For him, following Jesus

meant giving up cheating and stealing, and making restitution for all that he had stolen.

- viii. Over the years, people have lost just about anything you can think of for Jesus. Some were rejected by their friends, or spouse, or parents, or kids. Some have been fired. Some have been teased and ridiculed. Some have lost their business and their home. Some have lost their freedom. Some have lost their lives.
- ix. **John 16:33** "You will have suffering in this world."
- x. Following Jesus will involve losses. You will face hardship, even if it is only the hardship of giving up your sins.
- xi. This truth is more relevant to Christians in American today than ever before because of two realities: The government is bigger and more powerful than ever before. The culture is more anti-Christian than ever before.

## 2. The losses are required.

- i. **Luke 9:23** Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."
- ii. You cannot hold on to your old life and start your new life with Christ.
- iii. You cannot walk in sin and walk with Jesus.
- iv. You cannot gain Christ and gain the world.
- v. There is not such thing as cheap grace; as easy believism; as comfortable Christianity.
- vi. **Mark 8:35** "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me and the gospel will save it."
- vii. The person who calls himself a Christian but refuses to give up the world is a hypocrite. They are deceived. The Bible says don't even associate with those people (1 Cor 5:11).
- viii. This week I read about a woman who was a porn actress before she got saved, married a pastor, and left her sin behind. But then she got a divorce, got remarried, and decided to go back to the porn profession. And worst of all, she said that she didn't think this interfered with her relationship with God. She convinced herself that she could follow Christ without leaving her sin and the money from her sinful lifestyle. She is wrong. She is not a Christian.
- ix. As a pastor I've seen this over the years. Many people wanted to follow Christ, but they were unwilling to lose for Jesus. They were unwilling to lose a relationship, or a sinful habit, or their money. They came to church for a while, but eventually they dropped out.
- x. You cannot avoid the losses if you truly want to follow Christ.
- xi. **Matthew 10:38** "And whoever doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."

## 3. The more you have to lose, the harder it is to follow Christ.

- i. It is not hard to follow Jesus if you have no family or friends, or no spouse and children, because that means that nobody can reject you for following Jesus.
- ii. It is not hard to follow Jesus if you don't have a job, because there's no risk of being fired.
- iii. It is not hard to follow Jesus if you don't have any followers in Twitter, because nobody is paying attention to what you are saying.
- iv. It is not hard to follow Jesus if you are poor, because it is not hard to give away all you own if you own very little.
- v. If you are a person of means, of position, of popularity, then you have more to lose, and it will be harder for you to follow Christ.
- vi. This is illustrated in the story of the Rich Young Ruler. A young man of wealth and position approached Jesus and asked what he needed to do to go to heaven. Jesus told him to sell everything and give all his money to the poor, and then come and follow Him. The young man walked away from Christ. He chose to lose his soul than to lose his wealth and position in this world.
- vii. **Mark 10:25** "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."
- viii. We tend to have worldly ambition. We all want more money, more power, more popularity. But the more of those we get the harder it is to follow Jesus.

#### 4. The losses cannot compare to the gains.

- i. While there are losses involved in following Jesus, they cannot compare to the gains.
- ii. **Matthew 10:29** "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields because of my name will receive a hundred times more and will inherit eternal life."
- iii. **Romans 8:18** "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us."
- iv. Following Jesus will cost you your pet sins. It may cost you money, relationships, comforts, your job. But consider the gains of following Jesus: Eternal life. Inner peace. A relationship with God. A clear conscience. Victory over sin. Purpose. Significance. Church family. The indwelling Holy Spirit.
- v. At the same time, consider the losses involved with denying Christ. Enslavement to sin, and eternity in hell.
- vi. Jesus pointed out the insanity of choosing the world over Christ.
- vii. **Mark 8:36** "For what does it benefit someone to gain the whole world and yet lose his life?"

viii. The apostle Paul, before becoming a Christian, was a man of means and position. He was a Pharisee. He hobnobbed with the elites. When he became a Christian he became an outlaw. He went from the predator to the prey. He experienced many difficulties and eventually lost his life. Did he regret it? He wrote these words from prison. **Philippians 3:8** "More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ."

#### 5. Following Jesus effectively demands a constant focus on the gains.

- i. Following Jesus initially involves denying yourself; repenting of your sin. But the losses of the Christian life do not end there. Each day you must take up your cross. Each day you will be presented with the call to lose something for Christ; to lose a relationship; your reputation; your pride; money.
- ii. How do we keep losing for Jesus?
- iii. The key is to keep your focus on the gains. The mistake of the Jewish leaders is that their focus was completely on the potential losses instead of focusing on the gains of following Jesus. They were focused on losing their place; they should have been focusing on all they would gain in Christ.
- iv. **Colossians 3:1-2** "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."
- v. This is how Jesus was able to endure the cross. **Hebrews 12:2** "For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross"
- vi. This is why it is so important to read the word daily, to go to church on Sunday, to get in Home Group. We are forgetful beings. We forget God's promises. We forget the gains of following Jesus. And we are easily distracted. The devil is a master distractor. All day long, all week long, he is telling us of the gains of the world; the pleasures of the world; the pleasures of this life; and the cost of following Jesus. We need to stay in the word so we can be ever mindful of the gains of losing Christ.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

1. Is Christ calling you to follow Him, but you have been resisting Him because of what you will lose?
2. Is Christ calling you to a deeper relationship, but the one thing holding you back is your fear of loss?
3. **Jim Elliot** "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."
4. In life, you must lose to gain. You must die to live.