

## Try God – Matthew 26:57-68

**Introduction:** There is a bumper sticker I've seen, and perhaps you have too that says, "Try God!" Tonight, I want to talk to you about why that is what we ought to do.

Trying God is really a play on words. In one sense, we should try God when it comes to salvation because He is the only one who can give it to us. But in another sense, people "try" God or put God on trial when they start to question who He is or what He is about.

In our text tonight, we see where some men put God on trial on their own terms and for their own purposes when they put Jesus on trial. Actually, the Bible records not a single trial, but actually six so-called trials. We read in John 18 where Jesus was taken to Annas, who had been the previous high priest. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest at the time. Annas was a patriarch, a man who was looked up to and feared. Jesus was taken to him first because his home was close to the Garden of Gethsemane, but primarily so that the chief priests and elders might gain Annas' blessing. After a brief examination, Jesus was transferred to the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. The Bible tells us that some of the chief priests were involved in His examination there. Later, in the third stage of Jesus' trial, He appeared before most of the Sanhedrin, which was the ruling body of the Jews. This is the trial we see in our passage here in Matthew. This was not a trial about justice. It amounted to an old-fashioned lynching. It was an unfair trial from the get-go.

We've all experienced unfair treatment. Whether it's an assessment of our property that we feel was unjust, a car accident that wasn't our fault, yet we end up paying for the damage, or even a simple fight between brothers and sisters where the last one who did the shoving or hitting got caught and punished. When those things happen, we declare, "*That was not fair!*"

But tonight, we're going to see that no one was ever treated more unfairly and unjustly than Jesus. Jesus could have said, "*Father, these trials are nothing but shams! It's not right that I can't have any witnesses testify on my behalf!*"

But instead of crying and begging for a fair trial, Jesus takes the opportunity to teach the truth about himself! Tonight, let's look at this trial and see the proper way to respond to the truth about Jesus. First, we see Jesus:

### 1. Turning the Tables

In our text, we see Jesus being taken to the high priest. Peter follows at a distance. Verse 59 says that "*The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death.*"

How many of you have heard the expression "*My mind is made up. Don't confuse me with the facts?*" That's the case here. These religious leaders had their minds made up. Jesus was gaining popularity and they feared a backlash among the people if Jesus continued to preach against their religious practices. If that

happened, the Romans would come in and disrupt their way of life, and they couldn't let that happen. They had to rid themselves of Jesus by hook or crook – now!

One of the false evidences brought up in this trial was announced in vs. 61. Two people came forward to declare, *“This fellow (Jesus) said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.’”*

But the truth is, Jesus never said *“I can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days.”* He said *“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”* (John 2:19 NIV.) He was talking about his body being destroyed and Him coming back to life! He was talking about His resurrection! Of course, the religious establishment never really understood Jesus, so it was natural that they would misinterpret Him. Jesus knew they wouldn't understand, so in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:7, (*yet he did not open his mouth*) He remained silent.

The high priest was frustrated with Jesus' silence. But he had another card to play. In vs. 63, he says *“I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.”*

And Jesus said *“Yes, it is as you say.”* Literally the Greek text says *“You said it!”* You finally got something right!

Then Jesus explains to them in vs. 64 what it means for Him to be the Christ. He said, *“In the future, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”* In other words he told them that they might be sitting in judgment over Him now. But in the future, the table will be turned, and He'd be sitting in judgment over them. It's either accept Him for who is now, or face the consequences of their unbelief later.

In essence, Jesus was putting them on trial! If you want to be right with God, then you have to accept the truth of who Jesus is!

As we read how Jesus handles His unjust treatment, we need to put ourselves in the jury box. We all need to ask ourselves, *“What do I think of Jesus?”* We've studied His story in the Gospel of Matthew. We've learned about his virgin birth. We've studied His sermon on the mount. We've read about His miracles. We've seen how he interacted with people – especially His own disciples. And now we've begun to see His passion here in chapter 26 as He makes His way to the cross. Now it's time to make a decision. What do YOU think of Jesus?

Is He the kind of person who stands over us like a bully with a baseball bat, ready to whack us when we do something He doesn't like? If so, then we've read Him wrong, for we see the real Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV). He says, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

Perhaps you think of Jesus as a nice guy, but He's just not able to do anything about your problems. If so, then you need to reread Matthew 28:18 (NIV) where the real Jesus says, *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*

Or maybe you think of Jesus as too far away to care about what happens to you. If so, then you need to think again about what the real Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 (NIV), "...surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Or maybe you think of Jesus as just one savior among many other saviors. If so, then you need go back to John 14:6 (NIV) where the real Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

So, in light of this revelation Jesus makes of Himself, we ultimately need to consider:

## 2. The Right Response

The truth about Jesus demands the right response. But in verse 66, the leaders gave the wrong response. The high priest tore his robe and basically said, "*That's it!! We don't need to hear any more witnesses. This man is a blasphemer!*" The other leaders agreed saying "*He is worthy of death.*"

The religious leaders refused to believe. They had their minds made up already and they were ready to rid themselves of this threat to their way of life, so they moved to have Jesus put to death. It was the wrong response.

But the right response is to say "*Lord, I'm the one who is worthy of death! My sin is the reason why you had to die on the cross to begin with! And so right here, right now, I repent of my sins. Right here, right now, I accept you as my personal Lord and Savior and ask you into my heart and life!*"

That's what one of the criminals on the cross did. In Luke 23, we see where Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One of the thieves mocked and ridiculed Jesus, but the other one recognized the truth about Jesus and realized that He had done nothing to deserve the punishment He was getting. Then he asked Jesus, "*Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*" (42). And Jesus responded, "*I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*" (43).

In other words, Jesus says, "*Even if you're the biggest sinner in the world, because of God's grace, you're only one prayer away from my Father's mercy!*" All you have to do repent, and ask the Lord to remember you and give Him your heart and life, and He will give you eternal life. The truth about Jesus demands the right response.

**Conclusion:** I was reading about Brian Welch, the co-founder and former lead guitarist for the band Korn. Brian was also known "*Head.*" In his mind, he had everything he could want: Money. Fame, and lots of opportunities for more. But Brian Welch also had a pain in his heart that wouldn't go away. He said that he was dying on the inside and tried to kill the pain with drugs and alcohol.

Brian Welch also had wife and a daughter. When His daughter Jeanea came along, he tried to straighten up his life but when the band went back out on the road, the booze and drug temptations were too much for him to resist, and he was hooked again. His wife eventually left him and he had to fight to keep his daughter.

Eventually he won custody of her, but his life was still a mess. He hated the fact that he was exposing her to all the wildness associated with his band Korn.

One day, he heard his daughter singing a Korn song called “Adidas.” The song’s lyrics were about all day long dreaming about sex. Brian said, *“It’s a party song. And I felt like a loser. I’m no good for this kid.”*

During that time, Brian went into real estate partnership with two Christian friends. At one point Brian mentioned to them how his life was falling apart. Their reply -- *“Come to me, all you who are weary and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

Brian began to question, *“‘Could Jesus be real?’ I was thinking in my mind, was this guy not just a goody, goody? Could there really be a God, and is He calling me? I looked up that scripture and I wanted it to be true.”*

Eventually Brian went to his partner’s church, and prayed to receive Christ. Within a few weeks, Brian flushed the drugs down the toilet and never went back to them. According to his testimony, the fact that he was able to come clean after being on drugs for all those years was a miracle.

Not long after that, Brian Welch walked away from the band he helped found. He got baptized in the Jordan River and started his new journey.

*“To tell you the truth, God was real,”* Brian says. *“He revealed himself to me, kept revealing Himself to me, and I felt his presence at my house. He’s speaking to my kid and all this crazy stuff is happening, and that’s all that mattered to me. I was OK. This band stuff, the stardom, I mean everything, it doesn’t matter anymore. It’s God. He’s so real. I don’t care what I do the rest of my life.”*

Brian has taken his responsibility as a father head on. Instead of lewd lyrics, Jeanea hears her dad talk about the love of God.

Brian’s music career also has taken on a new direction. His music now reflects his journey from self-destruction into the loving arms of God.

*“He put me on Earth to have fellowship and intimacy with Him,”* Brian says. *“And I’m going to spend as much time I can possibly spend getting to know him everyday. I don’t want to waste any time. I’ve wasted enough time. That’s what I’m put on Earth to do. Be intimate with God. Get to know Him as much as I can. Let Him fill me with His spirit so He can do the work by bringing people into the Kingdom.”* (cbnmusic.com – Why Brian Welch Walked Away)

The truth about Jesus demands the right response. Whether it’s responding to ask Jesus in your heart and beginning your walk with him as Brian Welch did or coming back to Him after you’ve walked away from Him; either way, the right response is to choose Christ.

Jesus experienced the judgment of man so that we wouldn’t have to experience the judgment of God. He went through a trial and a crucifixion He didn’t deserve so that He could pay the price for our sins.