

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Injustice Brings Gratuitous Mercy Fifth Week of Lent Saturday, March 28, 2015
8:15 AM Ez 37:21-28; **Jn 11:45-57** (A basic principle of divine providence: that human beings are free, but the providence of God continues to work anyway.)

It is often said that John's Gospel has an anti-Semitic accent to it, a charge I have never really believed in or accepted. John does have a way of speaking rather strongly about the leadership of Israel. But in this particular passage he actually offers **a plausible motivation to their plotting to kill Jesus**. As Caiaphas says, **"It is better for one to die than the whole nation."** Now that is plausible precisely because in fact the whole nation did die. The Romans came in 70 A.D. and destroyed the temple; then they came back and destroyed the entire nation of Judea in 135 renaming it Palaestina, Palestine, after the Philistines, the great enemies of the Jews.

There was an underlying problem of fanaticism and revolution and ferment constantly churning the people as part of the context of Jesus' coming. The point however that the gospel makes is that although **Jesus died** for the nation, actually that failed to save the nation per se as a nation. But it wasn't just for the nation. It was **for all nations and all people**, and that it has the effect that God wills it to have so that those who want to be saved can be. **Those who want to see in Jesus' death the pouring out of the love of God and the mercy of God and want to accept it, can do so.** Whereas those who have other goals, other purposes, well, they have their own goals and their own purposes, not God's.

So in this way we can see that although those who plotted against Jesus were doing something wrong, nonetheless that played into the plan of God. And that is **a basic principle of divine providence, that human beings are free, we can accept or reject God's messages, we can accept or reject God's will for us, but the providence of God continues to work anyway.** And perhaps the greatest example is **the Cross**, where an act of completely **gratuitous injustice is elevated to a sign of gratuitous mercy**, unmerited forgiveness. And that's where John leaves us on the eve of Holy Week.