



Mark - Lesson 6C

Chapter 6:14-29

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- Last week we came across a pivotal moment in Jesus' teaching ministry.
 - As the rejection of His message and identity continued to increase amongst the people, He continued in proclaiming the Gospel of God.
 - As the disciples witnessed the people's rejection of Jesus, it would serve as a teaching tool for how they should respond – and so it did.
 - Jesus sent His Apostles on their first trial mission where they would be given apostolic authority.
 - This would be Jesus' authorization and authentication of His workers to do His work of spreading the message of God around regions of the Galilee and eventually the world.
 - And from that trial mission, His Apostles would be trained in observing and doing, equipped by the authority of Christ, and sent in the power of Christ to do the work of Christ.
 - Tonight, as we approach the text, we will come across an interesting narrative that ultimately leads to the death of John the Baptist.
 - If I were to outline our flow through the text tonight, it would go as follows:
 - 1. A Flashback and a Familiar Message (v.14-16)
 - 2. A Fearful Fascination (v.17-20)
 - 3. A Fraudulent Request (v.21-28)
 - 4. A Forceful Foretelling (v.28-29)
 - If I were to put a tag on tonight's text it would be, "Don't shoot the Messenger"
 - With that being said, I invite you to open your bibles to Mark 6:14-29 for the reading of the word of the Lord.

Mark 6:14 And King Herod heard about it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him."

Mark 6:15 But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old."

Mark 6:16 But when Herod heard about it, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"

Mark 6:17 For Herod himself had sent men and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.

Mark 6:18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Mark 6:19 And Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death, and could not do so;

Mark 6:20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he had been protecting him. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; and yet he used to enjoy listening to him.

Mark 6:21 An opportune day came when Herod, on his birthday, held a banquet for his nobles and military commanders, and the leading people of Galilee;

Mark 6:22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want, and I will give it to you.”

Mark 6:23 And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you, up to half of my kingdom.”

Mark 6:24 And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”

Mark 6:25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

Mark 6:26 And although the king was very sorry, because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

Mark 6:27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison,

Mark 6:28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

Mark 6:29 When his disciples heard about this, they came and carried away his body, and laid it in a tomb.

- Let’s Pray.
- There’s an old adage that goes like this: “Don’t shoot the messenger”
 - This statement was a sentiment expressed in the play *Antigone* (An-ti-guh-nee), written by Sophocles around 440 BC.
 - It would later be used in Shakespeare’s play entitled *Antony and Cleopatra*.
 - This phrase is often used when someone reveals truth that the receiver is not willing to receive or blatantly doesn’t want to receive.
 - And rather than that person being upset with the origin of the message, they find the means to take their frustrations out on the messenger themselves.
 - In the case of our text tonight, we have a similar story at play – the only difference is that the communicator of truth was killed by the receiver of the message.
 - As we observe the text we will ultimately see men and women, naturally, attempt to silence the truth at any cost – even if it means attempting to eliminate the proclaimers of truth altogether.
 - Pick me up at verse 14-15 of Mark 6.

Mark 6:14 And King Herod heard about it, for His name had become well known; and people were saying, “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him.”

Mark 6:15 But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.”

- Mark picks up here as Jesus’ teaching ministry continues to grow and expand, especially now that the Apostles have been sent on a mission.
 - Christ has both authorized and authenticated these men to do the work He has

summoned them to.

- So as the Apostles are going out two by two, their reach with the message of the Kingdom and repentance makes its way around the region.
- Jesus' name becomes so well-known throughout the region that Mark tells us that even Herod Antipas heard of Him.
 - And with Herod Antipas hearing about Jesus and His message of repentance and the Kingdom, it almost became too surreal.
 - Reason being is because as Mark lays out the message Herod is hearing at this point it sounds quite familiar to what John the Baptist was preaching.
- Now this section of the text may read a bit strange because it is as if Mark is taking Herod Antipas' experience and rewinding it, if you will.
 - You may recall earlier on in our study of Mark that on the onset of Jesus' early teaching ministry, John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod (Mark 1:14-15)
 - However, by the time we get to Mark 6:14, we read that John has died.
- So what we have here in the text is a "flashback moment".
 - Almost as if Herod Antipas were experiencing déjà vu.
- One question that could be raised is: "What event(s) occurred between the time he was imprisoned to the time of his execution?"
 - Well tonight, time will allow us to get into the weeds of this question and to the eventual cause of his death.
 - However, before we get to that, we must realize what Mark is making known for the reader regarding the familiarity of the message.
- Remember, that John the Baptist's ministry was a well-known ministry as well, well before Jesus' arrival on the scene.
 - During the start of John's ministry, Israel had not heard a prophet or prophetic word in over 400 years. (Intertestamental period)
- Being that John the Baptist was the first prophetic voice after the intertestamental period, his ministry and identity would have been quite prominent to say the least.
 - So when Herod Antipas and others closest to him hear about a similar message and the authority of Jesus' name around the region, Herod's conscience becomes pricked.
- So with Herod hearing about all of the miraculous things that Jesus was doing and the similar message that Jesus was preaching, people were connecting these acts to a great prophetic work.
 - And indeed, the prophetic message of God was continuing and unhindered through the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Therefore we see some assuming that the ministry of Jesus was that of Elijah or one of the prophets; it was dynamic and powerful.
 - What Herod Antipas assumed was the end of the ministry of John the Baptist was simply a continuation of the message about the One who was coming to be the way for men and women to enter the Kingdom.
- One could imagine, hearing about these amazing works and hearing this similar

message would have caused a startling anxiousness in Herod's heart.

- Growing up, my mom would startle me by creeping up behind me without announcing herself.
- This was usually done because the instructions she gave me to do were not being completed.
 - So before I knew it, I would turn around to proceed in disobedience and be greeted by my mother's face staring directly at mine.
 - And to that end I would jump and scream while she would say with the calmest voice: "See... You ain't living right!"
- And what she meant by that was: "If you were doing what I told you to do and living according to the rules, you wouldn't be startled!"
 - This friends is what Herod Antipas was experiencing in that present moment: a guilty conscience, knowing what he had done with John the Baptist.
 - It was all playing back like a bad dream.
- Let's keep moving as we will now answer the question we previously posed earlier: "Why was John the Baptist imprisoned and what caused his death?"
 - Check out to Mark 6:17-20.

Mark 6:17 For Herod himself had sent men and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, because he had married her.

Mark 6:18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Mark 6:19 And Herodias held a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death, and could not do so;

Mark 6:20 for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he had been protecting him. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; and yet he used to enjoy listening to him

- Mark begins to expound on this "flashback" moment with Herod Antipas.
 - And he makes it clear that the things that Herod Antipas is hearing about Jesus sounds quite familiar to the man that he had killed.
 - Although Jesus and John are two completely different men with separate and distinct identities, they both proclaimed the same message.
 - There was something about Jesus' message and ministry that resonated with Herod Antipas.
 - And what resonated with Herod was the fact that this message of conviction and truth was the same as what he had heard before.
 - It was something about the truth that Herod Antipas couldn't escape. He was once again having to face the truth square in the face.
 - And it is in verse 17 that we come to grips with the reality of why John the Baptist was killed and who the leader of that execution was.

- Mark tells us that John the Baptist's death was "on account" of Herodias.
- Now before we move on too quickly let me just say, if you thought you or your family had family drama – you haven't seen anything yet.
- Herodias was the granddaughter of Herod the Great: the ruler that sought to kill Jesus as a baby and who was jealous that there would be one who would rule over him.
 - Herodias married Herod Phillip who was one of the sons of Herod the Great, which means that her husband was also her uncle.
- It would be through Herod Antipas visiting his brother Philip in Rome that he snagged the opportunity to elope with his brother's wife.
 - So with this information having become public knowledge at this time, John the Baptist called both Herod Antipas and Herodias out for their sin.
- Both Herod Antipas and Herodias were involved in adultery which was clearly in contrast to Jewish Law – which Herod prescribed to by lip service (religiously).
 - More specifically we can see in Leviticus 18:16 and Leviticus 20:21 how Herod and Herodias had broken the Law.
 - Check out the text with me really quickly:

Leviticus 18:16 You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.

- ○ Here's Leviticus 20:21.

Leviticus 20:21 If there is a man who takes his brother's wife, it is abhorrent; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They will be childless.

- Verse 18 of Mark 6 tells us that John the Baptist "had been saying" what Herod was doing was unlawful and that he needed to turn from his sinful ways and acknowledge the truth of God's word and command.
 - Notice the sentence structure here in verse 18: John "had been saying". The phrase is in the imperfect, active, indicative.
 - Meaning this was something that John had been telling Herod, time and time again.
 - And doesn't this remind us of how truth resonates with that of the fallen humanity?
 - No matter how many times truth is made known, people choose what and how they want to respond to it.
 - They will listen to nuggets of wisdom up to the point that it doesn't disrupt their lives as it is.
 - They will either remain in the comforts of their sin or they will turn to the Savior. There is no in between!
 - So an opportunity on several occasions had been presented before Herod to display humility and turn from sin.

- However it seemed that his sin was more comforting than the condition of his soul.
- And as a proclaimer of truth, John the Baptist can't sit still and allow one who "claims" to love God live in a way contrary to the ways of God.
- We see this similar truth conveyed in Ezekiel 3:18-19. Check out the text.

Ezekiel 3:18 When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand.

Ezekiel 3:19 Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself.

- So both Herod Antipas and Herodias have been communicated the truth of the Gospel of God – to repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.
 - But notice Herodias' disposition to the truth made known to her regarding her sin condition. The text tells us she had a "grudge" against John.
 - The word "grudge" in Greek is *enecho*. The sense of this word is that it goes beyond resentment.
 - It is to the point that the individual wants to take action against this person.
 - In other words, Herodias was so deep in her sin and far from a peaceful shore that hearing the truth time and time again moved her to desire in her heart to kill John.
 - The truth of the matter was, John's message of repentance became a sore spot of conviction that Herodias didn't want to deal with.
 - Friends, this is what we see in our world today. The moment that people don't want to hear truth, they do whatever it takes to "cancel" that proclaimer of truth.
 - The moment that absolute truth is proclaimed, opposition begins to rise to shut it down by any means necessary.
 - One will either humbly submit to the truth and obey God by the working of the Spirit of God because their eyes have been open to the truth or they will seek their own understanding and their own truth and turn from God.
 - And this reality will ultimately bring about judgement that will rightfully be due.
 - The reality is, if it were not for the Lord Jesus taking our place and bearing our sins, we would be right in the line of fire of the very wrath of God.
 - What I find most interesting is that Herod was quite aware of Herodias' feelings about John but wanted to keep John safe.
 - Verse 20 tells us that Herod kept John safe. The reason being is twofold:
 - 1. He was afraid of John because John was a righteous and holy man.
 - 2. Secondly, the text tells us Herod "heard him gladly". In other words, Herod had a certain "fearful fascination" for John.
 - This is key for us to recognize at this point in the narrative because it speaks to the

overwhelming conviction of truth!

- The reality is, upon the heart of every human being is one's ability to know right from wrong.
- Paul speaks much about this reality of our human conscience bearing witness of right and wrong.
- Check out the text: Romans 2:12-16 quickly.

Romans 2:12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law;
Romans 2:13 for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Romans 2:14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,
Romans 2:15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

Romans 2:16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

- I remember in middle school when it came to associating with classmates and those who knew me as a “church kid”, I was often greeted in this way:
 - “Oh here comes Jesus’ little brother – let’s change the subject y’all. We don’t want to cause his ears to burn.”
 - I’m sure you have your share of stories regarding your experience at family gatherings or other social events.
 - When there are people around someone who they deem to be “right with God” or a “holy person” or believer in Christ, people’s attitudes and behaviors change.
 - Why? Because people have a fear of what is holy and righteous because we are naturally sinful people.
 - There is this natural distinction between light and dark, goodness and evil, and in this same way the presence of truth can cause one to be in fearful fascination – however without a willingness or draw to turn from their sin.
 - This respect and fear for what was holy caused Herod to honor John and to shield him from his wife’s schemes.
 - Herod was willing to put John in prison, but he wasn’t willing to kill him.
 - So in the case of Herodias, what do you do when one is caught between the truth and a desirable need but is not anchored to truth – you seek the opportune time to get what you want.
 - And just like the father of lies, Herodias waits, yet again for the right moment to get her request to kill John the Baptist.
 - Check out Mark 6:21-26:

Mark 6:21 An opportune day came when Herod, on his birthday, held a banquet for his nobles and military commanders, and the leading people of Galilee;

Mark 6:22 and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want, and I will give it to you.”

Mark 6:23 And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you, up to half of my kingdom.”

Mark 6:24 And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”

Mark 6:25 Immediately she came in a hurry to the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.”

Mark 6:26 And although the king was very sorry, because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

Mark 6:27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison,

Mark 6:28 and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

- We must first begin here by looking at the second word in verse 21. Mark tells us that a “strategic day” or an “opportune day” came.
 - The word “strategic” here in Greek is *eukarios*.
 - You may be familiar with the Greek root word, *karios*, which we have talked about in previous teachings.
 - It normally deals with an opportune time or season.
 - However, in this context this opportune moment is found most suitable for none other than Herodias herself.
 - The opportunity to get rid of John the Baptist once and for all would come about on Herod’s birthday.
 - This would be the day Herod Antipas would be a bit more vulnerable than what he normally would be.
 - On this day, Mark mentions that Herod Antipas held a banquet with a rather large guest list.
 - This list included his lords, commanders, and other leading men in the region he ruled, which was in the Galilee.
 - And it just so happens that the entertainment for his guest was none other than Herodias’ daughter, Salome.
 - Scholars suggest that Salome was of the age of a young woman which meant she could have been no less than 12 years old.
 - Verse 22 states that Herodias’ daughter “pleased” the dinner guest and the king.
 - Now this word “pleased” in our text and this context means to delight in or give pleasure to.
 - In other words, her dancing was pleasing to the eye which we can surmise was seductive dancing at best.

- The question becomes “Why this method of entertainment and for what purpose was this serving?”
- Well, it becomes obvious from Matthew’s account that this entire plan of seduction was for a malicious purpose.
 - Check out what Matthew 14:8 states regarding Herodias’ daughter’s fraudulent request after the King makes an unwise oath at his weakest moment.

Matthew 14:8 Having been prompted by her mother, she *said, “Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist.”

- It is at this moment upon hearing Salome’s request that Herod Antipas realizes this seductive act was ultimately orchestrated by Herodias.
 - At this point, what can Herod Antipas do after having made an oath of this caliber to Herodias’ daughter before all his men?
 - Understand that during this time an oath was a man’s bond, especially that from the mouth of a ruler such as the Herodians.
 - However, the type of oath that Herod Antipas made was considered to be “an oath in uncertain things”
 - Such a frivolous oath was wicked in the sight of the Lord which is why Bock in his commentary states that, “the oath could have been revoked”.
 - Unfortunately, because Herod made this oath before his men, his reputation was on the line and therefore his pride became louder than the reality of the matter.
 - You will see a little later on tonight just how “Pride comes before the fall”. (Proverbs 16:18)
 - I believe the text makes a very important applicational point here: When we allow sin to rule and reign, it will stop at nothing to corrupt the whole body.
 - Herod Antipas could have responded to the message he heard time and time again from John.
 - However, the revelation of truth will cause one to respond to truth and turn from sin or sit in sin and turn from truth.
 - We ultimately see here the depravity of the human condition.
 - Check out what Proverbs 21:2 tells us regarding the hearts and desires of men vs. the things of God:

Proverbs 21:2 Every man’s way is right in his own eyes,
But the Lord weighs the hearts.

- ○ And for good measure, Proverbs 14:12 states this:

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.

- ◦ Apart from Holy God, the ways of the hearts of men lead to death and nothing good.
 - And we see this played out in the plans within Herodias' heart.
- So Herodias received what she always wanted but felt that Herod was too weak to accomplish – she got John the Baptist's head on a platter (v.27-28).
 - What we see in the natural are the tactics that Herodias used in manipulating her daughter to dance before the King for the sake of a fraudulent request.
 - However, there were spiritual matters at play behind these human agents because ultimately, Satan himself was using this woman for his purposes.
- Where does this leave Herod Antipas at this time?
 - Verse 26 told us that this made Herod Antipas “very sorry”. He was completely grieved by what He had to do because of his own sin.
 - As Franzman in his Bible History commentary points out: “Herod had let his hour of grace slip by”.
- What began as a drawing to the light of the truth of the Gospel of God for Herod became an utter rejection of truth for the sake of comfort and sin.
 - We ultimately see this reality played out in Luke 23:8-12. Check out the text.

Luke 23:8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

Luke 23:9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

Luke 23:10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

Luke 23:12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

- There was no change found in the heart of Herod nor his reception to truth after the fact.
 - He was more concerned with his political alliances and comforts as a desiring king and the threats of a coming Kingdom in which Christ would be ruling.
 - Friends, coming to the truth requires cost and an abandonment of what you hold near and dear!
 - It is a cost of comfort and convenience for the sake of obedience to the word of God and His truth.
 - If you recall last week, we mentioned that when the Apostles were sent out with the gospel message there would be some who responded to it and some who didn't.
 - For those who did not respond, the apostles would “shake the dust from their sandals as an indication of judgement.”

- And this particular judgement would come either upon that home or that city.
 - Well with Herodias giving into sin and killing John the Baptist (rejecting truth and ultimately Christ), Herod would soon receive his due penalty from Heaven in his day.
 - Josephus records that the eventual destruction of Herod Antipas' army was sent as a punishment upon Herod and a mark of God's displeasure to him. (insert citation)
- Lastly, we see in verse 29 that John's disciples come to pick his body up and give him a proper burial in a tomb.
 - Again, truth, we see, comes at a cost and in some occasions will cost us our lives.
- The killing of John the Baptist ultimately served as a foreshadowing of Jesus' own death that was drawing near – and might I add with similar insights.
 - Just as Herodias sought ways in which to stop John's ministry, so were the Pharisees and Herodians plotting to kill Jesus for what he proclaimed but most importantly for who He was in His person, authority, and power!
- What we gather from the text as an obvious observation as well is that sin spreads.
 - What started as a means to “cover up” truth for the sake of sin in Herodias' heart eventually spread to involving Herod and Salome.
- What could have been an opportunity of repentance for Herod became a thing of remorse to that of a calloused heart.
 - Also don't miss what Mark is saying here: Although there is time to respond to the Gospel and hear it now, there will be a moment where it won't be.
 - Friends, tomorrow is not promised! And the question on the table for the non-believer is “Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Do you believe that in Him through Him and by Him men and women can be saved?!”
 - Secondly, as we are still in the Church Age, continue to share the Gospel despite the persecution.
- Truth has been made known – Christ has revealed Himself by the will of the Father.
 - For those who do not know Jesus but have heard the message, will you respond to the message of the Gospel of God?
 - Will you turn from your own dispositions and recognize the reality of sin in your life?
- Because the reality is that you will either respond to Christ in faith based upon who He is and what He has done for you, or you will face the wrath of God that is coming.
 - I implore you by the Spirit of God: Repent and Believe the Gospel!
 - Let's Pray.

Citation:

- Werner Herman Franzmann, [*Bible History Commentary: New Testament*](#), electronic

ed. (Milwaukee, WI: WELS Board for Parish Education, 1998), 294.