

March 16, 2014
Port Gardner Church
Chuck Hickman

Mark 6:14-29
Death of John the Baptist

Mark 6:14-29

The Death of John the Baptist

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." 17 For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly.

21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl. "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 2 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Who motivates our actions?
Who do we follow?
Who do we obey?
Do we obey ourselves?
Do we obey our boss?
Do we obey our spouse?
Who has power over us?
Who has influence in our life?
Why do we obey?
Why do we do what we do?

This story gives us a picture of two men and what motivates their decisions, their actions and ultimately their lives.

Our two main characters are Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great and John the Baptist

Our lesser characters are Herodias, the wife of Herod Antipas and her daughter.

Herod Antipas is paranoid and ruthless. His wife, Herodias hates John because he has come out against her illegal marriage. Herod Antipas is afraid of John. He knows John and Jesus are both sent by God but that doesn't change his behavior... at all.

Herod Antipas had to jilt his own wife and then encourage Herodias to divorce her own husband, Herod Philip, half brother of Herod Antipas.

In the end, Antipas reaps what he sowed.

His first wife was the daughter of Aretas, King of Nabatea east of the Dead Sea. In reprisal for divorcing his daughter,

Aretas inflicted a crushing defeat on Antipas in AD36. Three years later Antipas and Herodias were banished to Gaul by the Roman Emperor Caligula. You had to be a pretty bad dude to be banished by Caligula.

The growing reputation of Jesus is scaring Herod and he thinks that Jesus may be John the Baptist come back to life... to torment him.

Herod Antipas has a very high regard for the prophets of God. He has a very high regard for Jesus Christ. But we can see that having a high regard for someone does not necessarily equal "faith"

It is easier to be content with a "noble" opinion that is wrong, than it is to be content with a base opinion that is wrong.
James R. Edwards (a base opinion is a fundamental principle)

What are the differences between Herod and John?

Herod is a Jew. John is a Jew

Herod is a King. John is a Prophet.

Herod lives in luxury and power. John lives in the desert.

Herod comes from a corrupt family. John comes from a family that serves God.

Herod is afraid to lose what he has. John has nothing to lose

Herod wants what he wants. John wants what God wants.

Herod is like many **so called** Christians. They like the idea of Jesus. They like the idea of serving God. They even kind of like the messengers of God because they know they are right in their assessment of sin...etc. They like being close to people of influence.

Herod covets John and Jesus' audience. He wants them on his side politically.

Most people of power or politics want to control large groups of people. They want to harness the current agenda that gathers large groups of people.

O Brother Where Art Thou.

The incumbent Governor Pappy O'Daniel seizes the stage after he sees how popular the "Soggy Bottom Boys" are with his constituency.

He doesn't care about the Soggy Bottom Boys except for what they can do for him. He doesn't care about his constituency except for what they can do for him.

Herod is similar. Herod has the power and he doesn't want to lose it. He is afraid and paranoid that his "world" will be taken from him.

There is a reason that Jesus says that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

When you have lots of stuff, you get used to your stuff. You like your stuff. You want to keep your stuff. You are afraid of losing your stuff. Your lifestyle. Your standing.

Have you ever been wealthy and then ... not? Have you ever had stuff and then... not?

When we have lots of worldly things, we start to rely on those things. When we have comfort, we rely on our comfort. When we have standing and status, we rely on standing and status.

Herod Antipas has a legacy to live up to... John... has no worldly legacy.

It's not wrong to have things, but the question is, Do the things have you? It's not wrong to have friends, but do the friends have you? Are you making choices and decisions based on your things, your friends or your standing? Or are you living a life that has an eternal perspective?

John the Baptist didn't have to call out Herod. He didn't have to accuse him or call him to repentance; there were plenty of other issues at hand. The Herodian empire was full of corruption and evil.

The Roman government was the same. The issue of Herod's marriage was actually kind of a little thing in comparison to all the corruption and evil in the surrounding kingdoms.

This difference between John and Herod is fundamental. It comes down to a life perspective. John has a perspective that says "this earth is not my home". I am a child of the God of my salvation. I will not defile myself or God's people by giving a pass to evil and rebellion against God in our midst. (now remember, Herod and Herodias were Jews. Herod was a Jewish King.)

Every time we make a difficult choice we are serving someone or something. We are serving others, ourselves or we are serving God. Sometimes you can serve yourself and others will be served as well. Sometimes you can serve others and you will also be serving yourself. But only when you first serve God will you be guaranteed to be serving all three. John swears to his own hurt. He stands by God's promises and statutes without remorse. Even to his own death.

This is where we are sidetracked:

Doing good things. Thinking good thoughts. Having good purposes. Best practices. Doing well. Satisfying others.

We like to think about the easy things Jesus said and agree with them. We like to think of ourselves as noble And our motives pure. We want to feed children because Jesus did it. We want to preach love and acceptance because we see from the outside that this is what Jesus did. We agree with the things of God that agree with us and our lifestyle.

Don't be fooled into believing that because you agree with Jesus on a few points that you are a follower.

Check yourself. Do you really know what Jesus preached? Do you really know how he lived? Do you really know that he is the same God that swings the sword of Judgment?

Remember our quote from James R. Edwards? It is easier to be content with a "noble" opinion that is wrong, than it is to be content with a base opinion that is wrong. The book of Mark shows us that familiarity with Jesus, even family relationship with him is of no ultimate advantage... and may actually hinder faith.

We like to believe all the happy and good things that benefit me. But what about having sex with someone you're not married to? What about throwing your brothers and sisters in Christ under the bus? What about loving your neighbors as yourself? What about, what about, what about?

What are you winking at? What sin or behavior are you winking at or saying, aw, that's cool... that's alright. I'll repent someday.

After preaching a message like this it's easy to hear God's spirit convict us and then feel guilt and shame. And these are not necessarily bad things as long as they drive us to Jesus. But we need to be careful to not begin to become legalistic in our thinking and actions. We can't earn anything with God. We can't save ourselves from any part of our sin. We can't do any work that is pleasing to God. We can only surrender.

This is not about fixing something yourself. This is not about working harder at your faith. This is not about you. This is about Jesus.

Jesus didn't come to condemn Herod... He came to free Herod.

It's all about knowing Jesus. Trusting him. Having faith in him. Wanting to please him and not yourself. Not your friends, not your boss and not even your spouse. It's about knowing who Jesus is and who you are in relation to him. He has called you and chosen you to be adopted into his forever family. Don't settle for the things of this world to satisfy you. Look to Jesus.