

Content

The passage we are looking at this morning, Mark 6:14-30, must be one of the most sordid stories in the New Testament. But as we are going through the gospel of Mark, and Mark has told us from the outset what his narrative is all about, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), we can ask what do we learn about the gospel and the nature and reality of the kingdom of God through this text? And we will do this from two vantage points. Tragedy and triumph. The tragedy of sin and triumph through suffering. Tragedy of sin is obvious enough. It revolves around the major characters of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great and Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. When John the Baptist confronts them concerning their affair and breaking of the Mosaic Law, Herod proceeds to seize John, throw him in prison, and Herodias, biding her time, waits for the opportune moment, which comes at Herod’s birthday party to hatch a plan that will lead to the death of John the Baptist. But John’s death is certainly not pointless as it foreshadows the One who John was always pointing to, Jesus Christ.

Gospel Connections

The death of John the Baptist brings triumph through suffering. Especially as it points away from himself and toward Jesus. It was John who said, “**He must increase, but I must decrease**” (**John 3:30**). Jesus suffered and died what appeared to be a tragic death. He lost everything and then was raised from the dead so that death no longer gets the last word. Tragedy is never the last word. Tragedy is real, and painful, but because of Jesus it is never the final word. He must increase. May he increase in our lives.

Application and Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn from this sermon? Specifically
 - a. What insights did you learn?
 - b. What questions do you have? Are there any areas you don’t understand?
 - c. What areas of your life (be specific) do you sense God wants to change as a result of this passage of Scripture?

2. How did the death of John the Baptist affect the expansion of the kingdom of God? Would you consider John the Baptist successful? Why or why not?

3. What causes you to feel puzzled and distressed at times? How does God help you when you're perplexed? How does this passage help you to see God's perspective in suffering?