

From the Pulpit to the Plate

(Mark 6:14-29)

(preached 1/11/15 Pine Grove BC; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Please open your Bibles this morning to the book of Mark.

Mark 6:14.

Mark is one of the four gospels, which is simply means a book of good news.

Mark writes about the good news of Jesus Christ, along with Matthew, Luke and John.

For almost the past 6 months, we have been in the gospel of Mark looking at it verse by verse.

And Lord willing, we will most likely remain in it for the remainder of 2015.

I want to read this passage first before we get started.

It is an incredible account that runs from Mark 6:14-29.

Please follow along as I read this out loud.

Mark 6:14..

¹⁴ And King Herod heard of 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.”¹⁵ But others were saying, “He is Elijah.” And others were saying, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old.”¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he kept saying, “John, whom I beheaded, has risen!”

¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, 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 Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so;²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; ^[u]but he ^[m]used to enjoy listening to him. ²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and ^[n]military commanders and the leading men of Galilee;²² and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and ^[o]his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.”²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.”²⁴ And she went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she said, “The head of John the Baptist.”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.”²⁶ And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of ^[P]his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.²⁷ Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded 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.²⁹ When his disciples heard about this, they came and took away his body and laid it in a tomb.

Let us pray.

After I graduated high school, I went to Clemson for a few years.

I normally came home most weekends, and my grandmother eventually purchased a 1990 Jeep Cherokee for me to travel back and forth to school.

The Jeep was nice, but I put some miles on it back and forth to school, and it quickly began to show some wear and tear.

The factory paint job was not that good.

I'm sure many of you have seen cars where the hood paint begins to flake off and it has a really dull finish.

Well, that was my Jeep.

But I loved her dearly.

On one Sunday headed back to Clemson, there was a bad rainstorm.

And I got hit from behind by another car.

The accident destroyed my bumper and caused a dent on the right side of the jeep above the front wheel.

Well, the insurance adjuster came to look and okayed the fixing of my bumper and agreed to fix the dent on the right side.

Well, when they pulled out the dent, they only painted the part of my Jeep that was right around where the dent had been.

So, when I picked up my Jeep, it had this still horrible paint job everywhere except over the right front tire.

I know you ladies have a “best side” when you pose for a picture.

Well, this was my Jeep’s best part.

If I took had taken a picture with that Jeep, I would have stood by that right front tire.

You all know the saying “That stands out like a sore thumb.”

Well, that was true of my Jeep’s front quarter panel.

But that is also true of the verses we just read in Mark.

Mark 6:14-29 stands out like a sore thumb in Mark’s gospel.

Because this is the only extended passage in the gospel where the story isn’t about Jesus in some way.”

We do see a reference to him in the opening, but from 17-29, it is the story of John the Baptist’s death.

So, why did Mark place this here?

What is the point of including this section that recalls how John was murdered?

And I think there are two reasons....

One, John the Baptist was a forerunner to Jesus.

He came before Jesus preaching a message of repentance.

Jesus would follow John’s message and preach repentance.

So, John was a forerunner in ministry, but here he also becomes a forerunner in death.

John is beheaded for his message.

Jesus will be crucified for his message.

Mark writes about John's death, and he will soon write about Jesus' death.

So first, we see Mark offering a foreshadowing of what is to come.

But second, I think God also inspires Mark to put it here to give every gospel messenger an important reminder.

Preaching the truth comes with a high price tag.

Last week, we watched as Jesus sends the disciples out on a trial run of sorts.

He sends them out to preach repentance in towns across Galilee.

And we wrapped up our look at that in verse 13...

Well in verse 30, they will return and report back to Jesus.

But sandwiched between the going and coming back, we have this account of John the Baptist being killed.

And it reminds everyone who carries the truth to the nations that sometimes people respond to it by killing the messengers.

And let me say this...

That is not something that is popular in pulpits across our world.

So many pastors will get up today and tell people that coming to Jesus will bring health, wealth and happiness.

That the rest of your life will be nothing but blessing after blessing if you get saved.

And you know what?

That message sells.

It packs places that call themselves churches.

People line up outside the doors to hear that message.

Do you God is saying to you this morning through the gospel of Mark?

Get saved by repenting of your sins and believing that Jesus dies in your place on the cross...

But once you get saved and take that same message to world, there may be blessings but there also may be beatings.

And be prepared for both.

Look, as a pastor, I would love to get up here and say...

Get saved and your bank account will never be empty.

Get saved and your cancer will be healed.

Get saved and your dream job will come your way.

I would love to tell you that because we could pack this place out with that message.

But as a preacher, I have to remain faithful to the Word of God.

And the reality of getting saved is that it may cost you everything, even your very life.

That is what it cost your Savior.

And that was the cost paid by almost all of the 12 disciples.

And that is also what it cost John the Baptist.

That is we have this section in the gospel of Mark.

It is a solemn reminder that the proclamation of the truth is highly offensive to the world.

So pray that ears would be opened to it, but be ready for closed fists.

And with that, let's look at these verses this morning.

It is a tragic story, but it is also rather simple account...

I only have two outline points on the back of your bulletin if you want to follow along and take notes.

We are going to see Herod's Worry in verses 14-16...

Followed by Herod's Wickedness in verses 17-29...

I. Herod's Worry (14-16)

Verse 14...

14 And King Herod heard of it, for His name had become well known

What had Herod heard?

Well, he had heard of the things that were just talked about in the section before...

He heard how Jesus had sent his disciples all over the area preaching repentance.

He had heard that the disciples along with Jesus had been casting out demons and healing the sick.

News like this would eventually reach the king, and in verse 14 it does.

So who is this Herod?

Well, this will require some effort to explain because there are a few different Herods mentioned in the Bible.

Probably, the most well known of them was Herod the Great.

Herod the Great was the king over the region when Jesus was a baby.

Herod the Great was the one who ordered the execution of all babies under 2, hoping that this would result in Jesus being killed as a baby.

And Herod the Great had ten wives, so there were a lot of Herods in this day.

Well one of his sons is the King Herod of these verses.

And he is king over Galilee, which is really not saying much.

The Roman Empire was appoint rulers over the Galilee area of the Roman Empire.

And he was not much of a king, he simply did what the Roman emperor told him to do.

And he could lose his position very easily if he made the slightest error.

So, he is here in Galilee trying to keep his job and the power that goes along with it.

He is trying to keep the peace, which is the best way to please the Roman emperor.

But her hears about what Jesus and his disciples are doing and the stir they are creating in his area.

I worked for a few years as a manager at a restaurant...

And though that may sound nice, a manager is just simply a peace keeper among the employees.

He doesn't have to come up with great ideas or great advertising.

His job is to simply keep people from fighting.

If I heard of the slightest argument or bad attitude, it was my job to catch it before it got out of hand and smooth it over.

Well, that is Herod.

But Jesus and his disciples have the area around Galilee stirring.

And rumors starting flying about all the miraculous things happening.

And some people were speculating that John the Baptist had risen from the dead.

Now, what we see in verse 17-29 will be a flashback.

So when the disciples were on mission, John is already dead.

John the Baptist would have been well known in the area.

If you preach in the wilderness and eat honey and locusts, most people know you.

And his death would also have been noticed as well.

But the word on the street is that he is alive and they are saying that Jesus is John the Baptist raised from the dead.

But that really troubles Herod.

In verse 16, Herod even says, “I am the one who beheaded him.”

And if he is back from the dead, this is really bad news.

And it's bad news because Herod knows that he killed John the Baptist for the wrong reason.

And then we have this flashback to Herod's Crime beginning in verse 17...

But I want to see one very important principle in these opening verses...

And it is this...

Do the right thing today and you won't ever have to worry about having a haunted past.

Why was Herod nervous here?

He had sinned by killing John the Baptist.

And it is haunting him.

What is the saying?

People who tell the truth don't need a good memory.

That is why we fight sin today as believers.

So, we don't look back with regret.

And let me tell you something very clearly, the worst haunted past that you could possibly have...

Is standing before a Holy God and looking back over a past filled with sin.

That is a hopeless situation.

You want to know the good news of the gospel?

The promise of the gospel that comes with repentance and faith in Jesus....

Is that you will stand with God and when you look back over your life...

You will see nothing but the perfect life of Christ.

The truth of the gospel is that you will get credit for a life that you could not possibly have lived.

You will get credit for the sinless life of Christ.

No believer in Jesus Christ has a haunted past.

Yes, we may still pay the earthly consequences for our sin.

But we will never pay the eternal consequences for our sin.

Herod had a haunted past and he was nervous, fearful and worried.

If you are here this morning without Christ, your haunted past and present should have you terrified.

But the good news is that the blood of Christ erases our past, present and future sins.

The good news of the gospel is that in repentance and faith, you say goodbye to a haunted past present and future.

So, we turn from Herod's Worry to...

II. Herod's Wickedness (17-29)

Verse 17...

17 For Herod himself had sent and had John arrested and bound in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, 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."

The reason that John the Baptist was dead was because he simply preached the truth.

Getting back to the twisted family tree of Herod the Great for a minute...

You must see the connections here.

Well, we have met this Herod's father, who we was Herod the Great, and we know he had 10 wives and plenty of children.

Well, the Herod of these verses had half brothers and one of his half brothers was named Philip.

Philip had a wife named Herodias, but Herod divorced his wife and Herodias divorced Philip.

And Herod married Herodias, which was unlawful according to God's law, which said that a brother could not take his brother's wife.

It was a sin against his wife and his brother.

And John, being a prophet of God, simply proclaimed that truth to Herod.

And most likely preached about that sin while he was in the wilderness to anyone who would listen.

And I want to make one note here...

Remember, John the Baptist had been a preacher of repentance in the wilderness before Jesus came.

And from all indications, no one had a problem with that.

He preached about a coming Messiah.

He preached about the need to repent of sin.

He preached that Jesus was the only way to God.

And though some may have disagreed with it, he was not threatened with his life, much less arrested.

Yet, when he preaches about sexual immorality, people not only want to arrest him...

The want him dead.

What a great reminder in our day.

We see this same reaction.

You can tell people that Jesus is the only way.

You can even preach that that people need to repent.

But the moment a man stand up and tells me my lifestyle is immoral and a sin against God, the people want him silenced and even dead.

Such is the case today and such was the case in these verses.

Verse 19...

¹⁹ Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not do so; ²⁰ for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; ^Ubut he ^mused to enjoy listening to him.

We see the struggle here in Herod's own soul.

HE has a wicked wife that wants a man dead.

But Herod knew that John was a righteous man.

So, instead of killing him, he locked him in prison.

Herod even listened to John's messages with enjoyment...

Yet, another warning in the Bible that even a love of good preaching does not equal saving faith.

But a day finally comes when Herod can no longer ride the fence.

And that day begins in verse 21....

²¹ A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and ^[u]military commanders and the leading men of Galilee; ²² and when the daughter of Herodias herself came in and danced, she pleased Herod and ^[o]his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask me for whatever you want and I will give it to you.” ²³ And he swore to her, “Whatever you ask of me, I will give it to you; up to half of my kingdom.”

Herodias had a daughter from her marriage to Philip and her name was Salome.

Well, nothing good happens at parties when ladies dance.

If you come on Wednesday nights, we have seen that already in the book of Esther.

And Salome’s dance leads Herod to say something that he would later regret.

He says that he will give her whatever she wants.

This is such a prideful statement.

To impress all his guests, Herod makes a dumb decision.

How often does that happen when we say something because of our own pride.

So, Salome runs to mama.

And we all know what she wanted.

Verse 24...

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

And one sinful choice leads to more sinful choices...

Verse 26...

²⁶ And although the king was very sorry, yet because of his oaths and because of ^[2]his dinner guests, he was unwilling to refuse her.

Here is sin on top of sin.

And it all started with Herod's tongue.

Our words can lead to so much trouble that we are unable to stop sinning.

So even though he has regret, it is not enough for him to swallow his pride.

And so he honors her request and we read about John's death in verses 27-29...

27 Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and had him beheaded 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.

What did Jesus say about John the Baptist?

Matthew 11:11...

11 Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist!

Yet that great prophet, the greatest of all the OT prophets has his head chopped off...

Because he simply was a proclaimer of the truth.

And in an instant, he went to his eternal reward because of husband and wife did not want to hear about their sexual sin.

For the guests of the party, it was just entertainment.

In the eternal plan of God, it was a tragic event.

Verse 29 says that John's disciples came and took what was left of his body and buried it.

And news of John the Baptist's death even came to Jesus...

And Matthew 14:13 says that when Jesus heard of John's death...

He got in a boat and went away to a secluded place all alone....

Why?

His day is quickly coming.

Though his head would be cut off, a crown of thorns will be forced upon it.

He knows the price that he must pay.

It is the same price that John paid.

Conclusion

As I look back over this passage, there was much to be learned from it.

And probably many more things that we could learn from it if given the time.

But what really strikes about this passage is that it is a small picture of the one battle that this life is all about.

And that is the battle for truth in this world.

John told the truth and he was killed.

Jesus told the truth to the religious leaders and they crucified him.

Yet that should be no surprise to us.

The battle for the truth began in the garden with a serpent and some fruit.

And the question of whether “did God really say.”

And even this day, the battle for the truth rages on.

It is raging in here this morning.

Some of us here love the truth, while some of us despise it.

And there you have the battle that truly defines this life.

Simply put, truth divides.

Truth divides people.

Truth divides families.

Truth even divides husbands from wives.

And parents from children.

And truth will ultimately divide heaven from hell.

Heaven will be filled with those who have embraced the truth about themselves.

That they are sinners separated from a holy God.

And they will have believed upon the solution to that separation, - the person of Jesus Christ.

By repenting of their sin and trusting in Christ alone to save them.

Hell will be full of those who have rejected that truth.

Telling the truth cost John the Baptist his life.

But believing the truth will save your life this morning.