

“The Death of John the Baptist”  
Mark 6:14-29  
(Preached at Trinity, January 19, 2010)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. So far in **Chapter 6** we’ve witnessed Jesus returning to His hometown of Nazareth only to be rejected by those who knew Him best. We can see the danger of familiarity.  
**Mark 6:4** - "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his *own* relatives and in his *own* household."
2. This is a danger for us as we look upon our leaders; the danger of seeing them as mere men and despising their authority. There is a particular danger of an unholy familiarity as we approach God; to become so accustomed to His presence that we fail to tremble before His holiness.
3. His hometown rejected Jesus and He marveled at their unbelief.  
Jesus then called His disciples to Him and sent them forth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of Christ. They were sent out two-by-two with no provision trusting in God to bless their travels and bless His Word.
4. As we continued with **Verse 14** we saw with the preaching of the disciples the fame of Jesus went far and wide eventually reaching the ears of King Herod.  
**Mark 6:14** – “And King Herod heard of *it*, for His name had become well known”
5. While the fame of Jesus was sweeping the land and multitudes knew of Him, few actually believed in Him unto salvation. There is an infinite difference between a mere head knowledge of Christ and an intimate knowledge wrought through regeneration.  
The masses had many opinions of Jesus:  
**Mark 6:14-15** – “and *people* were saying, "John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that is why these miraculous powers are at work in Him." <sup>15</sup> But others were saying, "He is Elijah." And others were saying, "*He is* a prophet, like one of the prophets *of old*."
6. When Herod heard of the amazing works of Jesus his conscience smote him. He bore personal responsibility for the death of John the Baptist and he couldn’t get it out of his head. Hearing of the miraculous works of Jesus he had only one conclusion:  
**Mark 6:16** – “But when Herod heard of *it*, he kept saying, "John, whom I beheaded, has risen!"
7. The details of John’s death are presented in a straight forward way.
  - A. Herod had married his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias. She had a hatred of John the Baptist because he had denounced the relationship.
    1. Herodias was particularly evil
      - a. For cheating on her husband Philip
      - b. For evil design upon John which was motivated by pure revenge
      - c. For employing her daughter (Salome, who was probably 16-17 years old) Such dancing was usually sexually suggestive.
    2. Herod, on the other hand had a respect for John. John was put in prison to satisfy the demand of Herodias.

**Matthew 14:3** – “For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip.”

- B. On a particular day Herod’s step daughter danced for him and he swore to her that he would give her whatever she desired.
1. Herodias instructed her to ask for John’s head which she did.
  2. Herod, reluctantly, had John beheaded.
  3. John’s head was brought to Herodias, and his body was given to his disciples .
  4. They buried John’s body and went and told Jesus.
8. There are several observations of spiritual value that I wish to share.
- I. Truth can never be abolished
- A. Herodias was angry because John had preached the truth. His words stung her. She was Philip’s wife, not his widow.
- Leviticus 18:16** – “You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness.”
- 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 shall be childless.”
1. Herod was guilty of taking his brother’s wife
  2. He was also guilty of putting away his own wife
  3. John was a man of holiness and moral courage. He was intensely concerned about the righteousness of God and He boldly denounced sin. He was never afraid to boldly proclaim the truth.
- B. No sooner than he killed John he heard Jesus preaching the same pure doctrine. This must surely be John the Baptist come from the dead
1. God’s Word will never be silenced. As soon as one minister is silenced God raises up another
  2. Jesus told His disciples if they faced opposition, shake the dust off their feet and go the next town.
- Mark 6:11** – “Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.”
3. In spite of thousands of martyrs the Gospel continues to go forth
- C. We must be faithful to the truth no matter the cost
1. Herod was the king – yet living in sin. It would have been easier for John to ignore the sin. Herod was one of John’s hearers:  
**NAS Mark 6:20** – “for Herod was afraid of John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. And when he heard him, he was very perplexed; but he used to enjoy listening to him.”
    - a. John was obliged to boldly confront Herod’s sin  
The only charge against John was that he preached the truth
    - b. Ministers, who are reprovers by office, must reprove those whom God has placed under them.
  2. Today we are more concerned about individual “rights” than about crying against sin.
- D. Reproofs will often provoke and create resentment

## II. The foolishness of Herod's oath

### A. It was made for such a foolish reason – because she danced

1. It wasn't because she had done a noble deed. She had danced lewdly before these men. She wasn't concerned about honoring God
2. Herod was to bless her only because she satisfied his own lusts
3. Wisdom would have brought him to add, "as long as it is lawful"
4. There is another example of a foolish oath

**Judges 11:30-31** – "And Jephthah made a vow to the LORD and said, "If Thou wilt indeed give the sons of Ammon into my hand, <sup>31</sup> then it shall be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me when I return in peace from the sons of Ammon, it shall be the LORD's, and I will offer it up as a burnt offering."

**Judges 11:34-35** – "When Jephthah came to his house at Mizpah, behold, his daughter was coming out to meet him with tambourines and with dancing. Now she was his one *and* only child; besides her he had neither son nor daughter. <sup>35</sup> And it came about when he saw her, that he tore his clothes and said, "Alas, my daughter! You have brought me very low, and you are among those who trouble me; for I have given my word to the LORD, and I cannot take *it* back."

5. May we be people of our word, but might God grant us the wisdom not to bind ourselves with foolish oaths.

### B. Herod should have declared his vow null and void – no man can place himself under the obligation to sin – His oath did not justify the taking of a human life

1. He did not want to appear before his guests to be a man who would go back on his word.
2. His sorrow was probably not so much for John as for regrets over shedding blood on his birthday – considered an ill omen
3. Some suggest that upon reflection on his rash oath, he was relieved that she hadn't asked some great sum of money
4. Matthew's Gospel suggests that Herod had his own grudge against John and secretly wanted to put him to death.

**Matthew 14:3-5** – "For when Herod had John arrested, he bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. <sup>4</sup> For John had been saying to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." <sup>5</sup> Although Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded John as a prophet."

### C. John was quickly and quietly beheaded It has not been hid from God

- III. Sin always has its consequences – on the day he seduced Herodias Herod sealed his doom
- A. His sin of adultery led to the sin of murder.  
The same thing happened to King David. His lust over Bathsheba led to him overseeing the death of her husband to cover his sin.
- B. Herod had been married to the daughter of Aretas IV, one of the Arabian kings of southern Jordan.  
Bitter over the insult of Herod in divorcing his daughter Aretas made war upon Herod and heavily defeated his holdings. Herod's entire army was destroyed. The Jews attributed his defeat to his murder of John.  
Herod was later sent away into exile.  
**Numbers 32:23** – “But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD, and be sure your sin will find you out.”
- IV. Wicked men cannot escape the cries of their conscience
- A. Our conscience is that inner voice that distinguishes between right and wrong.
1. It is a warning system for the soul much like pain is a warning system for the body.
  2. The conscience isn't an infallible witness, particularly in the life of an unbeliever.
    - a. Many justify themselves clearing their conscience of wrongdoing.  
**Titus 1:15** – “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.”
    - b. Before Paul was converted he considered himself blameless. He thought persecuting Christians was doing the work of God.
- B. The convicted conscience can hunt us like a bloodhound that haunts us awakening fears and anxiety.
1. The “I” in **Verse 16** is emphatic in the Greek. Herod is crying out, “I” beheaded John.  
Also it is implied here that he said it over and over. His conscience would give him no rest.  
Literally it should read:  
*“But Herod, having heard, kept on saying, Him whom I beheaded, John, this man was raised.”*  
Herod was certain that Jesus was John.
  2. John's head will be an eternal reminder to Herod of his wickedness
  3. The conscience, however, is not sufficient to restrain wicked men from their desires
    - a. Human beings have the ability to silence their conscience. They learn to ignore the guilty feelings.
    - b. Most people simply do what they want.  
**Judges 21:25** – “In those days *there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*”

3. Even with the death of John the Baptist haunting him he remained unchanged.
  - a. John the Baptist would have preached Christ to him  
**Mark 6:20** – “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; but he used to enjoy listening to him.”
  - b. When it finally came time for him to meet Jesus he only saw it as an opportunity to amuse himself by seeing some miracle.  
**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.”
  - c. Herod had no problem with mocking Jesus and sending Him to His death.  
**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.”

Conclusion:

1. This account testifies to us that nothing will stop wicked men from carrying out their wicked deeds.
2. This is why we must be people of principle. We must continually seek to honor and glorify Christ, no matter what. Every sin has its consequences and unconfessed, unrepented sin always leads to greater sin.