

The Alarm of Conscience

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Text: Mark 6:1-29

Date: May 16, 2010

Series: Mark (Introducing Jesus)

Introduction: Open your Bible to **Mark 6**. We come to a situation that is radically out of control in this passage. It ends with the murder of John the Baptist. We have a man, “King” Herod whose life is out of control. Herod is best known as the one who had John the Baptist killed. His life was out of control and he didn’t even know it. He was an “in the moment” kind of a person.

REVIEW (Points I and II)...

I. *If your life is out of control, start **resolving problems** in your life.*

*Ignoring them won’t make them go away. Start dealing with the issues in your life, or you will be headed for disaster. You’ve got warnings coming at you that you need to deal with something, but you are putting it off, because you want to stay in your comfort zone. If that’s you, you might be comfortable now, but soon you will be in deep trouble, and you’ll hurt others in the process. Turn over to **Proverbs 10:17**.*

You may not deal with unresolved issues because you are living in the moment instead of thinking through the long term issues.

So, Herod was living in the moment. He wasn’t thinking through the fact that he might one day crash and burn. There are those people who will not resolve issues because they believe, “Everything will just work itself out”. Listen, everything will not work itself out. The only way to work things out is to choose to resolve it. You’ve got to confront issues. You’ve got to listen to those who are warning you.

You may not deal with unresolved issues in your life because you love living in the comfort zone.

Herod Antipas loved the comfort zone. *He liked preaching, he liked the world, he liked it all—as long as he didn’t have to make the hard choice. He would have fit real well in our generation. Every time he’d go hear John preach, John would say, “You’ve got the wrong wife. You need to deal with this problem. It’s going to send you to hell”. Then he’d go home and hear Herodias say, “You’ve got to kill John”. You think killing John will wipe away Herod’s sin? But it didn’t matter—Herod Antipas did nothing. He loved his comfort zone. He could put off the greatest of all the OT prophets!*

Antipas let life happen—he let it slide by. *He must have made a thousand excuses.*

- *It’s too hard!*
- *It’s too much trouble!*

- *I'll just leave it alone for a while, and maybe it'll go away!*
- *I'm sure he had all kinds of excuses...*
 - *I'd like to follow what John says, BUT, it's too hard.*
 - *I'd like to make this hard choice, BUT, I'm hoping it will resolve itself.*

I. *If your life is out of control, start **resolving problems** in your life.*

II. *Here's the second thing: If your life is out of control, **stop trivializing truth**.*

*Look again at verse 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 [puzzled, he didn't understand what he was hearing], and yet he heard him gladly." Literally it says that Herod used to enjoy listening to him. Now think about this, John the Baptist had only one sermon: REPENT! Basically he was saying, "This is serious stuff, and you need to take God's message seriously. It's heaven and hell." But it seems Herod enjoyed the **style**, enjoyed the **show**, but left without the **substance**. In other words, he could listen to God's Word over and over again, and he found it interesting. It tickled his intellect. But it never reached his heart! He **trivialized the truth**.*

Car / Sleeping Illustration: *Have you ever been asleep at the wheel? Jill and I used to travel to churches on deputation raising support so we could go to Spain as missionaries. We would travel several hours and be busy teaching and preaching all day long. At the end of a long day we would head back several hours home. We were almost always the last people to leave the church. The last hour home was always the hardest. We would do anything to stay awake. Roll down the windows. Turn up the music as loud as we could.*

There's nothing worse than the feeling of being jolted awake and realizing you are propelling forward at 60 miles an hour! In that moment you go from wonderful dream world of rest (which is not reality) to the real world trying to get your car under control and hopefully not die.

Cops Illustration: *Jill and I were watching the show the other night about COPS. It really should be renamed, "Stupid Criminal Show". At any rate, one of the incidents was a police officer following a swerving vehicle. The vehicle suddenly, seemingly for no reason veered off into the other lane of traffic and proceeded to hit a telephone pole. Amazingly, the guy got out of the car. He was dazed, but no broken bones. He had fallen asleep.*

Application: *Here we are in North America. Never in the history of the world have we had so much Bible teaching, with so many Bible study tools, and never has it made so little difference in the way people live. Listening, listening. Bible teaching can become a form of entertainment.*

Application: *The measure of your worship here this morning is not whether you enjoyed it or not. Our worship is not for our entertainment or enjoyment. Our worship is not for us but for God. We are in deep trouble if this becomes about our enjoyment and our happiness. The purpose of Tabernacle Baptist Church is to glorify God by being changed into Christ's*

image, by proclaiming His Gospel to lost people and seeing them transformed, and then diligently building the Body of Christ. Now if you get enjoyment out of that, it's a by product. It's not the main thing. Jesus didn't die so we could be happy. He died so we could be holy!

Until you stop trivializing spiritual truth, you will not gain control of your life. If you hear preaching on how God wants you to marry a godly mate, take heed to it! If you hear preaching on honoring the wishes of your mother and father, apply it to your life. If you hear that God hates gossip, yet you aren't willing to stop, you are trivializing spiritual truth.

Now we come to a third truth.

III. Wake up spiritually! If your life is out of control, **stop ignoring your internal spiritual alarm (conscience).**

Look at verses 21-26, “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 [Salome] 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.”

Involvement question: Did you know that God put a spiritual alarm inside every one of us? It's called the conscience.

A. **What is the conscience?**

The conscience is the internal alarm system that God put in you to warn you of sin. It either gives you confidence that something is right, or it gives you a sense of unease and guilt if something is to be avoided. This was going off in the head and heart of Herod Antipas, but he chose to ignore it.

Alarm Illustration: Have you ever heard this? [Trip Fire Alarm Beeper]. Do you know what that means? It means get out of the building! Have you ever ignored the “check engine light” in your car? If you have, you probably are not driving that car any more. It's not in the parking lot, it's in the JUNK HEAP. Now I don't really care about houses and cars, but I do care about your soul.

Application: God has given you a warning system called the conscience. All people have a conscience. The word conscience is found over 30 times in the NT. It's a phenomenal thing. It always works, and it doesn't need batteries. Let give you four truths about your conscience.

B. How does the conscience work?

- 1. First, if you follow your conscience, it commends you, and gives you peace and well being and confidence.** If you violate your conscience it brings condemnation and shame and fear and regret and disgrace and anguish.
- 2. Second, a conscience is conditioned by what you know.** A conscience is not a teacher. It is not a source of revelation. How many of you could do all kinds of things before you were saved that today you are ashamed of? You didn't feel bad about these things, but now you've been taught by God's Word and His Holy Spirit. Because our conscience is warped by sin, we need to bring it under the power of the Word of God. Some things feel wrong but are not morally wrong, and you need to strengthen your conscience according to the Word. Other things are wrong, but you may be unaware of it. So you need to educate your conscience. **Example:** Euphemisms. How many people know it is wrong to blaspheme God? How many of you find your self saying "O my _____"? You see we need to educate our conscience.
- 3. Third, your conscience is conditioned by what you do.**
 - (1.) It's an amazing phenomenon that the more you do right, the more you submit to the Lord, the more sensitive your conscience becomes. If you look at the greatest saints in church history, you'll find they were most aware of their personal sin. We've all met people who when you ask them if they are a sinner, they can hardly locate a single sin in their life.
 - (2.) It's also amazing that the more you ignore your conscience, the more you do wrong, the less sensitive your conscience will be.
 - **Wounded Conscience.** 1 Cor. 8 says if your conscience is functioning well, when you do wrong, it causes you pain. It is wounded. If you at times have a wounded conscience praise God! Listen to it and thank God for a sensitive heart! Praise God for the alarm.
 - **Calloused Conscience.** Mat. 13 says if you ignore your conscience it will be dulled and hardened. You can remember perhaps something that used to disturb you, but now there is only a dull kind of pain in your conscience. There used to be great grief. If you do nothing with a wounded conscience, you will get a calloused conscience.
 - **Seared Conscience.** If you do nothing with a calloused conscience, you will get a seared conscience. 1 Tim. 4:2 describes a person who's conscience doesn't feel any pain at all. People at this place just disobey the Lord, and you can't tell them any different. It would like picking up a hot iron skillet with no mitten. And it just burns my hand. But if I did it again and again and again, soon I would have no feeling in my hand.

4. Ignoring your conscience is extremely dangerous. It's like killing the guard sent to protect you.

Illustrations:

- It's like taking down the railing of your 25th story apartment.
- It's like ripping the label off the bottle of poison and putting it back in the refrigerator.

1 Tim. 1:19 says those who ignore conscience will suffer shipwreck in regard to their faith.

Context : Herod did not listen to the alarms that were going off inside him. It says when Salome, Herodias's daughter asked for John's head, "the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her."

C. What is it that causes us to ignore warnings?

I think the main thing is LIVING FOR THE MOMENT or living in a fantasy world. You don't think about the long haul.

1. **Herod made a rash promise. Verse 22,** "For when Herodias's daughter [Salome] 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."

Have you ever seen someone about to make a choice, and you want to grab them and shake them and say, "What are you thinking?" If someone is warning you about something in your life, you need to listen!! John was warning Herod.

2. **Herod was taken in the pleasure of the moment.** He lived on emotions. "[Salome] came in and danced".

Harry Ironside said of this in 1948 as pastor of the Moody Church. Quote,

"This is describing a vile orgy of drunkenness and debauchery. Clearly a pagan festival that began with alcohol, continued with perversity, and in a moment will conclude with murder".

Are you living of the moment? You've got to count the cost!

- IV. **Finally, If your life is out of control, stop embracing open rebellion, and submit your life to Christ.** Verse 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. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb."

Herod is frozen in the moment—he ignores the warnings. He’s living in the moment. He’s not thinking of the future. And he goes over the edge and has John the Baptist’s head taken from him. Herod’s life is not utterly out of control, and he crashes!

Perhaps you are here today, and you can’t understand why your life is out of control.

Conclusion: We all need to heed the warning signs. If not we might go right over the cliff.

March of the Lemmings Illustration

The lemming is found in Norway and is a short-tailed animal that looks like a miniature rabbit. Through the sub-Arctic Norwegian winter it lives completely buried under snow through which it burrows in search of food. Females can conceive and produce offspring within four weeks of their birth. Talk about reproduction, these things make rabbits look infertile. Mass reproduction! Eventually they outgrow the tunnel system, and the lemmings fill the tunnels, and there’s not enough food and not enough space.

God has put a little alarm inside the lemmings to give us a picture. A warning for us. What these lemmings do is about every two years, when the population is too high, most of them will crawl out of the ground and start a march. They come out of the ground in Norway.

This is so bizarre that the people come outside and watch this happen. First 10 and then 100 and then thousands and then hundreds of thousands join this massive march across the landscape so that you can’t even see the ground. They get to the sea, and they go right over the cliff, and right over into the ocean and DROWN.

This is silly. It’s stupid of these animals to do that. That animal has a brain as small as your fingernail, yet some of you are on the same path. You are about to make some decisions that are going to harm your future. Others of you need to be bold and trust God and go forward with God’s revealed will.

We have an internal alarm system that God has given us. We need to listen to it! We need to listen to the Word of God. We need to resolve problems and apply this book to our lives!