

Sermon Notes for July 10, 2016

**Sermon Series on Questioning  
God In Our Trials  
“Sometimes, Life Is Not Fair”  
Matthew 14:1-13**

**Introduction**

**A. We Continue Our Sermon Series on “Questioning God In Our Trials.”**

1. During this sermon series, hopefully we have learned that Christians go through trials
  - a. We misunderstand the Christian life if we believe that:
    1. we will always be happy in this life.
    2. we should not struggle at all.
    3. we should have a great job, a wonderful family and plenty of money in the bank.
    4. **it is my belief that to most Christians, trials are an unwelcome experience in the Christian life.**
  - b. If you think that the Christian life should always be happy or without trials; LOOK AT THE SCRIPTURES:
    1. where are the people who are always happy and have no struggles?
    2. the fact of the matter is that almost every person seen in the Scripture went through trials!
2. So, don't be surprised at the trials that **you** go through as a Christian

**B. Today, We Ask Ourselves; Do You Ever Experience Trials Where You Are Treated Unfairly?**

1. It is one thing to go through:
  - a. cancer
  - b. heart issues
  - c. financial times
2. But, can trials consist of times where we are just not treated fairly?
  - a. to be wrongly accused
  - b. to be divorced by a lying, cheating spouse who “gets off the hook”
  - c. to not get a promotion because a fellow worker lied about his accomplishments and “got your promotion”
3. Today, we will see a classic case of one of God's children being treated unfairly; **John the Baptist.**

**I. The ARREST Of John**

**A. The Reason For John's Arrest**

**Vs. 3-4 – “Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him:”It is not lawful for you to have her.”**

1. Herod the Tetrarch arrested John the Baptist
  - a. who was Herod the Tetrarch
    1. this “particular” Herod was not Herod the Great
      - a. the King who built the Temple in Jerusalem
      - b. the King who dealt with the wise men at Jesus’ birth
      - c. the King who killed all of the baby boys in Jerusalem
    2. instead, this Herod was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great
      - a. he ruled this area of Palestine for some 32 years
      - b. a man known to be a lover of luxury and who was lazy
  - b. Herod Antipas had been married to the daughter of Aretes, the King of the Nabateans
    1. upon traveling to Rome one time, Herod Antipas had an affair with the wife of his brother, whose name was Herodias
    2. so, to be together, Herod Antipas divorced his wife and Herodias divorced her husband and they married one another
  - c. after hearing of their adulterous relationship, John the Baptist personally confronted Herod about his relationship with Herodias
  - d. Herodias was enraged at John the Baptist condemnation of their marriage
    1. Herodias was a vicious, jealous woman who did not want anyone to challenge her
    2. when she first heard this, she wanted to kill John the Baptist
    3. Herod did not initially kill John but would often visit John in prison to talk to him
 

**Mark 6:19-20** – “So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; **yet he liked to listen to him.**”
2. Some scholars believe that John the Baptist was in jail for at least one to two years after his arrest

## B. The Rationale Of Herod About John

1. although Herod was fascinated by John, he still wanted to kill John
2. however, we see a real personality fault in Herod, for he was a “people pleaser”  
**Vs. 5 – “Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.”**
3. this fault of Herod being a people pleaser would actually lead to the death of John the Baptist

## II. The ARRANGEMENT Of Herod

### A. There Was A Birthday Party For Herod

**Vs. 6-7 – “On Herod's birthday, the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.”**

1. it was Herod’s birthday, so a party was thrown for him
  - a. many commentators called “all of the Herods” and their families “The Mafia Of The First Century”
    1. scheming
    2. lying
    3. murdering
  - b. **John MacArthur** - “This true account is more incredible than the most bizarre soap opera. It is a story of infidelity, divorce, remarriage, incest, political intrigue, jealousy, spite, revenge, lewdness, lust, cold-heartedness, cruelty, brutality, violence and ungodly remorse.”
  - c. so, you can imagine what kind of party this was
    1. obviously, there was much drinking; to the point of wild drunkenness
    2. and, it was usual to have slave girls dance in a sexual, provocative way for the guests at their parties
2. however, at Herod’s party, the daughter of Herod’s wife, Herodias, danced
  - a. it was not a custom that leaders would allow their daughters to dance in this way at a public event
  - b. so, some commentators believe that Herod’s wife, Herodias, set the whole thing up in order to get Herod drunk

### B. There Was A Birthday Promise Made By Herod

1. and, just as Herodias had planned, Herod got drunk and was so overwhelmed by his step-daughter’s sensual dance that he promised his step-daughter whatever she wanted

**Vs. 6-7 – “On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for them and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked.”**

2. please notice that the daughter did not make the decision about the oath, her mother actually did
 

**Vs. 8 – “Prompted by her mother,** she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist."

  - a. Herodias’ scheme and plan had worked to perfection
  - b. for she planned:
    1. to get her husband drunk
    2. to get her daughter to dance
    3. to get an emotional promise from her husband
    4. **AND; SHE TOOK FULL ADVANTAGE OF IT!**
3. so, after consulting with her mother about what she should ask for, the daughter’s request was to receive the head of John the Baptist on a platter
  - a. so, Herod had a dilemma – he feared killing John the Baptist because of the people who loved him
  - b. but, he **ALSO** feared not fulfilling his promise that he had made to his step-daughter in front of all of his guests
  - c. this man, who was a total “people pleaser,” had to make a choice
  - d. ultimately, he had to keep his word before all of his guests at the party

### C. There Was A Birthday Death By Herod

1. so, to keep his word made to his step-daughter, Herod sent soldiers to and go cut off the head of John the Baptist
 

**Vs. 9-11– “The King was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother.”**
2. so, Herod’s soldiers entered the jail cell of John the Baptist
  - a. they leaned John over and cut off his head
  - b. what a brutal, tragic scene this was!
3. and, then John’s head was placed on a platter, a “charger,” and John’s head was brought to the young girl
  - a. the daughter then took John’s head to her **mother;** who must have smiled
  - b. Herodias must have looked at the “fruit of her labor.” She had gotten just what she had wanted; revenge and the death of the man who had judged her

- c. **John Broadus** - “When the dish was brought in with the bleeding head on it, no doubt the daughter took it daintily in her hands lest a drop of it should stain her, and she tripped away to her mother as if bearing her some choice dish of food from the King’s table. It was not uncommon to bring the head of one who had been slain to the person who ordered it, as a sure proof that the command had been obeyed.”
- d. according to Jerome, a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Bible scholar, Herodias spat on John’s head and stuck a pin through the tongue.

### III. THE ANGST OF JESUS AND JOHN’S DISCIPLES

#### A. John’s Disciples Buried His Body

**Vs. 12a – “John’s disciples came and took his body and buried it.”**

1. upon hearing about the death of John the Baptist, his disciples came and got John’s body and buried it
  - a. can you imagine how John’s disciples must have felt?
  - b. they had to pick up the body of John the Baptist, whose head was no longer attached to his body
2. they just have thought; what had John done to receive such treatment?
  - a. they knew this amazing man
  - b. they respected John’s ministry or they would not have been one of his disciples!

#### B. Jesus Heard The News Of John’s Death

1. John’s disciples then went to tell Jesus of John’s death

**Vs. 12b – “Then they went and told Jesus.”**

2. Jesus was so devastated by John’s death that he withdrew to grieve John’s death

**Vs. 13a– “When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.”**

- a. apparently, this was the first time that Jesus knew that John had been killed
- b. and, Jesus needed to get away by Himself to deal with John’s death
- c. what do you think Jesus would have said if someone had asked Him if John the Baptist’s death was “fair”
  1. Jesus would have screamed
  2. **NO!! THIS IS NOT FAIR!**

### IV. THE ABSURDITY Of John’s Death

#### A. The Holiness Of John The Baptist

1. **DO YOU REALIZE WHO JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS?**
  - a. **JOHN WAS BORN WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT ON HIM IN THE WOMB**

**Luke 1:11-15** – “Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, **for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth.**”

b. **JOHN WAS TO BE THE ONE WHO PREPARED THE WAY FOR THE COMING MESSIAH**

**Luke 1:17** - “And he will go on before the Lord, **in the spirit and power of Elijah**, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”

1. **AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT JOHN THE BAPTIST DID**

a. **John 1:19-23** – “Now this was John's testimony when the Jews of Jerusalem sent Priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, **"I am not the Christ."** They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, No." Finally, they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, **"I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"**

b. **John 1:29** – “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

c. **JESUS CALLED JOHN THE BAPTIST THE GREATEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED.**

**Matthew 11:11a** – “I tell you the truth: **Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist;**”

d. **JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS A TRUE PROPHET OF GOD**

1 John spoke directly to the heart of man, whether they were Kings or slaves

2. **Chuck Colson** tells what he witnessed when he would bring visitors to meet Richard Nixon when Nixon was President of the United States and Colson was special legal counsel to the President. Colson would gather the guests in a room outside the Oval Office, where they would talk to each other about what they were going to tell the President when they were face to face. **“It was always the same,” Colson wrote, “In the reception room they would rehearse their angry lines and reassure one another. “I’ll tell him what’s going on. He’s got to do something.”**

“When the aide came to escort us in, they’d set their jaws and march toward the door. But once it swung open, the aide announcing. ‘The President will see you,’ it was as if they had suddenly sniffed some intoxicating fragrance. Most became almost self-conscious about even stepping on the plush blue carpet on which was sculpted the Great Seal of the United States. And Mr. Nixon’s voice and presence—like any President’s—filled the room.

**“Invariably, the lions of the waiting room became the lambs of the Oval Office,” said Colson.**

It is sad to report that none were meeker than the religious leaders. Of all people, they should have been the most outspoken. But they too wilted in the face of worldly power. Such is the awe of majesty that high office evokes. But John the Baptist did not cower before worldly power. He spoke out boldly and continued to do so, repeatedly saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have her.”

2. So, if John the Baptist was such a great man, and forerunner of Jesus, **WHY DID GOD ALLOW HEROD TO KILL HIM?**
- a. what could be gained from allowing such a horrific event to take place?
  - b. what had John done except be a faithful prophet of God?

## **B. The Lack Of Leadership Of Herod**

1. why did God allow a man like Herod to be a leader in the first place?
  - a. Herod was a schemer, a murderer, and an adulterer
  - b. Herod did not care what God thought
  - c. all that Herod cared about was pleasing others

d. **William Barclay** – “Herod was more frightened of a woman’s tantrums than of the moral law. He was more frightened of the criticism, and perhaps the amusement, of his guests, than of the voice of conscience. Herod was a man who could take a firm stand on the wrong things, even when he knew what was right and such a stand is the sign, not of strength, but of weakness.

2. **WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW A WEAK, PEOPLE-PLEASING MAN TO MAKE A DECISION TO KILL THE LAST OLD TESTAMENT PROPHET?**

**C. The Scheming Life Of Herodias**

1. and, why did God allow the scheming, lying, manipulating woman name Herodias to instigate such a crime?
2. **John MacArthur** said that Herodias was one of the most wicked and perverse woman mentioned in Scripture, perhaps second only to Jezebel.”
3. and, to “top it all off,” Herodias used her teenage daughter to mentally seduce her husband, Herod
  - a. how sick was it that Herodias would use her own daughter in this way?
  - b. the tragic example of a mother prostituting her own daughter to get her way!

**D. The Pathetic Life Of The Daughter**

1. **AND, WHEN IT ALL CAME DOWN TO IT, GUESS WHO MADE THE DECISION OF BEHEADING JOHN THE BAPTIST?**
  - a. it was the decision of a fickle, spoiled, bratty 14 to 15 year old girl!
  - b. the decision to kill the greatest man who ever lived was left up to a 14-year old girl who had been trained like a monkey to do whatever her mother wanted her to do.
2. **SO, LET ME ASK YOU: WAS THIS FAIR?**

**Conclusion**

1. **WHERE IS GOD WHEN CHRISTIANS GO THROUGH TRIALS AT THE HANDS OF FOOLS, MANIPULATORS AND LIARS?**
  - a. how can I trust in a God who allows these kinds of things to happen to His children?
  - b. **WHERE IS THE FAIRNESS IN THAT?**

2. Historically, you **need to know** what happened to Herod and his wife, Herodias
  - a. **first**, Herod's first wife's father, Aretas, as a result of Herod's "unfaithfulness to his daughter, went to war against Herod, and the only thing that saved Herod from total annihilation was the Roman army that came to his rescue
    1. hear what the Jewish historian, Josephus, said of this battle: "Some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God and that very justly, as a punishment for what he did against John, who was called the Baptist!"
    2. why do we think that we will get away with treating people poorly?
  - b. **second**, a few years after killing John the Baptist, Herod's brother, Agrippa, was made a King by Roman Emperor Caligula
    1. Herod Antipas, the Herod in this text, was never made a King
    2. because Herod was also not made a King, Herod's wife Herodias, insisted that Herod travel to Rome and ask Caligula to make him a King as well
    3. however, hearing of Herod Antipas' plans, Herod Agrippa sent word to Emperor Caligula that Herod Antipas was threatening to rebel from Rome
      - a. so, Emperor Caligula took away Herod Antipas' province
      - b. and took away all of his money
      - c. and put him and his wife into exile in Gaul, where they lived in poverty until they died
      - d. **William Barclay** – "So, in the end; it was through Herodias that Herod lost his fortune and his Kingdom and dragged out a weak existence in the far away places of Gaul."
3. Christian, if you think that you will **ALWAYS** be treated fairly as a Christian, you had better rethink your position
  - a. **Jesus Christ** was crucified on a cross
  - b. **the Apostle Paul** was beheaded in a Roman prison and his body thrown in the Tiber River like a piece of garbage
  - c. **all but one of the 12 disciples** of Jesus died a martyr's death
  - d. Christians during the reign of the various Emperors of Rome were killed for the amusement of the Emperor as well as the Roman people
  - e. Foxe's Book of Martyrs recounts an untold number of Christians throughout history who died for their faith

4. **THE ONLY PLACE** where you will EVER be treated fairly as a Christian will be heaven.
  - a. so, until then, look at **Psalm 73 (read)**
  - b. as a believer, you **must** have an eternal perspective
  
5. But, as believers, you must also have a real sense of the sovereignty of God
  - a. **Romans 8:28** – “And we know that **in all things God works for the good** of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”
  - b. my life
    1. my heartbreak as a 9<sup>th</sup> grade football player led to my conversion to Christ
    2. my heartbreak at not receiving a call to Pastor in Mississippi led me to Knoxville, Tennessee, to plant this church.