

# The Gospel According to Mark

## A Message the World Hates (The Cost of Discipleship)

Mark 6:14-29

Sunday, September 6, 2020

### Introduction

Repentance isn't a practice that most people enjoy. And it's certainly not something people want to be told they need to do. In a world that cheers personal autonomy and self-expression, the suggestion that someone's way of life is something that needs to be repented of is largely considered out of bounds. But as Christians, we recognize the call to repentance is a primary part of the message of the Gospel. It's only when we repent of our sins and turn to Jesus that we can be forgiven and saved from the wrath of God.

As we come to Mark 6:14-29 we encounter a group of people who are fully committed to living for themselves. At the heart of the story is a King who has an affair and who is called to repentance by John the Baptist. In these fifteen verses we get an incredible view of the deceitfulness and destructiveness of sin as well as a stark reminder of the significant opposition we can face as we stand for the things of God in world that is in rebellion against Him.

### Context of the Gospel of Mark

In Mark 6:7-13 Jesus sends out the Twelve on their first apostolic mission. In Mark 6:30 we are told of their return. Sandwiched between their departure and their return is this story of John the Baptist and his death at the hands of those who didn't like his message. The placement of the story is instructive: A reminder of the difficulty of the calling. As we go out to speak on behalf of Christ we must go with full knowledge of the opposition we will face.

### Speculation about Jesus and the Guilty Conscience of Herod (6:14-16)

- **Who is Jesus?** – As the popularity of Jesus grows so does speculation about who He really is. Some believe He's the Old Testament prophet Elijah who was prophesied to return (Malachi 4:5) or a new prophet from God. Still others believed he might be John the Baptist back from the dead.
- **'King' Herod Antipas** – As a son of Herod the Great (the Herod who reigned when Jesus was born) Herod Antipas was placed over a fourth of the kingdom when his father died. As he hears about Jesus he fears that He is in fact John the Baptist back from the dead. It's no doubt a sobering thought, born of guilty conscience, since Herod is the one who unjustly executed John.

### The Backstory – A Sordid Affair and A Call to Repentance (6:17-20)

- **A flashback** – Starting in verse 17 Mark takes us back in time and fills in some backstory about Herod's relationship with John the Baptist and the events that led to John's execution.

- **A twisted family tree** – One thing we don't understand fully from this passage alone is the complexity of Herod and his wife's relationship. We know from other sources that Herodias was both Herod's niece and sister-in-law. Herod divorced his first wife and convinced Herodias to divorce her husband (Herod's half-brother) so they could marry.
- **A faithful and bold prophet** – As a prophet of God John not only spoke truth and called for repentance from the masses, but he was willing to confront even powerful leaders face to face. This is a great example of what it looks like to stand boldly for the truth of God.
- **Herodias's grudge** – John's call to repentance left Herodias enraged. She is an example of the lengths we will go to in order to cover our sin. Sin makes us irrational (James 4:1-2). She wanted John the Baptist dead.
- **A fearful and puzzled conscience** – Herod's conscience is an illustration of how complicated life gets when we live in sin. Herod wanted to appease his wife and he wasn't willing to repent of his sin, but he was also intrigued by John and didn't intend to kill him. Sometimes we too are drawn to the things of God and yet also try to hang on to our sin.

### A Foolish Vow and a Vengeful Demand (6:21-25)

- **A fateful party** – It's at his own birthday party where Herod's sin compounds and forces his hand. In an effort to please his guests and win the approval of others Herod promises his step-daughter (Salome, the entertainment of the party) whatever she desires.
- **Herodias's opportunity** – Sin is irrational and deceitful. For Herodias it started with an affair and now it has led to exploiting her daughter and conning her husband into killing a man.

### The Inevitable End of Sin and the Death of John (6:26-29)

- It's been said that *sin will take you farther than you want to go, it will keep you longer than you want to stay, and cost you more than you want to pay.* This was certainly the case for Herod. His desire for Herodias ultimately led him to an unjust execution of a prophet of God. In the end he determined that it was a better option to kill John the Baptist than to disappoint his wife and appear indecisive in front of his peers.

### Conclusion

John stood for the truth. He followed God faithfully and he died a martyr's death. But of course, his death was not the end for him or for the mission of God in the world. John paved the way for Jesus and his death foreshadowed the death of Christ. And it's because of the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have the hope of eternal life and a message worth dying for.

The Scriptures are clear that as we stand for Christ we will suffer. But we also know that while we may be despised by kings in this life, we will reign with The King for all eternity (Mark 10:28-31).